Commentary on Isaiah (part 1 of 3)

Cyril of Alexandria (c. AD 376–444)

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Book 1

Preface

The word of the holy prophets is always obscure, but it is filled with hidden meanings, and travails for us with the foretelling of divine mysteries. For Christ is the end of the law and the prophets, as it is written. But I say that those who wish to make clear such subtle and enigmatic things must hasten to survey the breadth of the contemplations with the eye of the mind, and very prudently, on the one hand, the accuracy of the history, and on the other, the rendering of the spiritual interpretation, so that what is beneficial may come forth from all sides to the readers, and the clarification of the proposed meanings may appear, having nothing lacking. I know, then, that some who came before have written on these things, and have composed long discourses for us about them; and I think this is sufficient, and at least furnishes a not ignoble excuse for others to hesitate, and persuades them to choose silence rather than to add to what others have already said—saying nothing new, but rather repeating the same things and going through the same contemplations.

But since, even if this should happen, it would not be distressing at all, and since listeners are confirmed in the truth through the harmony of the majority, I persuade myself even now to be superior to hesitation, convinced that the sweat and labor on good studies is better than the idleness in snoring, and not at all having given up the hope of being able sometimes to find something new and different, as God widens the path in contemplations. For it is written, that ”Your commandment is exceedingly broad. Therefore the blessed Isaiah prophesies in the times of the reign of Uzziah, and Jotham, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah. And come, let us recall the times of each, and say cursorily how he lived out his life. For from this we shall know that the word of prophecy is both fitting and most suitable to the things being done at those times. Uzziah, therefore, who is also Ozias, was a pious man, and he advanced in both glory and strength to such a point as to conquer the nations bordering Judea, and indeed to impose tributes on many, and to subject them by necessity to his own scepters, and to build up cities, and to acquire others, and to join them to the borders of the land of the Jews. Then he suffered something human.

For from excessive luxury, and being overcome by the pre-eminence of his fame, he grew haughty in a way, and being mastered by the disease of arrogance, he even rose up against the divine law itself. For he thought he ought to crown himself also with the glories of

the divine priesthood. For he attempted to enter the divine temple, and by himself to offer incense to God and unlawfully to perform the established rites. For this reason he was immediately struck with leprosy, and was most dishonored; for according to the law, the one overcome by the affliction of leprosy is unclean. Then Jotham, his son, succeeded to the kingdom of Uzziah, a God-loving man, yet he did not, it says, remove the high places, but the men of Israel still sacrificed to the works of their own hands, occupying mountains and hills, under oak, and poplar, and a shading tree, as Hosea says, "because the shade is good. And when Jotham died, Ahaz succeeded to the scepter, a most abominable and God-hated man, and full of the utmost wickedness. This man even shut the divine temple, and did not permit the God of all to be honored with the sacrifices according to the law, and he forbade the customary feasts of the Jews, and in every place of Jerusalem, having set up altars, he commanded them to worship handmade things, and to serve the host of heaven;

and indeed he even passed his own children through fire, that is, he burned them as a sacrifice to the unclean demons, and to put it simply, there was no manner of impiety unpracticed by him. Then after him reigned Hezekiah, a pious and God-loving man, and a master of righteousness, and a zealot for every good thing, and a doer of the divine wills. This man commanded everything to be done and to have force against the transgressions of Ahaz; for he opened the doors of the temple, then he decreed that sacrifices and libations be offered to God, and that He be honored with sacred rites according to the law; and indeed, without long delays, he is seen to have renewed the law concerning the Passover. He tore down sacred precincts, and altars, and handmade things, and soothsayers and false prophets, and he commanded the hordes of enchanters to be still, and he was a good man in the eyes of God. Therefore, since in the times of the reign of those just mentioned by us, at one time the God of all was provoked to wrath, when Israel practiced idolatry; and at another time He was softened to gentleness, when it was transformed to piety through the clemency of the ruler; for this reason the discourse of the prophecy is mixed, and at times it makes the greatest threat, as against an impious Israel, but it introduces a word of promise for good things.

And it everywhere remembers the redemption through Christ, and says that at times Israel will be sent away from intimacy with God, but the multitude of the nations will be received, being justified through the faith that is in Christ. So that it seems to me to crown the blessed prophet Isaiah very well, not with the grace of prophecy alone, but indeed also with apostolic boasts. For at the same time he is both a prophet and an apostle, and he will make the words of his own writing not devoid of the brightness of the evangelical proclamations.

Discourse 1

The vision which Isaiah son of Amoz saw, which he saw against Judea, and against Jerusalem in the reign of Uzziah, and Jotham, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah who reigned over Judea. I do not think one would be mistaken in saying this about the holy prophets, that they received not only the knowledge of future things, as the Holy Spirit illuminated the matter for them and resounded in their mind, but indeed that at times they also became spectators of the events themselves. So the blessed prophet Isaiah seems to have seen with the eyes of the mind the sufferings that would come at various times upon Judea, on the one hand, the phalanxes of the enemy ravaging the land, and on the other, the cities laid waste, and houses set on fire, and whatever things are done by enemies according to the laws of war. For this reason it is written at the beginning of the prophecy: ”The vision which Isaiah son of Amoz saw, against Judea and against Jerusalem. And he usefully notes the times of the kings, so that God might be seen to be speaking things in the prophet appropriately to the ways of each one. Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken, I have begotten and raised up sons, but they have rejected me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel did not know me, and the people did not understand me.

What is the matter, what is the meaning, and what it might wish to signify, it is necessary to examine. For the blessed prophet calls heaven and earth to witness, as it were, and doing this not without God, but says that the words are not his own, but rather God’s. Signifying through this that they will in every way and entirely come to pass, and terrifying the hearers with the fears of what they are to suffer. For it is impossible for God to speak falsely; and at the same time establishing that other point, as I think. For since he was about to make the predictions against Judea and Jerusalem, and to announce beforehand sufferings beyond all description, and incurable calamities, he was not ignorant that in every way and by all means those to whom the word was addressed would be whetted to anger. Therefore, he says that the Lord spoke such things to them, most skillfully repelling the rage of the unholy, and as it were, shaming away their unjust anger. For if he was taken as a mediator and minister, and would convey the words from above and from God, how could anyone be justly angry with him? or rather, how would the impious ventures of wrath not be against God who has spoken. Therefore, does he very reasonably call heaven and earth to witness?

For since he was about to make complaints against Israel, he wishes the angels in heaven, and also the whole earth itself, to know the ways of his impiety, so that no one might think that he was moved in vain or for trifling and most insignificant stumbles had been ruined, to make an outcast of the beloved, and the people set for him as an inheritance, and who long ago by very great strength had been rescued from the greed of the Egyptians. For he pitied them as being wronged, contrary to what was fitting, and their nobility which was both proper to and inherent in their fathers, being weighed down by unwilling servitude. But since the oppressors resisted, they were punished bitterly, God inflicting every kind of torment upon them. Therefore, just as the acceptance of those from Israel became most notable, so he wishes the manner of their rejection not to be unknown. But if some should wish the very elements to be called by the prophet's voice, the force of their thoughts would not miss the mark of a fitting argument, having considered this. For Israel was being redeemed, as I said, from the unholiness of the Egyptians through Moses. But since Pharaoh, unholily rising up against the commands of God, said, I do not know the Lord, and I will not send Israel away, creation was armed with its own master against the hateful ones.

For from above and from heaven there were very many and conspicuous signs, and likewise very many and not unwonderful ones on the earth itself. For the heaven sent down the hail, and the earth cast up frogs, as it is written; and the water was changed into blood, and as furnace soot was scattered and clouded the air, ulcers and boils breaking out happened to the bodies of all. Therefore, as the very elements had toiled almost in vain for those who were redeemed, "Hear, O heaven, he says, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. But we will also approach the meanings of what is before us in another way. For having dishonored the instruction through the law, those from Israel, and having despised the saving teachings, having abandoned the one and by nature God, they offered their worship to unclean demons on mountains and hills, and in the most well-wooded valleys they have burned incense and worshipped the works of their own hands. And the God of all was indignant at these things, and very reasonably so, and he said to one of the holy prophets; "Arise and plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O hills, the judgment of the Lord, and you valleys, the foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a case against his people, and he will enter into judgment with Israel.

And we do not say that the judgment by the Lord through the prophet's voice was against the mountains and the hills, but rather he was judging the impiety of Israel on the mountains and hills and glens. For he was convicted of having been immeasurably impious, having constructed altars and sacred precincts there for the unclean demons. Therefore, since those from Israel, having disregarded their reverence for God, worshipped the host of heaven, I mean the sun and moon, and also receiving matter from the earth, I mean both wood and stones, made for themselves idols according to what seemed good to each, he very providentially alludes to their impiety in these things, and as it were brings heaven and earth into the midst for refutation and proof, saying, "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken," And in another way, we say that there are many fathers in heaven, the spiritual ones, clearly; and likewise many on earth, some carnal, others spiritual. But to all

these fathers, both above and below, honors are brought by the children under their hand. And those who are honored rejoice greatly, and there is none among them who does not in every way and altogether make it unbearable to be treated ungratefully by their children. Having suffered this, the God of all testifies to the fathers both in heaven and on earth, saying: Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken:

I have begotten and raised up sons, but they have rejected me. For Israel, having been accepted through grace, and deemed worthy of the forbearance befitting children, is said to have been begotten by God, since the true and spiritual regeneration has been perfected in us. Clearly through faith in Christ; for we have been born of water and the spirit, and to the ancients was given a spirit of bondage, even though he was the firstborn and was called a people. But to us, God has granted both the name and the spirit of adoption. ”For because you are,” he says, ”sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. For I have begotten, he says, sons, and not for this reason only, but I have also exalted them, that is, I have brought them up. For this is what the addition of the other interpreters has. For Israel, having been redeemed, was not after this without help, and destitute of the love from God. For he was nourished like a son by a truly child-loving and most affectionate father. ”For the bread of heaven,” he says, ”he gave them, man ate the bread of angels. And he was nourished in another way for spiritual well-being through lawful wisdom and prophetic teachings, skillfully leading to the knowledge of truth, that is, of Christ. For Paul writes, ”So the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ. But he rejected the one who begot him.

And what could be the manner of the rejection? For he turned to wanting to worship gods that are not gods by nature, and he has been sick in another way, much that is unruly, and what is beyond these in absurdity, nor has he imitated the very goodwill of irrational animals, which they might have towards their masters. For this reason he says: ”The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know me, and my people do not understand. For if a man were to buy an ox, he would certainly have it as most useful for the works of farming, on the one hand to plow, if he chose, the land, on the other hand to thresh on the floor, and to separate the chaff from the wheat. And if one were to buy a donkey, it too is called to obedience by natural impulses, and it makes its submission a kind of repayment for the things lying in its manger. For it willingly carries burdens, and shares the master’s labor. But these things are in these. But wise Israel, being taught in the law, to know what is beneficial, who had learned the glory of God through many and wonderful signs, comes behind the donkey and the ox, and being inferior to the reasonableness of irrational animals, has not known the master. And very well indeed it says, he did not know, he did not understand.

And yet, having learned, as I said, the glory of God, and because of turning too much to an unbridled digression, he has become equal to one who is ignorant. For if this were not true, he would not have said to the wood, ”You are my God; and to the stone, ”You begot me. Wherefore ”be astonished,” he says, ”O heaven, at this, and be horribly afraid, says the

Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water. And it would be fitting for Christ himself to say about them, But Israel did not know, and my people did not understand me. For the redemption of old also came through him. And the law was established until the time of reformation, as it is written. But since ... it was impossible for the shadow to be able to justify us, the only-begotten Word of God appeared to us in the flesh, that he might justify by faith those who approach him, and might deliver from death and sin. But Israel did not understand him, although he said clearly: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Woe, sinful nation, a people full of sins, a wicked seed, lawless sons; you have forsaken the Lord, and have provoked the Holy One of Israel.

Having very well declared the manner of their rejection, and having shown the magnitude of the irrationality in them, he immediately changes his discourse, on the one hand, to a lamentation over them, clearly, and on the other, again to a rebuke. It would be fitting, I think, for the prophetic person especially to almost bewail them, and out of a very great love for God to rise up and say: Woe, sinful nation, a people full of sins, a wicked seed, lawless sons. It certainly follows for those who wish to reject me, God the giver of all good things to us, to have unwashed sin, and to be burdened with terrible, inescapable accusations. For rejection is always in some way sick with apostasy, of the change from one's place to anything whatsoever. Therefore he immediately added this: you have forsaken the Lord. And he calls them a wicked seed, not as being or having been made such by nature, but because they have become wicked sons of wicked fathers, according to the voice of John; for he said even to the scribes and Pharisees coming to the baptism of repentance, "brood of vipers. For the first fathers from the beginning were admittedly holy, but those after them were exceedingly abominable. Therefore, he rightly called them a wicked seed, being nourished in the customs of their fathers, and emulating ancestral unholiness. For they have forsaken the Lord, and they did not cease from provoking the Holy One of Israel, that is, Christ.

For they did not understand the mystery concerning him. Therefore they have also remained in the fullness of their own sins. And Christ said this to them: "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Therefore Israel is full of sins, and has finally arrived at such worthlessness, that it is fitting for it to be punished. For they themselves have also filled up the measure of their own fathers, according to the Savior's voice. For up to a certain time and measure God makes the contempt of the sinners bearable; but when the sin has already reached the fullness known to him, he brings on the punishments, and punishes the disobedient one in proportion to the sins. And so the prophet Zechariah, having seen a measure, asked the blessed angel what this measure that was coming forth was. And he said to him, This is their iniquity in all the earth. Therefore Israel has remained having its unwashed sin, and was unwilling to receive the purification through Christ, but indeed, in addition to this, having forsaken him, by not having offered

faith in him, and saying in addition to this, ”Away, away, crucify him,” and, ”We have no king but Caesar. Why will you be struck any more, adding lawlessness? Every head is for pain, and every heart for grief; from the feet to the head, there is no soundness in them, neither wound, nor bruise, nor festering sore;

it is not possible to apply a soothing poultice, nor oil, nor bandages. He makes his statements as if about one body of the Jewish systems, I mean both small and great, and those understood to be in between. And he seems to call the head, the one who is comely with the glories of kingship. And the heart, the holy and chosen tribe, that is the Levitical one, as having been made wise in the law, and having the care of the whole body. ”For the lips of a priest,” he says, ”shall keep judgment, and they will seek the law from his mouth. And he says the feet are those in the last places, and who have obtained, as it were, the lowest rank among the peoples. Therefore, since the land of the Jews has already endured unbearable hardship, being ravaged, sometimes by the Babylonians, sometimes by the neighboring nations, was about to be burned down by the hands of the Romans on account of their impiety toward Christ, and their kingdom would be overthrown, for foreigners have ruled over them, and the works of the priesthood among them would cease, sacrifices having been overturned, the temple having been destroyed, there being no altars, nor priesthood, nor Urim, according to the prophet’s voice, so he says, Why will you be struck any more, adding transgression? Every form of wrath, he says, has been brought upon you, and torment from God, you have demanded harsh and successive punishments, but you are no less scornful and companions of lawlessness.

Why then will you be struck any more? What measure of torment will be sufficient for your correction? What terror will be brought upon you at all, which has not somehow already happened? Every head is into pain, and every heart into grief from the feet to the head. For those who had received the royal honor have suffered not moderately, being unable to withstand the attacks of the enemy. The priests also are grieved, as I said, since sacrifice is idle. And the feet were struck, that is, the last and the lowest. On the one hand being consumed by the swords of the enemy, and on the other hand being worn out by famines and barrenness, and having been brought to the experience of unmitigated hardship. Therefore he says, There is no plaster to apply, nor oil, nor bandages. For when certain moderate wounds happen to the human body, and the injury affects one single limb, then the discoveries of the skill of those who know how to heal are useful, such as a plaster, and bandages, and an anointing with oil that loosens what is strained. But when it is sick throughout the whole body, and is being destroyed in itself, what manner of therapy can help it? For the greatness of the disease completely overcomes the power of remedies from art. Therefore, the multitude of the Jews, having fallen into incurable wounds, and suffering unbearably from the things of wrath, has been utterly destroyed, with no manner of help for them.

Therefore the divine prophets also said: ”We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed; let us forsake her. For it is compared to the Babylon of the nations, although it was named a holy city, especially on account of the impiety toward Christ, or also because they

filled it with man-made things, so as in no way to yield to the Babylonians', which has also been called the land of carved images. Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence. And it is desolate, overthrown by foreign peoples. What seemed to be said somewhat more obscurely than it should have been, he makes clear. For what would he mean by "there is no plaster to apply, nor oil, nor bandages"? He interprets it plainly, saying their land has been laid waste, and their cities burned and have become subject to the enemy, and these of foreign peoples, so that almost everything was overturned from its foundations. Often, then, it happened that Judea was captured, by the Assyrians and Egyptians, Syrians and Moabites, Idumeans and those called Philistines, that is, Palestinians. But having suffered a little, and having fallen at times into moderate calamities, it recovered again with God defending it, and He who struck it Himself healing it. But it was utterly destroyed after the cross of the Savior, with Vespasian and Titus ravaging it.

For then indeed it happened that cities were burned down, and the whole country became empty of its inhabitants, and fell into the hands of the conquerors, and it was a most wretched thing for them to see with their own eyes and to be pained, that the land was in a manner devoured and consumed by others. For to only hear of it while absent would perhaps have made the grief bearable for them. But to be present and see it, and then to be unable to do anything to help, but to be weighed down as it were by unavoidable misfortunes, has an unbearable and very great grief. Therefore, we must not provoke the Holy One of Israel, so that we may not fall among visible and invisible enemies into the things of passions bring down to dishonor, and they destroy every fortress of the mind that is in us, so that the wretched soul is, in a way, consumed, and all its fruits are spent, so that it becomes dry and dishonored, and is found to be a land that brings forth thorns, whose end is to be burned, according to the voice of the blessed Paul. The daughter of Zion will be left like a tent in a vineyard, and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, like a besieged city. A pitiful thing; for how is it not worthy of lamentation and wailing?

For she who was formerly a daughter, and honored with such a title, and acting as if under a most loving father, God, she who was intoxicated with His forbearance and love, and crowned by Him with glories to the end, and prevailing over those who opposed her, and encompassed by an innumerable multitude of her inhabitants, the all-blessed and renowned Zion, that is, Jerusalem, will be forsaken, it says. That is, she will be desolate. And she will remain stripped both of the strength of the one who saves and of her inhabitants. And she will be forsaken thus, like a tent in a vineyard, and like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and like a besieged city. For the appointed guards of the vineyards, while the clusters of grapes are still blooming for them, provide the greatest possible security, and they terrify the robbers who want to cut them off. And they drive away the kinds of wild beasts. It is the custom for the overseers or masters of the cucumber gardens to do this as well. But when the grapes have been gathered and trodden, and those in the cucumber gardens have been taken out, the mildness of the guards is then relaxed; who, leaving their own tents, make

entry free for those who wish to meddle with what is left. The prophetic word teaches us that something of this kind has also been done to the wretched Zion.

For while she still had the fruits of righteousness, God deemed her worthy of all security and protection and forbearance. For He said that, "I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in the midst of her. For the blessed David also sings: "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. But since Israel, although he had become the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth, was indeed fenced and deemed worthy of a hedge. He produced thorns, and was given by God to those accustomed to do wrong, "For I will take away, he says, its hedge, and it shall be for plunder; and I will break down its wall, and it shall be for trampling. And I will let my vineyard go, and it shall not be pruned, nor dug. Therefore a boar from the wood has ravaged it, and a wild ass has fed upon it, and that God let the vineyard go, and it has been forsaken by him, the Savior teaches, saying: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. And he had cried this out beforehand also through the voice of a prophet, saying: "I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance;

I have given the beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest; she has given her voice against me, therefore I have hated her. And Josephus somewhere remembers, he who recounted the sufferings of the land of the Jews, that when Jerusalem was about to be captured, the priests in the temple heard a voice, as of the angels within it crying out, "Let us depart from here. But that when a city is besieged, a way of escape is sought by all those in it, how can one doubt? From this it is possible to infer the sufferings of the land of the Jews. For to the besieged it seemed most desirable even to be able to save only one's life. And they had no regard at all for home or property or even for the city itself. But it must be known that it often happens that the soul of man is also forsaken by God, if it should not choose to correct the things ordained, and submitting its neck to the master's ordinances, it brings forth the fruits of piety towards him. Even if he has been called a son or daughter of God, even if he has become Zion, which is a watchtower, that is, in a lofty mind and a most pure intellect and knowing how to see mysteries;

then doing what is not lawful, he should be seen provoking the Holy One of Israel, he will be forsaken by him, and like an unguarded vineyard will be given over to Satan, and to the passions of the flesh, and will be shown to be destitute of all virtue, and stripped of the boasts of a good life, and filled with all evil. And unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah. The land having been burned up on account of the impiety towards Christ, even so the remnant of Israel has been saved, God taking pity, and bestowing this also, along with the others, as a special gift in memory of the fathers. For it has not utterly perished, nor indeed has it been shaken from its foundations, but it has remained in its remnants. For from them were

also the divine disciples, and indeed all who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. And they will be called in the last times of the age, even those who have not yet believed. And a prophetic word will confirm this for us. For it says thus: ”For many days the children of Israel shall sit without a king and without a ruler, without a sacrifice and without an altar, neither a priesthood nor manifest signs. And after these things the children of Israel shall return, and shall seek the Lord their God and David their king.

And they shall be amazed at the Lord, and at his good things in the last of the days. And indeed elsewhere the God of all: ”How shall I deal with you, Ephraim? Shall I protect you, Israel? How shall I deal with you? I will make you as Admah, and as Zeboim. My heart is turned within me. My repentance is stirred up. I will not act according to the anger of my wrath. I will not abandon Ephraim to be blotted out, because I am God, and not man; the Holy One in you. Do you hear how he promised not to act against them according to the greatness of his anger, but rather promised before transgre..... ..... for those from Israel were disobedient even in the wilderness, when they were at the very streams of the Jordan, and about to inherit the land of promise. Wherefore God said: ”As I swore in my wrath, ’They shall not enter into my rest.’” For their carcasses fell in the wilderness, and they were all consumed, except Caleb son of Jephunneh, and Joshua son of Nun. They entered in with the new people, and crossed the Jordan, and have received their inheritance from God. These would be a type of the remnant of Israel, saved through the obedience of faith in Christ, having crossed with us the holy Jordan, and being about to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Therefore the prophet gives thanks, saying:

”Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah. For since Israel had worshipped idols, and had killed prophets, and had denied Christ, and rather had even killed the author of life, the God of all ought to have condemned the entire race to utter destruction. But since he is good beyond measure, he has kept the remnant, and they have not become equal to the people of Sodom, who with their whole race and household and with their very ..... and to have a sin difficult to wash away. And very rightly it will be said by us: Or do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. But according to your hardness and impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation and of the righteous judgment of God. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of lambs, and I do not desire the blood of bulls and goats.

Neither should you come to appear before me. For who has required these things at your hands? You shall no longer tread my court. If you bring fine flour, it is a vain offering; incense is an abomination to me. Your new moons, and the sabbaths, and the great day I

cannot endure; fast and idleness, and your feasts my soul hates. Having sufficiently terrified them with the threats of what is to come, and having proclaimed to them the things that will in every way and entirely come to pass in due time if they should not choose to think and do better things together, and according to the divine laws, he shifts the discourse for a time, and introduces what is useful, so that, having chosen to think better things, they might be delivered from the punishment hanging over them. For having acted insolently against Christ, those of Israel have perished, and we say that they fell to this on account of the impiety of those who were appointed to lead. For although they had recognized that he is the heir, they killed him. For they wished to make his vineyard their own inheritance. But that the senseless Israel, by following the perversities of its leaders, has missed the hope in Christ, the God of all will confirm by speaking through the voice of the prophets. ”Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have defiled my inheritance, they have given my desirable portion to an impassable wilderness. It has become a desolation of destruction. And again:

”Because the shepherds have become foolish and have not sought the Lord, therefore the whole pasture did not understand, and they were scattered. For the shepherds truly acted foolishly, and became a cause of destruction for the people under their hand. And yet, how was it not necessary for them, as men well-instructed through the Law and the Prophets in the mystery of Christ, to become a way for others to what was necessary, to believe in him? But, as the Savior says, they received glory from man, and did not seek the glory that is from the only God. For if they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, for he wrote about him. Therefore, they have become blind guides of the blind. For this reason they have also slipped, and fallen into the pits of destruction. What then? The prophet tries to transform them with good admonitions, toward the necessity of choosing to think better things, and to be tried by the words of the Savior. And he usefully mingles rebuke with these admonitions, as if with a variously prepared medicine, healing the wounds of their ill counsel. For this reason, he says, ”Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of God, you people of Gomorrah. Do you hear how he brings the rod of love and of a God-loving mind upon the peoples and rulers, and strikes those who are very sick with disobedience?

And he compares Jerusalem to the most impious cities, as being full of the greatest sin, and as having absolutely no one in itself .... For the God of all was planning to burn the cities of the Sodomites, and did he not communicate the matter to Abraham? But he said to him: ”Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked? And will the righteous be as the wicked? And God promised that if ten righteous men were found in Sodom, he would quell his anger against them. But they were not found. Therefore they have also paid the penalties commensurate with their impieties. Such a one was Jerusalem, the killer of the Lord, having a great scarcity of the righteous. And indeed the prophet Jeremiah was pleading for her. And God said: ”Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in her broad places, if you can find a man, if there is one who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will be merciful to her, says the Lord.

Therefore, because she is filthy, and in many ways stained with the pollutions of wickedness, and having a great scarcity of holy men, he calls her both Sodom and Gomorrah, and brings the reproach of the Sodomites' impurity upon both the peoples and the leaders. And what indeed he says; hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom, give ear to the law of God, you people of Gomorrah. Become sober, he says, for a little while.

And by the words of the all-wise Moses, having fixed the eye of your own mind, understand the mystery of Christ. For Moses said: "For the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers; you shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. Hear, therefore, the word of the Lord, give ear to the law of God; that is, understand for yourselves the power of the evangelical ordinances. This is what Moses commanded; for he guides us to Christ, and the end of the legal ordinances looks to the mystery concerning him. But you think, he says, to please God by wishing to fulfill the things in types and shadows. Hear him who also of old spoke the law to you. What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices, says the Lord. I am full. For if you offer them as to one in need, you have strayed from what is fitting, you have missed wise and true reasoning. For the nature that fills all things is in need of nothing at all, because all things are its, and from it they are given to others. "For what do you have that you did not receive. It would be fitting for this to be said by nature to creation. For I have had enough now, he says, and I am full, and I would no longer choose the sacrifices from them. For how, tell me, will a ram offered as a whole burnt offering benefit the God of all things?

what pleasure will the fat of lambs bring? and if the blood of goats and bulls were offered, how would God be pleased by this? For who has required these things from your hands? For even if Moses spoke of whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, yet from of old this manner of worship was not God's will. But since it was necessary to guide to the truth through type and shadow, the things in the law were established until the time of reformation, therefore, in so far as it concerned truly pleasing God; he would not have spoken at all about the sacrifices according to the law. But since the mind of those being instructed at that time was weak, they were led by the hand to the truth through type and the shadow of the letter. But when the time was at hand, in which for the future the beauty of the truth had to be revealed, the type is superfluous, the shadow useless. For this reason he says, You shall no longer tread my court. If you bring fine flour, it is a vain offering; incense is an abomination to me. For we, who have been made radiant by faith in Christ, offering spiritual sacrifices to God, fill his holy courts, that is, the churches. But the manner of Jewish worship is completely unacceptable to Christ in the churches. For those wishing to bring fine flour mixed with oil and perceptible incense would be least of all admitted. For we remember God saying of it:

It is an abomination to me. And we indeed celebrate the holy feasts in Christ. The Jews, however, not departing from the things in types, sound the trumpet on the day of the New Moon, they keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, and they honor the so-called great day. This is the last day of the feast called Tabernacles, and even if they fast to God, they strike the humble with their fists. Therefore let them hear him saying: Your feasts my soul hates. He

says these things, transferring them from types to the truth, and persuading them to submit the neck of their mind to the ordinances through Christ, so that they may live evangelically with us. Delighting God with intelligible sweet fragrances. And as some spiritual incense offering up to him gentleness in character, love, love of one another, patience, self-control, and before all else, faith. With such sacrifices God is well pleased, and the power of the evangelical ordinances crowns those who believe with such glories. You have become for me a surfeit, I will no longer remit your sins. When you stretch out your hands to me, I will turn my eyes away from you. And if you make many prayers, I will not listen to you. For your hands are full of blood. Things that have come to surfeit or satiety are wont to be despised, and of little account whatsoever is considered worthy of mention, but rather now it even comes to be hated.

And so the most wise Solomon says, ”Slowly bring your foot to your friend, lest being filled with you he hate you. Therefore the God of all said to the Jews, I have had my fill of the stale shadow, and I now consider you burdensome, even when you enter to be seen by me. And I refuse- even the mere sight of you; I will no longer remit your sins. For of old the men of Israel, having impiously turned aside from choosing to provoke the God of all against themselves, by worshiping creation and adoring the very works of their own hands, were given over to the Babylonians and were carried away as captives from Judea, and dwelt in the mountains of the Persians and Medes, enduring a bitter and unbearable slavery. But when the seventieth year was completed for them, the compassionate God had mercy again. And so, as it is written in Zechariah, the blessed angel made supplications for them, saying: ”O Lord Almighty, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, which you have overlooked? This is the seventieth year. And to these things God [said], ”I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and I am angry with great wrath against the nations that joined in the attack, because while I was but a little angry, they contributed to the evil. Therefore he then took away their sins, for they were redeemed, and were brought back again to their own land.

But after the cross of the Savior, he no longer promises to remit their sins, because long periods have passed over them, during which they have remained subject to the stirrings of wrath. For that they will be shown mercy in the last times, being justified with us by the grace in Christ, the holy scripture proclaimed; but, as I said, the times of wrath upon them have become much longer than those of old. For this reason, he says: I will no longer remit your sins; and if you wish, you may approach the meaning of what is proposed in another way. The men of Israel used to offer sacrifices according to the old law, for their own transgressions. And a goat and a lamb were slain, and God permitted it. Not that the law of old was incapable of helping the ancients, for in it the mystery of Christ was prefigured. But when Christ appeared, the purification in type had to cease, as the truth was now present. Therefore, he teaches that the shadow of the law will not suffice for their forgiveness, since they do not accept the redemption through Christ, saying: I will no longer remit your sins. For before the truth was present, he says, I allowed the types to be able

to help those guilty of sins, doing this also out of respect for the truth; but now that it is present and has been revealed, the type is inert, the shadow is useless.

And I will no longer remit your sins, and when you lift up your hands, I will turn away my eyes, and even if you choose to make very many supplications, I will not receive them. Has the creator of all, then, ceased to be good? Or has God forgotten to be merciful? Not at all, he says, for I am, I am good and kind and compassionate, but I only unwillingly turn away my eyes. For your hands are full of blood. Do you hear how he brought against them the charge of blood-guilt, while being silent about their other offenses? and yet we shall find them to be guilty of many accusations. For they heard, Woe, sinful nation, a people full of sins, a wicked seed, lawless sons. But since they have killed the prophets, and laid their unholy hands upon the very Savior of us all, Christ, for this reason and very fittingly he brings against them the most grievous charge, and that which is sufficient for every condemnation, saying: Your hands are full of blood. And God the Father turns away his face, as not enduring to see the hands of the murderers still stained red with the blood of the Son. Wash yourselves, become clean. Again, having brought them to a remembrance of the impieties they had committed, he does not permit them to despair. And he usefully adds the grace that comes from gentleness. And He does not exclude from the gift that has been set forth through Christ those under all of heaven.

”For all have turned aside, together they have become worthless. And the world has become answerable to God, the nations having served creation, and those of Israel having transgressed the law given to them through Moses. But Christ shone upon the nations, and they have been called to His marvelous light; and those who were once not a people, have become a people. But the wretched Jews have acted insolently toward Christ, and have wickedly killed the author of life, although He rose again as God. But since He is good, and wants all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, He Himself also widens the way of salvation and commands that the accusations be set aside, one being justified freely and not by the works of the law. Rather through faith, and holy baptism, for this reason He says: ”Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. This the old law also prefigured for them as in shadows, and proclaimed beforehand the grace through holy baptism. For somewhere God said to the hierophant Moses: ”Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and you shall purify them, and thus you shall perform their purification. You shall sprinkle them with the water of purification, and a razor shall pass over their whole body. And they shall wash their garments, and they will be clean. Then what the water of purification is, the most wise Paul will teach, saying:

”For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes sanctifies the defiled for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more the blood of Christ? Therefore, the law effected a fleshly cleansing through the water of purification. But Christ washes away every spiritual stain of ours through holy baptism. For we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire, which practically melts every kind of worthlessness in us, and consumes some refuse material as useless; for this is the work of fire. This the blessed Paul also

clarifies, saying: ”By faith Noah, being divinely warned, prepared an ark for the salvation of his household,” in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. ”Which also saves us now as an antitype, baptism, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal to God for a good conscience. Which indeed he also advises the peoples of the Jews to choose to do, saying: ”Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; that is, wash away the stain, since He who was insulted by you justifies us out of gentleness and love for mankind. And we find the divine Peter rebuking them for having killed the author of life, and for having asked that a murderer be granted to them, that is, Barabbas. Nevertheless, they are roused to repentance; for he said: ”And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

Repent therefore, and let each of you be baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promises are for you and for your children. Remove the evils from your souls from before my eyes; cease from your evils. The saving and holy baptism is sufficient for the washing away of sin, and it cleanses the stain of those who have already transgressed. But I say that those who have been once sanctified ought to keep their own souls pure and blameless, as far as they are able, and to remember the one who says: ”With all vigilance guard your heart. And again: ”If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for healing will pacify great sins. Very many are the pleasures that look to baser things and shake the soul of man, and before all others, the law that is innate and runs wild in the members of the flesh; then in addition to these, evil reasonings, which ignobly devour the mind that is in us toward every kind of worthlessness. Therefore, the baptized must abstain from all such evils, and remove the evils from their own of the soul; and not only in the eyes of men, but especially in the eyes of the God who knows and oversees all things. For sometimes they pretend to be good, and steal the reputation of gentleness, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves, according to what is written.

And concerning everyone of this sort, I think, the God of all things speaks through the voice of Jeremiah the prophet: ”With his mouth he speaks peace, but in himself he holds enmity. And indeed also from the voice of David: ”Their words were smoother than oil, yet they are darts. But even if they make every effort to be able to escape notice, He who dwells in heaven will laugh at them, and the Lord will hold them in derision. For He knows, He knows the heart and the reins. But the one who is truly good will be such with God and men, for as Paul says: ”Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. It is a great thing, therefore, to remove wickednesses from before the eyes of God. And perhaps Nathanael was such a one, of whom Christ says: ”Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Cease, he says, from your wickednesses, that is, abandon the perversity that is both ingrained in you and with which you are familiar, turn your own perversity toward better things. But if Christ should say these things, and accuse the Jews, you will understand how many things they have done, insolently treating him, and setting a snare, and digging pits. And what has come upon them, and with the power of arguments, seasoning every kind of malice against him.

For at one time they sent some of their own disciples, with those called Herodians, to ask and say: ”Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? At another time again they came saying, ”Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? so that they might accuse him. Let them hear him saying, therefore, ”Take away the wickednesses from your souls from before my eyes. Cease from your wickednesses. Learn to do good, seek judgment, rescue the wronged, judge for the orphan, and justify the widow, and come, and let us reason together, says the Lord. And if your sins are as scarlet, I will make them white as snow. And if they are as crimson, I will make them white as wool. Having defined the ineffectiveness of the worship in the law, both by saying, ”What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? I am full. And adding to these, ”For who has required these things from your hands? In due time, again, he explains the elegance of the evangelical life, and points out the way of a truly holy life, no longer in types and shadows, but in the things themselves, and in those boasts conceived according to virtue which have approval. For what does he say, ”Learn to do good? Does he then, tell me, as one might say, completely remove from the command of the law? does he not allow one to gaze at all upon what was ordained through Moses? Then how did Christ say:

”Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. And how did Paul also say: ”So the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good? To such things we will say again, that the law is good, if it is understood spiritually, that Christ does not remove us completely from the law? but rather he leads up to what is excellent and better, having laid down beforehand in us, as it were, a foundation of instruction through the law, and having shown in advance to the ancients a sort of preliminary exercise of true worship in shadows and types. And besides, it is necessary to say this to them: The law through Moses teaches to abstain from wickedness and sin, and is indicative of the more shameful things. And so Paul says: ”But I did not know sin except through the law. But the evangelical proclamation shows us to be caretakers of all virtue. For this reason it would be fittingly called, in the proper and true sense, the good thing itself. For ”You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery,” was to remove from sin those being disciplined, but not yet completely revealing what the beautiful is. But the need neither to be angry with one’s brother at all, nor to have desire, is what introduces one to the boasts of virtue.

For it is exceptional to subdue anger, and admirable in addition to this to be able to rein in evil desires, and not to permit the mind, to go even to the beginnings of the wicked and most abominable desire. Therefore, the truly beautiful would be the evangelical teaching, and the power of the life in Christ. Therefore one must exclaim to the friends of the letter, ”Learn to do good, seek judgment,” that is, to judge rightly. For in addition to all their other absurdities, those who were allotted to lead the synagogue of the Jews have also been sick with this: namely, I say, not making right judgments in each matter; but rather casting their vote unjustly, and being overcome by gifts and the pleasure of money, and selling the understanding of their own unholy counsel to those who wish to do wrong. For as the prophet says, ”Her leaders judged for a bribe. Therefore, the commandment is necessary,

and for those who wish to live according to the Gospel, judging rightly is not unhelpful for righteousness, not only in external matters, but also in those of the mind and heart. For example, what I mean is: while God condemns wickedness, Satan praises it. And the law of the Savior persuades us to consider the good as worthy of love; that one pulls us toward the opposite. Then indeed, the mind is like a critic and judge within us; and having praised the good, and having assigned it the need to prevail, it has sought judgment.

But having granted victory to wickedness, it has departed from judging rightly, and will justly hear: ”Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; woe to those who call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Therefore, an evangelical boast is to judge rightly, and to defend the wronged. For this, I think, is, ”Rescue the wronged. And one must practice in addition to this compassion, and impartiality. ”Judge for the orphan,” he says, ”and justify the widow; and come, and let us reason together, says the Lord; not as being judged by the Master? ”For he will surely be justified,” he says, ”in his words, and will prevail when he is judged. For no one will be clean from filth, nor will anyone boast that he has a pure heart, but rather being tested, and as it were examining ourselves, whether the greatness of the divine generosity is not both great and worthy of acceptance. As indeed the wise Paul writes to us; ”The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. ” He promises therefore to those who are in a way moving from the legal way of life through faith into the refinement of the life according to Christ, the forgiveness of their previous stumblings. For this is our entrance into hope, and the first-fruit of the divine gentleness towards us, and like a door and a way.

And that the grace through faith will suffice for the cleansing even of those who are exceedingly defiled, although they have suffered this sickness to a lesser degree, he persuades them by saying: ”Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they be as crimson, I will make them white as wool. For nothing is hard to wash out when God cleanses. For as Paul says, ”But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. And again; ”Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies, who is he who condemns? And if you are willing, and obey me, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you are not willing, nor obey me, a sword shall devour you. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things. He has somewhere addressed those of Israel, the God of all through the all-wise Moses: ”Behold, I have set before your face the way of life, and the way of death. For the path to both is set within us, and the fruit of each one’s inclinations, that is, their wills, would be to live brilliantly and lawfully, or otherwise, reprehensibly. But no one would doubt, that those indeed who the good and living a select and most beloved by God life, in every way and altogether they arrive at life. But those who are conquered by pleasures leading to evil, have their end in ruin and destruction.

The fruit of obedience, therefore, will be to eat the good things of the land which has been prepared for the saints, of which our Lord Jesus Christ himself also makes mention, saying: ”Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. But of perversity and a sin-loving

life the fruit is unprofitable afterthought, and the things from divine wrath, both sword and ruin, as I said, and indeed, what of such evils is not? But the prophet shows his own word to be trustworthy, by immediately adding that, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken these things. Since it is impossible for God to lie (for he always remains that which he is, that is, truth), how is it not necessary to understand that in every way and altogether the things foretold will come to pass? But it is necessary to consider this, how the prophetic word richly profits both the souls of the still more simple, and indeed also those of the already genuine and established in faith. For since the God of all has placed in the inclinations of those being instructed to choose the good and to turn away from evil, he has fully assured that he has given to each one on earth the reins of what is to be done or not, and to whatever one might choose, he will drive with authority. And since this is true, it is now vain and frigid, and a rhapsody to insist and to say, that evil is natural in man;

that is, that chance and fate, and nativity steer human affairs, and according to what seems good to each, binding whomever they might choose, they make them workers of both vice and virtue, not going into this by voluntary inclinations, but yoked as it were by inescapable commands, and bearing with difficulty the necessity of those in power. For if evil is by nature, and has substance, as at least those men foolishly say; how by the wills of each person is it both strengthened and weakened? for if I should choose to be good, nothing of the sort is seen to be preventing it. But if indeed also wicked, nothing would prevent slipping into this as well. Where then is the power of chance and fate? Or what sort of nativity brings to some the yoke of necessity, if the outcome follows the wills of each person, both for those choosing to fulfill obedience to eat the good things of the land, and indeed also to become the work of the sword, if they should set up their disobedience and refusal to hear against the divine laws? How has the faithful city Zion, full of judgment, become a harlot? Formerly, righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. He marvels, in a way, at the synagogue of the Jews' so rotten and inopportune change, to what is worse, I mean, and the removal from better things to baser ones.

For by the law through Moses she was instructed in the knowledge of what is profitable, and having the word of God as a conveyor for each of the things to be done, she was glorious and most renowned and admirable, distinguished by very many men, for whom the fruit of righteousness blossomed richly, and she was acceptable to God. For there were in her both prophets and priests, and guardians of the works of righteousness, and leaders of the peoples keeping judgment, and having the law on their tongue, and adorned in every kind and good manner. Then, being deprived of all such things, or rather, having chosen to disregard that ancient gentleness, and having set at nought reverence and love toward God, before the coming of our Savior she has worshipped those who are not by nature gods, outrageously insulting the one and true Master by these fornications. And like some common and wanton woman she acted impiously in many ways. At one time cleaving to one set of teachers, at another to another, who knew how to convey to anything whatever of the things hated by God. At least the God of all accuses her through the voice of Jeremiah, say-

ing: ”See what the house of Israel has done to me, she has gone upon every high mountain, and under every leafy tree, and has committed fornication there. And again, as to her:

”If a man sends away his his wife, and going away from him she becomes another man’s, shall she not openly return to him again? will not that woman be defiled by madness? and you have committed fornication with many shepherds, and you have returned to me, says the Lord. Lift up your eyes to a straight path, and see, where have you not been defiled, you sat for them on the ways, like a crow alone in the desert. And you have defiled the land with your fornications, and with your evils, and you have had many shepherds as a stumbling block to yourself. The face of a harlot has become yours, you have been shameless towards all. For having despised, as I said, the service under God, she turned to apostasy and to unclean spirits, and to the worshipers of idols, she used them as shepherds and teachers. And these things, as I said, before the coming of our Savior, were the accusations of the Synagogue of the Jews. But when Christ shone upon those on the earth (for God the Lord has appeared to us, according to what is written), she did not use him more as an instructor; she honored teachings, commandments of men; and having left the good shepherd, the one who knows how to lead to everything that is best, she clung to the high priests and Scribes, and indeed also to the Pharisees. And she has committed fornication in this way.

And yet both the law and the prophets had cried out to her beforehand the mystery of Christ, and had proclaimed that he would be present in due time. ”How then, he says, has the faithful city of Zion, full of judgment, become a harlot? It is as if he were saying: Having received what opportunities for being sick, or rather how, being full of spiritual helps, did she who was once faithful and a worker of righteousness slide into apostasy, in whom righteousness lodged, that is, the law rested? for the multitude of those being instructed has become like a house of his, but now murderers have lodged in it. Do you hear that, having passed over all other things, he accuses them of murder? For they have poured down upon their own heads the precious blood of Christ, saying to Pilate: ”His blood be on us and on our children. And they have killed also the holy prophets; and this the blessed Stephen reproached them for, saying: ”You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, you always resist the Holy Spirit. Which of the prophets did your fathers not kill? As your fathers did, so do you. Your silver is counterfeit. Your merchants mix wine with water, your rulers are disobedient, companions of thieves, loving gifts, pursuing reward, not judging orphans, and not attending to the judgment of a widow. He clearly enumerates the causes of the change for the worse.

And just as one of the most skillful physicians tells the sick the causes of their illness, so also he who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, makes clear to those who are sick from ignorance of what is proper the causes of the passions and offenses in them. ”For your silver is counterfeit,” he says. And he calls the word of their teachers, which is not well-disposed, but rather full of all abomination, counterfeit silver; and able to harm rather than to benefit those who listen. For the divinely-inspired Scripture is somehow accustomed to call the words of catechesis, which some might make to the people under their hand, silver. And so our Lord Jesus Christ says that the kingdom of heaven is

like a householder who, being about to go on a journey, called his own servants; and to one he gave five talents, and to another one, and went on his journey; and to those who had labored about .... giving them praise, he says, "Well done, good and faithful servant,". But to the one who hid the talent, having accomplished absolutely nothing, he says, "You wicked and lazy servant, you ought to have put my silver with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received what was my own with interest. And somewhere the divine David also sings: "The words of the Lord are pure words, silver tried in the fire, proven for the earth.

Therefore, the silver among them is indeed counterfeit and completely unapproved. to the Jews, that is, the word from the Scribes and Pharisees, who, like vintners, were willing to mix wine with water; that is, they made their exegesis of the law adulterated and not unadulterated; weaving in something of their own wills, and introducing cold and watery concepts not unmixed with what is worse, nor, as one might say, did they render the Legislator's will unmixed. And so the Scribes and Pharisees once came to the Savior, saying: "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. But he said to them: Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor your father and mother, and, he who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die; but you say, Whoever says to his father or mother, It is a gift, by which you might be profited by me, shall not honor his father or his mother. And you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your transgression. Do you see in these things the clear crimes of the Jewish adulteration? For wishing to follow their own traditions, they declared the laws of God invalid. Pretending to interpret them, but contributing stale and cold traditions. He accuses the rulers, as being very sick with insolence, and stretching out their necks proudly, as it were, and choosing to disobey.

For they did not want to accept faith in Christ, evidently, although the law cried out to them up and down the mystery concerning him, and showed it in ten thousand ways. And so our Lord Jesus Christ said to them: "Do you think that I will accuse you to the Father? There is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you have hoped. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. Therefore, they were disobedient, neither willing to interpret the will of the law unmixed and unadulterated to others, nor honoring the faith proclaimed through Moses and the prophets and saints. For they did not want to obey Christ when he said: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. And in addition to being hard and disobedient, they have become companions of thieves; on the one hand conspiring with those who take bribes (sic), and on the other hand having run together with the unholy counsels of the one who betrayed to them our Lord Jesus Christ, who was at once a wicked and most thievish disciple. The teachers of the Jews were also lovers of money in another way, tithing mint and dill and every herb, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith. For they did not judge for orphans and widows.

But seeking rather a return from those who brought cases to them, they would sometimes unholily condemn the wronged, passing a most lawless sentence upon them. And from judg-

ing unjustly and being shamefully overcome by bribes, they have also acted outrageously against Christ himself. For in order to have the gifts from the peoples, they did not receive the master of the vineyard, making their own the inheritance that was fitting for and owed to him alone. For they killed one who was innocent and righteous, although the law says: "You shall not kill the innocent and righteous. Therefore thus says the Lord, the Lord of Sabaoth: Woe to the mighty ones of Israel; for my anger will not cease against the adversaries, and I will execute judgment on my enemies. He assigns the reasons for Jerusalem's destruction to those who were appointed to lead, and very reasonably so. For the subjects follow them in everything; just as the flocks under their hand follow the shepherds. For if they should lead them to a rich and abundant pasture, they would be both robust and very well-fed; but if to a salty land and a mother of thorns, they will surely destroy them by poor feeding. Something of this sort upon ourselves we will find it to be true. For by introductions to righteousness and virtue and irreproachable knowledge of God, the mind of those being instructed is enriched. But by counsels to impiety, it most readily sinks toward the desire and eagerness for baser things.

Having suffered something of this sort, those of Israel, the wretched ones, were destroyed by the traditions and teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees. For they did not allow them to go on the true and saving path, I mean that through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so He healed the man blind from birth, and those throughout Jerusalem marveled at the greatness of the divine sign, but to the one freed from his suffering who proclaimed the physician, those who were obliged to instruct in truth said plainly, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. And one of the holy evangelists testifies that the Scribes and Pharisees had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. And so, having most unwisely preferred respect for one another to their own salvation, they have remained completely without a share in the glory from God. And the Savior said this to them: "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? And indeed elsewhere: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven. They have therefore become a stumbling block to the peoples, and they do not cease from fighting against the glory of Christ. For this reason He says concerning them: "Woe to the mighty ones. For my anger against my adversaries will not cease, and I will execute judgment on my enemies.

Do you see how He calls them adversaries and indeed also enemies? And He says that the things from the divine wrath will run most of all against them. For it was necessary, it was necessary for them to be punished more greatly, and to give an account to the judge for the destruction of others. Whom it was likely they could have also saved, if they themselves had been willing to think rightly, and to show to all others the path leading to this. The divine John also cried out to them as they were coming to the baptism of repentance: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore vengeance came from God upon the mighty ones; especially, that is, upon the powerful among them, that is, the leaders, their country having been ravaged and handed over to the most noble armies of the

Romans. And the Savior had foretold this to them: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and to the hills, 'Fall on us.'" It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; not because He is harsh and relentless; for He is rather kind and good; but because He is grieved when He is despised, when we especially deprive ourselves of the gifts from Him, although it is possible to take them richly; and to delight in them by choosing to yield to His laws.

And by shaking off the evil and unholy teachers of this life; who also hasten to subvert the orthodoxy of the faith with their own words, and pouring the poison of their own perversity into the souls of the more simple, they turn them aside to having to choose evil things. And I will bring my hand upon you, and I will purge you to purity, but the disobedient I will destroy, and all the proud I will humble; and I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. And after this you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful metropolis, Zion. For her captivity will be saved with judgment, and with mercy. And the lawless and the sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the Lord will be consumed. God brings His hand, as striking; for such is somehow always the posture of those who smite. That the bringing on of the hand will not be entirely unprofitable for them, that is, the assault and trial of terrible things, nor indeed indiscriminately for all the things from wrath will happen, but He will deem the believers worthy of care and sparing, and clearly teaches to bestow on the genuine the grace of being saved at least. For of old, Jerusalem, which fights against God, has committed fornication in many ways by worshiping other gods, and God brought His hand against her, and delivered her as if to some fire, to the calamities of war.

But since the Father sent the Son from heaven as Savior and Redeemer, then she has acted insolently toward Him, and has done things out of utter madness. And she has not ceased from savagely insulting Him with disobedience, although He justifies the impious and frees them from ancient transgressions through faith. So He brought His hand against her again, and like some craftsman, He separated in fire, and all that was most approved and chosen kind of believers in her, this He has kept for Himself, but the counterfeit and unapproved He has delivered to destruction and annihilation. Therefore, just as those who melt either bronze or silver by fire purify the materials; so I, He says, will purify by fire. And it is written that, "The Lord will wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion, and will cleanse the blood from their midst, in a spirit of judgment and in a spirit of burning. And it has also been said through the voice of one of the holy prophets, that "Suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to His temple, and the angel of the covenant whom you desire. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord, and who will endure the day of His coming? Or who will stand in His sight, for He comes as a refiner's fire, and as the fuller's herb, and He will sit refining, like silver and gold. And in another way, the wise Matthew clarifies this for us, saying about Christ:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and

with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Therefore, the wheat is gathered into the barn, but all that is useless, that is, the chaff, He said would be food for fire. And how, if one should choose to learn, the force of what is set forth will make clear. For He said immediately: ”But the disobedient I will destroy, and I will take away all lawless ones from you, and I will humble all the proud. For indeed the multitude of Israel of old has perished, having acted impiously toward Christ and denied the Redeemer; and all the proud and those living lawlessly have been taken away, that is, those who were allotted to lead the Synagogue of the Jews, the chief priests and Pharisees. For how would they not be lawless and arrogant, who have cared little for reverence toward the law, but lift up their horn on high and speak injustice against God? For they have said, ”Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.

But they have been removed from leading the peoples, the holy apostles having been appointed, concerning whom he says, ”I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. And the divine disciples have become in no way inferior to the ancient saints, whom He calls judges, and names counselors. For they have done both, rebuking sinners as judges, and counseling the weak in those things useful for their spiritual well-being. And indeed, the most wise Paul delivered the one who had committed fornication in Corinth to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit might be saved; and he gives good counsels, and says: ”But if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one do not even eat. Concerning the judges or counselors spoken of here, the blessed David also, in the Holy Spirit, said to Jerusalem herself, ”Instead of your fathers, your sons have been born,” that is, Your children have become to you in the rank of fathers; for they were Jews, and the divine disciples were sons of the then-Synagogue. That they have become fathers of those who have believed, hear Paul saying, ”For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel. And again; ”My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

And another of His holy prophets also makes mention to us concerning Christ, the Savior of us all, and of the manifestation of His holy disciples, and says: ”Behold, a righteous king shall reign, and princes shall rule with judgment. For the leaders of the synagogue of the Jews both held to a most lawless life and did not know how to rule with judgment, that is, righteousness. But when Christ reigned over the world under heaven, the divine disciples became righteous and good, and rulers with judgment; and when they were manifested, Zion was again called a city of righteousness, and a faithful metropolis, that is, the Church. And that the burning, or testing, from God did not happen indiscriminately, as I said, but with care and reason accompanied by righteousness, the race that was approved through faith makes clear; he adds, saying, ”For her captivity shall be saved with judgment and with mercy, and the lawless and the sinners shall be crushed together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For the races having already been distinguished, and the one that believed being approved, as I said, while the other certainly had stumbled not a little, the

chosen part was saved, but everything among them that was abominable and hateful, and a companion of folly, and had lived unholily, and had not cared for Christ who knows how to save, and forgives sins and justifies by grace, was destroyed.

Therefore they shall be ashamed of their idols, which they themselves wanted, and they were put to shame for their gardens, which they desired. For they shall be as a terebinth that has cast off its leaves, and as a garden that has no water. I said that in these things the word of the prophet makes a twofold pretext for the rejection of the Jews. For their crimes are twofold. For long ago, having abandoned God, the one and by nature, and the redeemer, they worshipped idols, and offered sacrifices to the host of heaven, and assigning reverence to the works of their own hands, they have been impious in no small measure. But when God the Lord appeared to us, according to the Scriptures, they denied Him also, and have provoked the author of life in no small measure. Therefore the crimes are kindred, and the manner of folly is not unlike the first, but rather is also a cause of greater folly. And they were punished, at least in the times before the advent, by the raids of enemies, the burning of cities, the overthrow of houses ..... For these things were done with God's permission by Persians and Medes, Moabites, and Idumeans, and the neighboring nations. But when, as I said, they were also impious toward Christ himself, they have not come into fewer evils than the more ancient ones.

For they fell into the hands of the Roman armies, who also utterly destroyed all of Judea, with no one defending, that is, able to rescue, and to deliver them from so bitter a calamity. For this reason he says, that "They shall be ashamed of their idols, which they themselves wanted, and they were put to shame for their gardens, which they desired. For occupying groves and thickets, then setting up idols around the tallest of the plants, and erecting altars, they would call upon the falsely named gods as saviors, and on the very works of their own hands they placed all their hope, that of being able to overcome enemies and easily conquer their opponents. But when the enemies arrived, and had done the deeds of enemies, and Israel remained unaided by their own gods, they were ashamed of their idols. For they saw them, even before the others, being burned along with the gardens, that is, the groves, and the very precincts and altars. Therefore they failed of their hope, when they saw those who suffered their own gods, then scarcely understanding what was said by God through the voice of the prophet: "And where are your gods, which you made for yourself? Will they rise up and save you in the time of your affliction? Therefore having suffered the shame over their own gods, which they themselves desired, and indeed over the gardens, they will be as a terebinth that has cast off its leaves, and as a garden that has no water;

that is, both naked and most dishonored, and greatly suffering barrenness, clearly, that is, the spiritual barrenness in good deeds. For the terebinth, or any other of the plants, as long as it is seen with its own lush foliage, it preserves the glory befitting it; but having cast off its leaves, it will be dry and uncomely, and as if dishonored. And a garden again, if it has springs, will be very full of trees, and in the abundance of its fruits it displays its varied charm. But being dry and waterless, it will be in every way barren, but rather it will

also suffer from desolation itself. Dishonored therefore and fruitless has Israel remained. For what fruit of virtue is there in the worshipers of idols? Or how is he not full of all dishonor, who has left the one God by nature, "and says to the wood, 'You are my father'; and to the stone, 'You gave me birth'? And in another way also Israel will be as a terebinth, that has cast off its leaves. For before the coming of our Savior, observing the shadow of the law, they resembled plants, having no fruit indeed, but very beautifully adorned with the sprouting of leaves. But since they have stumbled against Christ, they have also cast off the observance of the shadow itself. For they no longer observe the sacrifices according to the law, nor indeed do they take pride anywhere in their legal boasts;

but observing very few of the ancient customs in their cities, they are fruitless and dishonored; and very rightly so. For they killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. And their strength shall be as a stalk of tow, and their work as sparks of fire, and the lawless and the sinners shall be burned together, and there will be no one to quench it. The wise Solomon has said, that "Each is bound by the cords of his own sins"; and the saying is true. For to each of us our own transgressions bring about destruction, and inflict the punishments from divine wrath. Such a thing have those of Israel suffered. For they made for themselves the falsely-named gods, and in them they had the hope, of being able to prevail over their enemies. But this very thing became for them practically fire and wood. For on account of this transgression they have been given over to fire, and that an unquenchable one, that is, to terrible and unending calamities, with no one to help them. And this he makes clear to us, saying: And their strength shall be as a stalk of tow, and their work as sparks of fire. The power they expected to have, he says, will be as a stalk of tow, that is, food for the fire and kindling, and the works of their hands, as sparks of fire hurled against them.

Therefore the lawless and the sinners shall be burned together. Therefore one must avoid offending God, and doing those things .... for our works themselves, will be for us both fire and food for fire, just as, of course, the boasts from good deeds also are found to be producers of life and glory for those who succeed.

Discourse 2

The word that came from the Lord to Isaiah, son of Amoz, concerning Judea and concerning Jerusalem. The present matters are akin to those that have gone before, and proceed through the same thoughts one might perceive them, by applying a subtle mind to the contemplations of the intellect. For the words of old from God came to the divine prophet concerning Judea and concerning Jerusalem. And it seems somehow to have a certain intermediate and not very clear rendering of the vision, to say "concerning Judea and concerning Jerusalem. Nevertheless, as far as is possible, we shall clarify the power of the vision itself, bringing it to mind somehow, as it were, in brief. For since it attempts to speak of the devastation of the perceptible Judea and Jerusalem, but of the manifestation of the one in Christ and intelligible, and its revelation in this world; for this reason, he says he has seen the vision not on behalf of Judea, nor indeed against Jerusalem, but concerning Judea, and concerning Jerusalem. And we say perceptible Judea, and indeed Jerusalem, is the land itself in which Israel dwelt, and the very system of the Jewish synagogue. But again, we will consider the intelligible Jerusalem, or Judea, to be the Church, that is, the circumcision in the spirit, that is, those in Christ who have the circumcision not made with hands in mind and heart. And so one of the holy prophets proclaimed to the Jews:

Be circumcised to God, and circumcise the hardness of our hearts, you men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem. But the divine Paul knows another Jew, not so much the one according to the flesh, but the one in the spirit. For he writes thus: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God. Therefore one must soberly observe, when the prophet speaks against Jerusalem, or Judea, and when concerning the one in Christ and intelligible, which is also truly perfect and blameless. What then does he say? That in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, and the house of God on the top of the mountains. And it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall come to it. And many nations shall go and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will tell us his way, and we will walk in it. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. For the vision ended for him. And it was the end of the prophecy that had already come.

Because they shall be put to shame for their idols which they themselves wanted, and they were ashamed for their gardens which they themselves desired. And in what manner those of Israel were ashamed for their idols, we have sufficiently said. But since mention has been made of the prophecy concerning them, the prophet, beginning the next and second vision, marks the time, in which not in some part of the earth, nor in one country and city will the power of the devil fall, with the worship of idols and profane fabrication being completely destroyed, but from all under heaven this disease shall be taken away, and the tyranny of unclean demons. And this has also been accomplished for those on earth in the last days, that is, in the final times of the present age, in which the only-begotten Word of God shone forth, being born of a woman. When he also presented to himself the intelligible Judea, or Jerusalem, that is, the Church as a pure virgin, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, according to what is written; but rather holy and blameless. And concerning it he says, that in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, and the house of the God of Jacob on the top of the mountains. And to us, Zion in Judea is said to lie and be built on a mountain. But the Church might be understood in these things not so much perceptibly, but spiritually, which is also likened to a mountain.

For it is truly high and conspicuous, and very well-known to those everywhere. And high in another way; for it thinks nothing of earthly things but is above earthly things, and beholds the glory of God, as is possible, with the eyes of the mind, and boasts in the exceedingly high dogmas concerning him. For the eminent among the Greeks , although a great upon raising their brow in wisdom, they deify creation, and attach reverence to the elements of the world. For they have a base mind, and groveling speculations, and a darkened heart; professing to be wise, they became fools, as it is written. But the spiritual Zion, that is, the Church, flies above all creation, both visible and invisible, and arrives at the very nature that is beyond all things. For it is filled with divine light, and recognizing her as both creator and craftsman of all things, to her and to her alone it assigns power over all. And with such glory it crowns the universal king of all, and God, and Lord. Therefore the house of God might rightly be called a spiritual mountain. And it is conspicuous, as if raised upon hills. And one might very fittingly say of it what was said through the voice of the Savior, as from a clear example: ”A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

And one could collect very many examples, and very easily, through which it is possible to see in the divinely inspired Scriptures, that the stature of the spiritual Jerusalem, that is, the height of the Church, is compared to hills and mountains. But we shall proceed to what follows, leaving it to the lovers of learning to collect such things, if they should choose to do so. Let us see what results in benefit for those on the earth. From the house of God becoming so conspicuous to all everywhere, that it seems now somehow to be exalted upon the hills, and to be set on the tops of the mountains. Therefore, the prophet will immediately give full assurance, saying. ”And all the nations shall come to it; and many nations shall go and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob. And he will declare to us his way, and we will walk in it. That all the nations, therefore, have been gathered, and have run together through faith to the Church, we will not need

long arguments for proof. The outcome of the events itself will be a self-witness and true. But this is worthy of wonder. For the multitude of nations has been called, not through the instruction of the law, not through holy prophets; but rather a certain divine and ineffable grace gathers them, shining spiritually, and implanting the desire for salvation through Christ.

For see how, though no one proclaimed it to them, they call out to one another: ”Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will declare to us his way, and we will walk in it. First they go up, and then they seek for the word of God to be proclaimed to them. And they promise to walk in the way of the Lord, clearly that of the Gospel, which has as its prelude the purification through faith. But in seeking to learn the way of the Lord, they seem to have first accepted the condemnation of that ancient and profane error. For the desire for better things will not be in us otherwise, unless we have first condemned the things of old. Who then has been their mystagogue? Who is it that leads them to the knowledge of truth, and persuades them to consider the former things laughable, and to run to the latter? Is it not clearly God? who also shone, as I said, into their mind and heart, and persuaded them to say and at the same time to think that ”Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. But this bears a twofold meaning within itself. For either they mean this, that we shall receive a word from the house of God, and being there we shall know the word of God;

or that the law has left Zion, and as it were gone out from it, and the Word of God has departed from Jerusalem. For since they have behaved insolently toward Christ, and have denied his kingdom, he has left them and made them orphans. And this was what was said through the prophet: ”And I said, I will not shepherd you; let what is dying die, and what is failing fail, and let the rest each eat the flesh of his neighbor. Therefore, the law went out from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. For vision and prophecy were sealed after the Savior’s cross. And no longer is the law and word of God with them. And so the divine Paul, almost having given up, and seeing the multitude of the Jews to be uncorrectable, says, ”It was necessary that the word of the Lord should be spoken to you; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles; for so the Lord has commanded us. Understand, therefore, how the Gentiles boast in the grace of Christ. For they say that the law and word of the Lord have gone out from Zion and from Jerusalem, and have altogether migrated to them. For grace has passed from those who chose to disobey to those who have been called through faith. And he shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.

And nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Having said beforehand that the power of the devil will fall and come to nothing; and the making of idols will cease as nations exhort one another, crying out, ”Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will announce to us his way, and we will walk in it; he makes clear to his hearers the time when the aforesaid

things will come to pass, and from the very state of affairs he makes it most well-known. For long ago, when the earth was not under one yoke, but the nations were separated by countries and cities, and each had its own ruler, there was segregation and fighting and wars, with those on earth ravaging one another everywhere, and always plundering the things of others, and each considering the greed and savagery against those they could overcome to be the highest glory. Therefore they did not have a safe dwelling, always moving to another, and being driven out from what they had taken by those who were stronger.

But since the God of all brought what is under heaven under the scepters of the Romans, and one kingdom has finally been extended over all, wars have ceased, fighting and discord have stopped, and justice has prevailed, and the security of good order, with no one plundering, no one still ravaging and overrunning cities or countries, no one engaging in greed without rebuke. And not only this, but the use of weapons is given only to the most warlike, and to those who have a military rank, and are under the hand of the emperor. And the many nations that have shaken off the yoke of Roman rule and fiercely attack cities and countries have been proven to be weak. For it is not possible for them to overrun freely, as they might wish. For the Roman arms rise up against them, and force them to be still, and terrify them like beasts, and with their own strength prove them to be unmanly. Therefore the blessed prophet defines, as I said, the time of the calling and conversion of the nations. And what is this time? When, he says, the God of all, and universal king, and Lord shall judge between the nations, that is, he brings justice and judgment to all the nations. For injustice had prevailed, as I just said, with nations plundering one another, and inflicting every kind of savagery and greed.

But since these things have been removed, justice and judgment have been given by God, and many nations, as I said, have been proven vanquished by Roman arms. So that those under the emperor's hand no longer fear the attacks of anyone, and matters have now advanced for them to this point of peace and prosperity together, so that they no longer need experience in warfare, but rather choose and very gladly engage in the works of peace, and to take up the toils of agriculture, and to take thought for the things in the fields; for to this end they reshape the instruments of war, so that even a broadsword is taken up for the use of a plow; and indeed a spear is made into a pruning hook, to completely unlearn war, and to refuse battle with one another. For since Christ, who is peace, has reigned over the nations, all dissension and strife, and battles, and every kind of greed have been removed from their midst; and the harms from war have been taken away, and the terrors from it; and His will has prevailed, as He says to them: "My peace I give to you, my peace I leave to you. And now, O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. For he has forsaken his people, the house of Israel. Having sufficiently alarmed them with the predictions of terrible things, he does not allow those who have stumbled to perish in despair;

but he intimates that God will be merciful to those who choose to repent; and for those willing to unlearn the more shameful things and to strive for the better, He will again widen the path of salvation, and will receive them without remembering their evils, although

they have sinned in very many and unbearable ways. For this reason, he says, skillfully interweaving the word of exhortation with the reproofs: ”And now, O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. And I think it is most fitting for the prophet with this word to urge those of Israel to obey Christ who says: ”While you have the light, walk in the light, that darkness may not overtake you. And He Himself is the light. And indeed He said clearly: ”I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not remain in darkness, but will have the light of life. And His preaching, that is, the Gospel, would be called the light of the Lord, and very rightly so. It is as if he were saying, therefore, Let us live piously, let us honor the splendor of the evangelical life, let us cease from the types, let us end the shadow. Let us reshape the writings of Moses towards the truth, let us receive the saving light.

But since the Jews, boasting in their fathers according to the flesh, were always accustomed to raise a haughty brow, as if they were loved for their sake, being the portion and inheritance of God, and a holy and chosen people; then, speaking foolishly, they thought that in every way and altogether they lay in the care and love of God; even if they did many things hateful to Him; even if they considered the law as nothing; even if they dishonored and rejected the coming of the Savior, that is, the grace of the economy in the flesh; of necessity the prophet shows that the God of all is not so disposed, saying: ”For he has forsaken his people, the house of Israel. Something of this sort the God of all says also through another prophet, casting down the haughtiness of the Jews, and convicting them of being without understanding. For they coveted fields, he says, and plundered orphans, and oppressed households, and exalted themselves against the Lord, saying: ”Is not the Lord among us? No evils shall come upon us. For this reason, on account of us, Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become as a fruit-keeper’s lodge, and the mountain of the house as a grove of the forest.

If therefore you should not choose, he says, to walk with us in the light of the Lord, that is, if you reject the preaching which is through Christ, and turn away from the illumination from Him, He Himself will in every way and entirely forsake His own people. And this is clearly what our Lord Jesus Christ said to them: ”Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is left to you. And indeed also through the voice of Jeremiah, he says, ”I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance. Because their country was filled with divinations as from the beginning, like that of foreigners, and foreign children were born among them. And now the prophet in a way makes a defense for the judgments of God, and gives the reasons why the house of Israel, that is, his people, was very justly forsaken by God. And he recalls, as I said, both old things and and of the new transgressions of Israel, convicting them of being ungodly, and looking much to what is harsh, and going unbridled, towards anything reprehensible, and having much condemnation from the law. For before the advent of our Savior, having little regard for reverence towards God, and having disregarded the commandment given to them through Moses, they were convicted in many ways;

and they did the worst things of all even against the Savior of all, Christ himself. Therefore, it explains at one time the crimes of their madness against the law, and the punishments for this, which they justly demanded, when the Persians and Babylonians, Idumeans, Elamites, and other nations were at war with them at that time; and at another time it accuses the ways of their madness against Christ, and all that happened for them to suffer for this reason, when Vespasian and Titus campaigned against the entire multitude of Judea under their hand. Therefore, the present discourse explains to us the transgressions of the Jewish Synagogue before the advent; for this reason, he says, it was let loose, that is, his people were given by God to their enemies, because they chose again to be sick with the things from the beginning, and to relapse into their first unholiness. For they had served the local gods or demons in Egypt; then they were redeemed through Moses, God having pity on them, and they were freed at once from both spiritual and carnal slavery. For just as they shook off the yoke of the Egyptians' oppression, so also they were freed from the perversity of the demons, no longer serving the falsely-named gods, but rather being instructed by the law through Moses toward the truth, and recognizing the one God, both by nature and in truth. For they heard him legislating and saying in Horeb:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, nor a likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not worship them; for I am the Lord your God. And it is also written in Deuteronomy: "When you enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire. One who practices divination, or an observer of signs, or an augur, a sorcerer, a charmer, a medium, or a necromancer, or one who inquires of the dead. For everyone who does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God. You shall be perfect before your Lord. For these nations, which you are to dispossess, they listen to observers of signs and to diviners. And as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so. And these things, indeed, the law; but since they were easily led astray and far too ready for apostasy, that is, from God, he added to the law, saying: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are going to possess it, and he clears away great nations, and many and strong before you (he says so-and-so, and so-and-so), and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands, and you shall strike them.

You shall utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, nor shall you show mercy to them, nor shall you make marriages with them; you shall not give your daughter to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son; for he will turn your son away from me, and he will serve other gods; and the Lord will be angry with you in his wrath, and he will destroy you quickly. For God devised every kind of security for them, and as the sacred Scripture says, He gave the Law for a help. But they, having shown no regard for such revered commandments, turned irrationally to everything contrary to what was commanded. For they were addicted to omens and false divinations and were eager to seek knowledge of the future from those who sit by the idols, and yet they rebuked the holy prophets and said: "But speak to us, and report to us another error. And they associated

with the daughters of the neighboring nations, although the law had forbidden the practice. And wicked and God-hated women, and having been brought up in the customs of idolatry, they unlawfully brought them into their homes, they have become fathers of foreign children, who were also brought up in the customs of their mothers, pretending not even, so to speak, to know the law through Moses. In this way, he says, that their land was filled from the beginning with omens like those of foreigners, and foreign children were born to them.

It was indeed most absurd, and truly all-shameful, that those who inhabited the holy city, the sons born to them from foreign women, should live according to Greek customs and outside the law. And while God commanded that every male child be circumcised on the eighth day, and saying clearly, ”Three times a year shall all your males appear before me; but they did not do this, but they carried away their offspring to the demons, and in the precincts of idols they performed the sacrifices for them. You see they have trampled the law everywhere. Then how was it consistent for those who had come to such a point of impiety, so as not to even wish to know the redeemer, to be called His people? Therefore the sentence upon them is holy, and the reason for their rejection is not ignoble. ”For the judge of all is impartial. For their land was filled with silver and gold, and there was no number of their treasures; and the land was filled with horses, and there was no number of their chariots. He says that two of the most shameful of all evils were again present in them, namely avarice and pride. And that avarice is the root of all evils, the most wise Paul has clearly testified. And that the matter of arrogance is hateful to God is clear to everyone. For it is written, that ”The Lord opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

What sort of wickedness would one not see present in those who wish to be rich? For such people make their collection of money from usury and excesses, from covetousness and injustice, from plunder and slander. And to wealth is added arrogance, and the extreme readiness for indulgence in outrageous and most abominable pleasures. For where there is luxury, there are always revelries and drunkenness, beds, and licentiousness, and every kind of debauchery. Indeed, who among those accustomed to right thinking would not find hateful the arrogant man who spits on the weaker, who raises a haughty eyebrow, who overlooks those in poverty and cannot bear to suffer with those in hardship, who does not deign to pity those in need and toil, having at last forgotten that he is but dust and ashes? Therefore our virtue-loving God very rightly accuses them, as having an insatiable mind for greed, as riding on horses, and being caught in the snares of ambition. He says that their land was filled with horses, as if not one or two had been sick with pride, but as if their whole land had been seized by the passion, and the evil was spreading to all. However, through this he also rebukes those who have transgressed the law, and have chosen to disobey God, who has spoken clearly: ”And if you enter into the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and you inherit it, and dwell in it, and you say:

I will set a ruler over myself, as also the other nations that are round about me; you shall surely set a ruler over yourself, whom the Lord your God shall choose for himself. Then he says concerning the one who is appointed: ”That he shall not multiply horses for himself,

nor shall he turn back the people to Egypt, so that he may not multiply horses for himself. And in addition to these things: "And he shall not multiply silver and gold for himself exceedingly. Therefore he accuses them as making a collection of money, and this insatiably, and multiplying horses for themselves. And this blame, as is fitting, falls especially on those appointed to lead, for transgressing the commandment—they who, before all others, should have been seen to honor the established ordinances and to rebuke transgressors. And the land was filled with the abominations of the works of their hands, and they worshipped what their fingers had made. And man has bowed down, and a man has been brought low, and I will not forgive them. He again accuses them of spiritual fornication, and of choosing to worship many of the falsely-named gods. He shows that they have come to such a measure of impiety, as to arrive at the end of every evil, and to practice the most complete apostasy from the God who knows all things, who bears all things by his will, and who has brought them into existence.

It seems that in a way he also grieves exceedingly for human nature, which has been utterly insulted. For the God of all has honored man by his own handiwork. For he was not fashioned by a word along with the other creatures, just as for example, "Let there be a firmament, and it was so; but he took dust from the earth and made man, according to the words of the all-wise Moses. And he was made in the image and likeness of God, and has been ordained as a kind of ruler over the things on earth. He has also been honored in addition to this with the spirit of life. For he breathed into his face the breath of life. Therefore "man, being in honor, did not understand," as it is written; for he has served carved images; and, as the prophetic word said, "They worshipped what their fingers had made. And man has bowed down, and a man has been brought low. This is an insult both to God himself, and to human nature. For although it was possible from the beauty of creatures to see their craftsman in proportion; "For his invisible attributes, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood through what has been made," and "his eternal power and divinity; this, then, they have not done; but by assigning reverence to stones, and by worshipping stone, the wretched ones have offended the one who is by nature Lord and God and creator of all.

And they have forgotten, as is likely, that they are also insulting their own nature, if indeed man is better than wood and stones. For this reason, the creator of all, being justly indignant, says: "Man has bowed down, and a man has been brought low, and I will not forgive them. Through this he shows the unalterable nature of his wrath, even if he is stirred up against them for both reasons, as is likely. Because they have both grieved the divine glory, and have rendered their own nature most dishonorable. And that their land is filled with abominations, showing that those caught in the crimes of apostasy are not few, nor indeed easy to count, and that their worship is not one, but each has worshipped what seemed good to him, and a diverse swarm of idols has filled their whole land. And indeed it is said through the voice of Jeremiah, that "According to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah. And according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to burn incense to Baal. The making of idols, then, is wicked and unbearable to God, both of

sensible ones I say, and those according to the mind. For Satan plunders the souls of men, terribly and in many ways, by fantasies in the mind and heart, sometimes even by the fabrication of idols leading them into sins, and carrying them off to shameful and monstrous pleasures.

And now enter into the rocks, and hide yourselves in the earth from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength, when he arises to crush the earth. For the eyes of the Lord are lofty, but man is lowly, and the loftiness of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Since Jerusalem was practicing idolatry, or rather all of Judaea was led astray, and was turning without restraint to everything hated by the virtue-loving God; the war of the Babylonians was in a way poured out over all of Judaea, who, having ravaged everything, killed those who were captured, and carried off women and children to their own land; and being in the rank of captives, they spent long periods of time. However, the attack having been announced beforehand, and being about to happen, such great terror came upon the Jews, and they fell into such agony, that in caves and in the clefts of the mountains they hid— to hide themselves, and to occupy inaccessible places, as every hand of theirs was powerless for resistance against those who were coming.

Therefore, as if terrible things were about to happen at any moment, or rather, had already come within the gates and were in the land itself, he commands them to hide, and all but bury themselves alive in the earth, from the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength, when he arises to shatter the earth, that is, to crush the earth. And that the divine counsels and thoughts are lofty and above all men, and that no one on earth can fight against them, he makes clear by saying: ”For the eyes of the Lord are lofty. For by the eyes of the Lord in these words he means, as it were, his foreknowledge and counsels, and his judgments on each matter. For men, being small in nature and in mind, both deliberate on small things and consider lowly things. But the God of all, being lofty, and conceived in ineffable eminences over all things, has an invincible thought. For no one could bring against it either a counsel or a help capable of averting the consequences of the divine considerations. But he says that the Jews will learn this, although they did not know it before, when the terrible war descends upon them, and every defending hand grows weak, and thought fails, and the discoveries of human counsel, through which they thought they might perhaps be able to escape the disasters of the war.

Therefore experience will show, he says, that man is lowly, and the loftiness of men will be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. As I just said, when all their strength is exposed as feeble, the pre-eminence of the divine power will become most known to those who trust. Terrible, therefore, it is to offend God, and this matter becomes for us the cause of every disaster. But we must not be confident in our own powers, but rather assign the ability to do all things to God, and love to make him our helper, whenever any of the terrible things befalls those who have offended through sin. For the day of the Lord of Sabaoth is upon every insolent and proud person, and upon every high and exalted person; and they will be brought low. And upon every cedar of Lebanon, of the high and

exalted, and upon every oak tree of Bashan; and upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, and upon every high tower, and upon every high wall, and upon every ship of the sea, and upon every sight of beautiful ships; and the loftiness of men will be brought low and will fall, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. The time of the war, and the fulfillment of the wrath upon them, he calls the day of the Lord. For this is the custom of the God-inspired Scripture.

And so, David also signified the very time of our Savior's coming by the name of 'day,' saying thus: "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Therefore he says the time of wrath will be against every insolent and proud person. And he seems to call 'insolent' those who dishonor the divine glory, by not enduring to worship it, but are rather attached to the gods they themselves would fashion; and 'proud' those who despise the divine laws, and have practiced holding the established ordinances as nothing. And so the blessed David said: "The proud have transgressed exceedingly. And since there were very many in Judaea and indeed in Jerusalem, who boasted in abundant wealth, and were not moderately encompassed by superfluities of possessions, and who excelled others, and were fortified by powers, and who had leaped up to no small measure of glory among them, being lifted up on high, and, as it were, puffed up; for this reason he says that the effects of the divine wrath will especially run against them, enigmatically indicating the rank, or measure, of each. For he compares them also to the cedars of Lebanon: "For I saw a wicked man," he says, "highly exalted, and lifting himself up like the cedars of Lebanon; And certainly also to the acorn-bearing trees of Bashan, that is, the oaks in Bashanitis; this is a region in Judea, which is now called Basanaia, the best nurse of plants, having very thick and tall cedars.

And he likens them likewise to hills and mountains, and in addition to high towers and walls. That they will also lose the sources of their wealth along with their country, he adds, saying: "And upon every ship of the sea, and upon every sight of beautiful ships. This is understood in two ways. For when the war had already been announced, and the Babylonians were expected to arrive, the people of Israel, turning their minds from their hope in God, called upon the Egyptians for assistance, and hired Tyre and the neighboring nations. Now all the Tyrians are seafarers, and skilled in the practices of commerce, and they had built their ships with great care. But when the Babylonian came, before reaching the land of the Jews, he plundered the land of the Tyrians. Therefore, the prophetic word says this to us in these things, or perhaps that: For many of those who had reigned over Israel had merchant ships, which brought them things from the country and land of the Indians, and from other countries and cities; from which also their great wealth was gathered; from which they became lofty, equal to cedars and oaks, to mountains and towers. Therefore, that the source of wealth, that is, the profits accruing from commerce and exchange, will also be destroyed along with the proud, it signifies clearly. That the people of Israel hired many for assistance is not unclear, as God says about them through another prophet: "And Ephraim was a silly dove, without a heart:

he called upon Egypt, and he went to the Assyrians. As they go, I will cast my net upon them; I will bring them down as the birds of the heaven. I will chastise them in the hearing of their affliction. Therefore, the judgment of God is hard to escape, against whomever it may come; and it is ignorant and impious not to love to be dependent rather on the hope in him, but to be deluded by empty and foolish reasonings, thinking that even if he should wish to save them, some other person and the concourse of human aid will deliver them, and will ever prevail over his commands. For if he shuts a man in, it says, who will open? It is good therefore to hope in the Lord, rather than to hope in man, according to the voice of the psalmist. And they will hide all the things made by hands, carrying them into the caves, and into the clefts of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength, when he arises to crush the earth. He shows the thought of the Jews to be worthy of laughter, if they hide the gods, and hasten to save the ones being worshipped. And yet how should they not have expected them to be saviors, if they really knew them to be gods?

But they, condemning their own counsels, and testifying to their powerlessness for anything whatsoever, come to the aid of the gods. For they hide them in the caves, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in the holes of the earth, so that the enemies, finding them, might not carry them off together with the vanquished, like captive gods. How then are they still gods who need help from their worshippers, but they are lifeless matter. And as the blessed David says, ”The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the works of men’s hands. Indeed, those who serve them will be sick with the same insensibility as they. For they themselves, having become their artisans and craftsmen, lift them on their shoulders, and go, and worship it, and pray, saying, ”Deliver me, for you are my God. Their heart, therefore, is ashes. and they are deceived. But it would be fitting for those accustomed to piety to bid farewell to the foolishness of those who are deceived, and indeed to cry out that: ”The gods who did not make heaven and earth, let them perish from the earth. And from under this heaven; ”For to us there is one God, the Father, from from whom are all things, and we for him. And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.

In that day a man will cast out his abominations of silver and gold, which he made to worship vain things and bats, to enter into the caverns of the earth, solid rocks, and into the clefts of the rocks, from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his strength, when he rises to break the earth. That they were about to hide the gods made by them and falsely named, no longer overcome by reverence for them, but rather having condemned them as useless and inert matter, he makes clear by adding what he said: ”In that day a man will cast out his abominations, which he made to worship them and the bats. For having set up the handmade things in shrines, they have worshiped them unholily; for they thought they were gods. But when they saw the time of war was at hand, and then there was no way of help for them at all, and being stones and wood they were exposed, and golden and silver-plated matter, which they thought would be saviors and redeemers, they cast them out of the temples, and hid them in caves, sparing rather the material, and no longer honoring them as gods. But that their labor in making idols was also futile and useless, he showed

by saying: ”A man will cast out his abominations which he made to worship them and the bats.

For they themselves have become the creators of their own gods, and the craftsmen of the things they worship, but they have had nothing from them for their benefit. Perhaps, indeed, they built the temples for the bats alone. For such birds or small creatures always frequent the dark places, and fill the things in them with their own filth and foul odor. A man, therefore, will cast out the abominations he made, but where will he cast them? To enter, he says, into the caverns of the solid rock, and into the clefts of the rocks from the face of the fear of the Lord. See, then, how the wretched ones were eager to bury themselves together with their own gods. But they did not see such a God of all. For he was in no way hidden, when they fled from the land of the Egyptians, and Pharaoh followed in pursuit. For he split the sea, and led them through, with unspeakable power, and ineffable commands. And they were saved, walking as on dry land; but the astounded Pharaoh was drowned with his whole army. And indeed when Rabshakeh the general of the Babylonians, having surrounded Jerusalem in a circle, babbled against God, and said he would easily conquer all of Judea; God did not hide, nor did he seek the clefts of the rocks, nor the ravines of the mountains, but Hezekiah prayed, saying:

”Hear, O Lord, look, O Lord, and see the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of the Assyrians has sent to reproach the living God. And immediately he heard God saying: ”I will defend this city, for my own sake, and for my servant David’s sake. And what was the manner of help for those in danger at that time? Marvelous and worthy of God: ”For an angel of the Lord went out, and killed from the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Let them be ashamed, therefore, who worship carved images, who have abandoned the all-powerful God, and worship gods, which they hide before themselves, lest they perish before them, having fallen into the greed of their enemies. Let us say, therefore, according to the voice of the prophet Jeremiah: ”A throne of glory, exalted, our sanctuary, the hope of Israel, O Lord; let all who forsake you be ashamed. Let those who have turned away be written on the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of life. But if it is necessary to say something spiritual to the spiritual, let all who tolerate the idols in their mind, and receive the notions from strange fantasies, know that they will be nests of bats, that is, of unclean spirits. ”For each one is tempted,” he says, ”being drawn away by his own desires, and enticed. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Therefore, we must shun the beginnings of the passions, and let us thrust away the images into the mind, those entering through thoughts alone, knowing what is written; ”If the spirit of the ruler rise up against you, leave not your place; for yielding will pacify great sins. Behold, the Lord, the Lord of Sabaoth, takes away from Judea, and from Jerusalem the strong man, and the strong woman, the strength of bread, and the strength of water, the giant and the mighty man, and the ruler, the warrior and the judge. Having made for us a sufficient narrative, concerning at least their more ancient crimes, he opportunely shifts

again the discourse to their final calamities, which they justly endured for having impiously insulted our Lord Jesus Christ. For the wrath of the Lord was appointed for them, and very rightly; for having killed the prophets, and stoned those who were sent, they did not even show reverence for the Son himself, but attacked him like beasts, and the author of life, as far as it was in their power, they have clothed with death, saying; ”Let us bind the just one, for he is useless to us. Indeed, then, the events of the war were most terrible for them and they have been destroyed in many ways; on one hand by famine and sieges, by fire and sword, on the other by the enslavement of women and children.

And that they have also suffered the loss of the gifts from above and from God, and are deprived of the good things for the mind and soul, he teaches, saying; ”Behold, the Lord of Sabaoth, takes away from Judea and Jerusalem the strong man and the strong woman. And the word for the prophet now is not about bodily strength; for it is foolish to think so; but rather about spiritual strength, and that of the mind and heart, through which we are accustomed to achieve virtue. For the flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to one another; and very many worldly and unclean pleasures confuse the human mind, leading it down to sins. There is need, therefore, of strength from above and from God. For thus one will with difficulty survive, and is crowned for conquering; but he says this has been taken away from the Jews, and the facts themselves will cry out. For what reason is there still among them for achieving virtue? Or who is the one of good repute and practiced in resisting the passions of the flesh, that is, the assaults of improper pleasures? For the mind of all is set forth as it were like a half-boiled beet, according to the voice of the prophet. For he is not able to say; ”I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me. But the strength of bread and the strength of water have been taken away from them;

but again, not of perceptible bread, nor of waters in common use; but rather of that concerning which David says; ”He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of angels. And we say he is mindful of the spiritual waters, concerning which the prophet Isaiah himself somewhere says; ”And you will draw water with gladness from the springs of the Savior. And indeed the Savior himself also; ”Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him, will have in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. But understand precisely the words of the prophet. For he has not said simply that bread and water will be taken away from the Jews, but the strength of bread and the strength of water. And we must understand him as wanting to teach something of this sort. For we, when we encounter the sacred words, and read the divine Scriptures, then understanding them, receive the strength of spiritual bread. ”Not by bread alone,” he says, ”shall man live, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. You will understand similarly also concerning spiritual waters. The Jews, to be sure, still have the bread and the water. For they are busy with the writings of Moses, and they read the law. But since they know nothing, they do not have the strength of the bread, nor indeed the strength of the water.

For the bare letter alone has been given to them, of bread and of water having a reputation, but in no way nourishing them to intellectual well-being. And Paul will testify, writing: ”For to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart, it not being unveiled, because it is taken away in Christ. And in another way, we say that the strength of bread and the strength of water have been taken away from the synagogue of the Jews. And the saying is mystical. For we who have been called to holiness through faith have the bread from heaven, that is, Christ, or rather his body. But if someone should ask what its strength is, we say that it is life-giving. For it gives life to the world. And we likewise approach the grace through holy baptism, which sanctifies us, saying that the strength of water is the putting away of sins, spiritual rebirth, into conformity with Christ himself. And in addition to these things, an entry with confidence into the kingdom of heaven; ”For unless one,” he says, ”is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The Jews, therefore, are deprived of such good things. For the strength of bread is not with them, that is, the life-giving power in Christ. They do not have the strength of water; for unwashed sin has remained with them. They will not enter into the kingdom of heaven, having dishonored Christ who brings them in;

for they did not believe him when he said: ”I am the way, and I am the door. He will likewise take away the giant and the strong man. Then who is the giant? And who is the other? I think, then, that he calls ’giant’ the one who has reached the limit of spiritual strength, and ’strong man’ the one who is a little inferior, and is surpassed by the superiority understood in the former. For to each of us has been given a measure of grace from God. The most wise Paul makes this clear to us, saying: ”I wish that all men were as I myself am; but each of us has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that. And it is also a custom in another way for the divinely inspired Scripture to call the exceedingly strong ’giants’. And indeed God said somewhere concerning those from Babylon who campaigned against the country of the Jews: ”Giants are coming to fulfill my wrath, rejoicing and at the same time insolent. And indeed also the psalmist: ”He will rejoice as a giant to run his course. And there will not be among the Jews a warrior or a judge. For we who by faith have honored the Lord of hosts are strengthened by him, and are made capable of resistance, that is, against the evil and unclean powers.

”For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Whom we resist intellectually, fitted out with the weapons of righteousness, and having the spiritual panoply. Which the divine Paul also mentions, saying: ”Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth. And the rest; ”For our weapons are not carnal, but powerful in God; and though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. But among the Jews, there is no one of this sort anywhere; but without a fight they always, as it were, concede victory to every attacker, and to their own unruly pleasures. Nor would one find among them one who knows how to judge rightly, either in matters lying in the mind, that is, in external and worldly affairs. For into the human mind run both strange and evil reasonings, and a terrible turmoil of unclean desires stirs; but the mind of

the wise and equitable person stands firm, like a judge testing each thing, rejecting what is base, and with an unspoken vote crowning what is useful. And this is entirely unpracticed among the peoples of the Jews. For God who directs us to this is not with them, but not even if they should somehow exercise themselves in some external matters do they know how to approve what is blameless and pleasing to God;

for how could they know the exact purpose of the law, they who to the lawgiver having offended, and for this reason rightly deprived of all understanding, I mean, that which is in the holy Scriptures? And likewise, he says, he will take away in addition to this a prophet, and a diviner, and an elder, and a captain of fifty, and a wonderful counselor, and a wise architect, and a skillful hearer; and I will make youths their rulers, and mockers shall have dominion over them. That prophecy, therefore, has been taken away from the Synagogue of the Jews, no one would doubt, since the matter itself cries it out. For the blessed prophets, who appeared at various times, proclaimed beforehand Christ Jesus. But when that which was foretold was accomplished, and the end of the law and the prophets had come (for God and Lord appeared to us, according to the Scriptures), then they behaved insolently toward him; the grace of prophecy ceased among them. For it was not fitting that those who were fighters against God and insolent, and who had become even slayers of the Lord, and who had their hands full of blood, should be honored with the spirit of prophecy. And the blessed Daniel will testify to these things, saying that vision and prophet have been sealed up. Therefore Israel has become without a share of so brilliant and most glorious a grace; and so ignorant and destitute of a good mind, that there is not among them anyone who is a diviner.

And we say a diviner is one who, as it were, conjectures and correctly infers each of the matters, and where it will eventually arrive, and to what end they will come, discerning it very well. For those who thoughtlessly and from light thoughts proceed to what must be done, miss what is useful, and walking as in darkness, they stumble upon rocks. But those who are precise in understanding, see with a sharp eye the outcomes of matters. And they are admirable, for this reason doing all things with good management. This is the fruit of a good mind, and truly the achievement of the best counsel. And by ”elder” we mean not the one in terms of age (for there are very many among the Jews still even now, who have reached the extreme of old age), but the one in terms of understanding, and who has come to be in perfection of mind. To whom also the blessed John writes, saying: ”I write to you, Fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. Therefore, then, let us understand as elders those who already have a calm mind, and are settled, and are gray in mind, and have practiced using what is firm. And by ”captain of fifty” he means, not necessarily the one appointed over fifty men, but from this one thing, simply the leader. And as one who persuades those who are subject to him to live and conduct their lives in order and rank.

And the Synagogue of the Jews has been afflicted by this also, along with the other things. For while our Savior of all, Christ, was still with them, and calling through faith to eter-

nal life, to the kingdom of heaven, to intimacy with God; there were still among them high priests and leaders, both Scribes and Pharisees. But when the wretched ones killed him, they were scattered to every wind, and have become sojourners and wanderers, and strangers everywhere, no longer having leaders and rulers, just as of old; but like some flock destitute of shepherds, and having no one set over it, and what is even more burdensome, having neither wonderful counselors, such as the prophets of old were, who introduced to them the things for salvation, and advised them when unruly, and skillfully guided them by the hand for whatever was necessary for their benefit. And he threatens to remove from them also a wise architect, and a discerning hearer, and these too are spiritual and God-given gifts, and worthy of all account. For we say a wise architect is one who knows how to build up the Church spiritually, with both right and blameless initiations, and on the one hand tearing down the deceptions of falsely-named knowledge, and on the other hand fortifying the mind of the believers with the doctrines of truth. Such a one was the divine Paul, writing and saying: ”According to the grace given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation; but another builds on it.

But let each one take care how he builds. For no one can lay another foundation than that which is laid, which is Christ. Therefore, there is no wise master builder among the Jews, nor even a discerning hearer, but we consider this one to be he, who has the discernment of spirits, and is able to understand, who it is that speaks in the Spirit of God, and who, in turn, in Beelzebul. For many are the words that have come from many, both having dogmatic explanation, and introducing the memory of seemliness in manners. But the undiscerning and ignorant snatch them indiscriminately, and receive the words unexamined, although they have nothing beneficial, but are much more accustomed to produce harm. But the discerning hearer, like an approved money-changer, accepts what is naturally beneficial, but rejects as a counterfeit coin what is not so. The blessed Paul also says something of this sort: ”Become wise money-changers, test everything, hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil. And indeed another of the holy disciples commands in harmony with these things, saying: ”Brothers, test the spirits, whether they are from God. When all these things have therefore been taken away, I will set, he says, youths as their rulers, and mockers shall rule over them. And again he speaks here of youths not according to the time of their age, but those who have not yet obtained perfection in understanding.

For youth is always foolish, and is unstable towards what is impassive, and is overcome by the best counsel. And in truth, the Jews continue to this day having such leaders, and younger men in their desolation. And mockers in another way, buying with money the right to be called Rabbi, and having obtained the position of leader for the sake of love of gain and the collection of profits. But those of Christ, the Savior of us all, rejecting the disease of hypocrisy, are true worshippers, and do not have a deceptive [alt. fabricated] appearance of virtue from external adornments, but having brought the boasts of piety toward God into the inner mind and heart, they walk on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven, having as their leader our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And the people will fall, man against man, and man against his neighbor. The child will stumble against the elder, and the dishonored

against the honored. The word has foretold to us, that from Judea will be taken away the strength of bread and the strength of water, both giant and strong man, warrior, and judge, and indeed prophet and diviner, and elder, and captain of fifty, and wonderful counselor; and indeed also a wise master builder, and a discerning hearer. Then to what end the matter will turn out for them, and into what sort of harm it will result for them, it makes clear by adding immediately, that "The people will fall, man against man;

that is, they will be in disorder, and will live a life full of confusion. The young not respecting the venerable gray hair of the elder; the one of lower rank no longer deigning to honor his superior; but with no one rebuking, that is, correcting towards what is fitting for each, everything will be in confusion among them, with all good order and knowledge having been removed. For where divine law, the arbiter of what must be done, does not stand over, how or from where could the ability to live in an orderly way come to anyone? For it is as if someone should wish a ship, bereft of both rudders and helmsman, to be carried on a straight and unerring course. Because a man will take hold of his brother, or of one of his father's house, saying: You have a cloak, become our ruler, and let my food be under your care. And answering, he will say on that day: I will not be your ruler, for there is no bread in my house, nor a cloak, I will not be a ruler of this people. The prophetic word signifies to us the magnitude of the misery of the Jews and of their extreme wretchedness. They were reigning, on the one hand, For from time to time in Jerusalem those from the tribe of Judah were both splendid and distinguished, and boasting in wealth, and very well crowned with glories unto the end.

And in another way they were leaders, those from the tribe of Levi according to the order of Aaron. With the high priest presiding, and the priests and Levites ministering, such men were also revered, by those throughout all the land of the Jews. But since they have done what is not lawful, and no manner of impiety toward Christ was unpracticed by them, they slipped from that ancient splendor and renown in wealth and glory, and their affairs came to such a point of commonness and cheapness, that they were completely unable to have a ruler over them who was splendid in their former pre-eminence, nor indeed one having wealth and power, or knowledge of the law. And this very thing he teaches, saying that, "A man will take hold of his brother, or of one of his father's house, saying: You have a cloak, become our ruler, and let my food be under you. For with affairs in confusion, and suffering much disorder, so that they fall upon one another, and there is no honor or respect, for an elder or for the young, that is, for the dishonored or for the glorious; each for himself, he says, will seek a leader, and will choose this one by kinship according to family, scarcely persuading and calling him to mercy. And he will choose him, he says, not as having wealth, but as not being naked, and he will be content to be fed by him and to serve a poor man.

Except even such a one will not seize the leadership, although asking nothing from those who have resolved to be subject. For they seek bread so that they may also be subject, and for the cheapest food they would offer him their servitude in return. What then is the refusal? Poverty, surely. For he will say, he says, "There is no bread in my house, nor a cloak, I

will not be a ruler of this people. Do you see that which was formerly worthy of all account among them, I mean, to lead the many. Sometimes sought by contrivances, and having come to a few, it will indeed be offered to those who are willing. But since the affairs of all are in terrible and helpless poverty, it will also become a thing to be fled from. It is possible therefore for us to see from these events themselves, from what things to what things the affairs of the Jews have changed. For the wretched ones have stumbled against Christ, the one who richly distributes all good things to us, and who crowns with glory those who love him, and with spiritual gifts enriches the souls of the genuine. Because Jerusalem is forsaken, and Judea has fallen, and their tongue is with lawlessness, disobeying the things concerning God. He says that Judea has fallen, just like, of course, a single house. And for what reason does he maintain that it suffered this? And why is it forsaken?

That is, it was left or abandoned, having become without a share in the care from Christ. For they heard him saying clearly: "Behold, your house is left to you. Therefore it has fallen, not having one who raises it up, and who knows how and is able to save. For Christ is the foundation, and upon him we are all built up, living and spiritual stones, and being fitted together, and joined together spiritually into a holy temple, for a dwelling place of God, in the Spirit, and we are laid upon him. And having received him as a foundation, they have an unshaken establishment and position in all good things; but those who do not have him, are very unsound, and easily carried away to anything whatsoever that is amiss. Therefore Judea has fallen, and Jerusalem is also forsaken. Indeed another of the holy prophets proclaimed this beforehand, saying: "The house of Israel has fallen, there will not be one to raise it up. And it has happened that they suffered such things, because in addition to their disobedience, they have had an impious and most lawless tongue. For what is there of shameful things, which we will not find that they have said against the Savior of us all, Christ? a Samaritan and one possessed by a demon, and indeed they called him a glutton and a drunkard, and one born of fornication. Therefore, along with disobedience, their tongue has continued being impious toward Christ. And one might say upon them:

For not unjustly are nets spread for the winged. For they themselves who take part in murder treasure up evils for themselves. But the destruction of lawless men is evil. Because now their glory has been humbled, and the shame of their face has risen up against them, and they have declared and made manifest their sin like that of Sodom. He marks the time of the humbling of the Jews, and says: Now their glory has been humbled, making it fully known that precisely at that time, when their tongue with lawlessness acted impiously against Christ, then also every kind of suffering was brought upon them, and they fell into disrepute. But in what way their tongue acted impiously with disobedience, the prophet himself makes clear to us, passing over other things, but recalling only their final act of impiety. For they were always at odds with Christ, and wounded by the arrows of envy, they plotted against him in many ways. But when they brought him to Pilate, then indeed especially they declared and made manifest their own sin like that of Sodom. For just as the inhabitants of Sodom, wildly sick with unrestrained appetites, and overcome by unnatural pleasures, rushed upon the blessed Lot, demanding the men who had entered into his house

for abuse, with all sense of shame trampled by them and an unbreakable shamelessness henceforth prevailing; in the same way, I think, the Jews also declared their lawlessness, crying out and saying to Pilate concerning Christ: ”Away with him, away with him, crucify him.

He accused this voice of theirs also through one of the prophets, saying: I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance, I have given my beloved soul into the hands of her enemies. My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest, she has lifted up her voice against me, therefore I have hated her. Woe to their soul, for they have devised an evil counsel against themselves, saying: Let us bind the righteous one, for he is unprofitable to us. Therefore they shall eat the fruits of their works. Woe to the lawless, evil will befall him according to the works of his hands. And now the prophet pronounces woe upon the people of the Jews, and gives the reasons for the lamentations over them. For they said, he says, among themselves: Let us bind the righteous one, for he is unprofitable to us. For they did not receive through faith Christ the Savior of all, but they have continued to dishonor him, and they thought in truth that he who came for this purpose would in no way be useful to life, so that all things in us might be made new in him, and he might transfer those of the blood of Israel from a legal way of life to a spiritual one.

Therefore, supposing him to be useful for nothing, they bound him over to death, as far as it was in their power, even if he came back to life again as God, having emptied Hades, and destroyed the power of corruption. For he is life and life-giving. Nevertheless, they counseled against themselves, wanting to bind the righteous one; and they will eat the fruits of their works. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. And those who are gentle in their ways, and have a God-loving mind, will find good fruits from this; but those who are turning away and disobedient, and who fight against the divine glory, will eat the fruits of their works, that is, fire, and justice and punishment and the things that come from wrath. For such evils will certainly follow those who have chosen to fight against God. It is true then that, woe to the lawless, evil will befall him according to the works of his hands; for just as they brought Jesus to Pilate, and to the unruly rages of the soldiers, so also they themselves will be handed over, he says, to the Roman armies. And indeed we will find Ezekiel saying this clearly and through his voice. For it was said to the unholy and Lord-slaying Jerusalem: As you have done, so shall it be to you. Your recompense shall be returned upon your own head.

Discourse 3

My people, your exactors glean you, and your extortioners rule over you. Having most transparently and very clearly explained beforehand that the land of the Jews will suffer the desolation of every good thing, and having declared what will happen to those who have acted insolently toward Christ, he again persuades them beforehand to abstain from their offenses, and with words of gentleness he, so to speak, usefully bewitches them, transferring them to what is better, and teaching them to reject those who have become the causes of all their evils. For I do not think one should be fond of submitting to those who have been appointed to lead, even if they do not attempt to teach any of those things which tend toward profit, nor indeed ... to deem worthy of slander what is believed to have been justly ranked in the portion of wickedness. For the virtue of a teacher is to be able to bring those being instructed to an accurate knowledge of what is beneficial, and to reject as spurious what is by nature harmful, and to command them to shun what is accustomed to do wrong. And those who are in the position of students would be worthy of all praise, if they looked not simply at the opinions of their teachers, but at the nature of the matters themselves, and admire the teachers, if they should be upright and knowledgeable, and proponents of the best things, but censure those whose purpose is not such.

For some pasture flocks of sheep in mountains and glens; but if a pit lies near the livestock, or they see a cliff, the sheep go around it, and do not cast themselves down to death; for they are instructed as if by an inborn law, that they ought to spare their own lives. Then how is it not absurd, if this is seen to prevail among the irrational animals, but among us, although we are rational beings, there is not the knowledge of what is useful and necessary for life. Therefore it is necessary, even if some of those appointed as teachers and leaders should choose to lead us to things to which they ought not, not to be fond of simply enduring it, nor indeed to follow unreflectively what seems good to them, but to test each of the things to be done. O... to proceed to that which is especially of those things accustomed to be beneficial. The leaders of the Jews, therefore, that is, the Scribes and the Pharisees, were clever at collecting revenues of money, and at gathering gifts from the people, first-fruits, tithes, and whatever the law gave as an inheritance to those appointed to serve as priests. And it was their aim, and set forth with all diligence, to persuade the people that it was necessary to keep the law especially in these things indeed; but of the other commandments, there was

not much account at all among them. For this reason indeed the Savior Himself also said to them:

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe dill and mint and cummin. And you have neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith. They were, then, lovers of gain and money, and sometimes they brought bitter judgments upon offenders, so that by terrifying those accused of anything whatsoever, they might persuade them to bring to them even, at times, things beyond their means. For this reason indeed he says to those being wronged by them: "My people, your exactors glean you, and your extortioners rule over you. And by saying 'people,' he still gives Israel to understand, that if they should choose to turn to what seems good to him, they will obtain gentleness and loving-kindness, and they will not fall away completely from their relational intimacy with him. And by saying that the exactors 'glean,' he shows the magnitude of the insatiability and love of gain that is in them. For in the cornfields, some cut the stalk with iron, while others, gathering what falls from the hand of the reaper, leave nothing in the fields. And it is the custom also for those who harvest the vines to do this. "Therefore, he says, your exactors glean you. It is as if he were saying: They have harvested your possessions, and their insatiability does not stop at this. But now they even glean, that is, they lay hands, also upon those who are still left.

Very well indeed, and fittingly for them, he says they are not guides, not teachers, nor anything else of the sort, but he calls them exactors and collectors. He teaches that they lord it over them, not as teachers gently dealing with students, but as harsh and savage masters, compelling them to think what seems good to them, and leading them off to anything whatsoever, and sometimes to things against their will. But the aim of those in Christ was not such. For the divine Peter writes to those called to the episcopate, and who have been allotted to lead the rational flocks, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. But the mystical word knows also other exactors, whom those who wish to live rightly must reject. For the evil and opposing powers all but demand from each one on earth diligence towards what is wicked, and they collect a kind of tax from us, the inclination of the mind toward the passions. And so the sacred word calls blessed those who have not heard the voice of a tax-collector; for those who rise up against the desires of the flesh, and with youthful spirit thrust aside the injuries from sin, and trample on principalities, and conquer the spirits of wickedness, have become stronger than the voice of the tax-collector. It is necessary, therefore, to reject such exactors, and neither to permit the fruit of sin to be harvested in us, nor indeed to be gleaned.

And we will do this, being strengthened through Christ, and sending out from our own mind evil thoughts, shameful desires, and every form of wickedness. My people, those who call you blessed lead you astray, and they confuse the path of your feet. He rouses them again to sobriety, and wants them to be testers of things, not simply to be puffed up toward indifference by fair speeches. For the Pharisees, going around the houses of the Jews, attempted to speak fine words, and they called them a blessed people and the inheritance of God. And

perhaps they proclaimed to them what is said through the voice of Baruch: ”We are blessed, O Israel, for the things that are pleasing to God are known to us. Therefore, in order to draw to themselves the gift-offerings appointed to them by the law, and indeed the tithes, that is, the first-fruits, they made a pretense of speaking fair words, and often wished to be approachable, and they affected a gentle appearance; but for the sake of gains and profits they even taught the people under them to break the law. For our Lord Jesus Christ accused them of invalidating the commandment of God for the sake of their own tradition. Therefore, he says, those who call you blessed lead you astray, and they confuse the path of your feet. For they do not allow you to walk uprightly. But leading you astray, as it were, from the straight path, they bring you down cliffs and into pits.

But the straight and smooth path is fellowship with Christ through faith. And since the guides of the Jews knew that, with the commandment through Moses being abolished, they would be excluded from gains and profits, they confused, as it were, the path of the people’s feet, debasing the word of Christ, and commanding them to adhere to the shadows of the law. For those wretched men dared to say: ”We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where he is from; and again: ”If this man were from God, he would not break the Sabbath. And what is even more impious than these, for to those willing to listen to Christ and to adhere to his words, they unholily said: ”He has a demon and is mad; why do you listen to him? But I think that the spiritual man and the worker of virtue must in another way also strongly reject the thoughts that call him blessed in his mind and heart. For Satan, being terrible at working evil, when he is not able to bring down the successful from their most beloved life and conduct to what seems good to him, he tries to paralyze them in another way. For he praises them as having succeeded, and accepts them as therefore as saints, and he blesses them also as having already become friends of God, and as having ascended to the summit of all virtue.

Then, having engendered in them the passion of arrogance, he prepares them to offend God, and then shakes them down like some plant from its root. For he has not been ignorant that the God of all gives grace to the humble, but opposes the proud. We must therefore reject, as I said, the thoughts that bless us within our mind and heart. For indeed they do not permit us to traverse the straight path, by which one might go very easily to what is pleasing to God. But now the Lord will stand for judgment, and He will make His people stand for judgment. The Lord Himself will come to judgment with the elders of the people, and with their rulers. But why have you set my vineyard on fire? And is the plunder of the poor in your houses? Why do you wrong my people, and shame the faces of the poor? The prophet says that the multitude of the wronged will not be without help, nor indeed destitute of all care, but he strongly affirms that the God of all will rather contend for them. For He will judge on their behalf, he says, against those who glean them and bless them. And He will confound the path of their feet. And He will judge the elders of the people, and moreover the rulers, that is, the leaders. For He redeemed his people from the house of bondage, and delivered them from the wickedness of the rulers, having raised up all creation against them.

And having worked changes of water into blood, striking with hail, with deep and three-day darkness, and with all the others. For it would be long to relate each one. Then having led them through the midst of the sea, He nourished them in the desert. He brought them into the land of promise, having cast out great and most warlike nations like thorns. And this the divine David made clear to us, saying to the savior and redeemer of all: "You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out nations, and planted it. You cleared the way before it; you stretched out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the rivers. For Israel, as the prophet Jeremiah says, became a fruitful vine, and its fruit abounded. But those who were appointed to lead were made into vinedressers; and they wronged the master's vineyard so much that it seemed now to have been entirely burned. For this reason, then, He Himself will bring this charge, saying: But why have you set my vineyard on fire? For those who were expected to render that spiritual and fruitful vine, that is, Israel, more productive, these have brought it to complete desolation, and rendered it dry and useless to the master. It was burned, therefore, by those from whom it was expected to be rich in clusters and heavy with fruit, and beyond all harm. In what way are they said to have burned the spiritual vineyard, how is it not worthwhile to see?

For it was necessary that those who had the teaching profession, and who knew the law that leads to everything whatsoever that is pleasing to God, should, above all others, both live most lawfully themselves, and be greatly adorned with boasts of righteousness, so that their own life might become a type, as it were, and an image of an excellent life for the people under their charge. Then, in addition to this, they were supposed to lead those under their yoke by the instructions of the law to everything whatsoever that is good, and to reprove sinners, and to correct the erring, and to show the way of piety, and to instruct them towards better things, and to persuade them to look to the end of the law, I mean, of course, Christ; "For Christ is the end of the law and the prophets. And Moses spoke about Him through shadow and types, proclaiming beforehand to those of old the solemn and great mystery. But having neglected all these things, they were themselves wicked in their ways, unbridled towards greed, unrestrained in love of gain, considering it of very little account at all to judge rightly; and being accustomed to boast in those very things for which it were better to blush.

The vineyard, therefore, is set on fire, being profited neither by the life of those allotted to lead, nor indeed being instructed by the legal teachings unto an upright and blameless life, that is, unto the knowledge of Christ, and this when he had already shone upon those on the earth, and saying clearly: "I am the light of the world, I am the way, and I am the truth. Let them hear therefore: But why have you set my vineyard on fire, and the plunder of the poor is in your houses? Why do you wrong my people, and shame the faces of the poor? For they would snatch the poor into a way of understanding according to what seemed good to them, and they prepared their faces to be shamed. For just as the guardians of righteousness stand, so to speak, with a bright face full of much boldness in the eyes of God, so we say that the lovers of wickedness have the face of their heart gloomy and unsmiling, full of shame and disgrace. But just as one who instructs unto understanding, and a proponent of the

most excellent things, is a help, so, I think, any one of those appointed as teachers does wrong, if he does not make the one being taught a lover of better things. For he shames, as it were, his face, and being poor in understanding, he practically forces and snatches him away to baser things.

And the leaders of the Jews were also in other ways unjust and rapacious, and shaming the faces of the poor, but favoring the rich, although the law says: Judge a just judgment, and everywhere commanding, You shall not be partial in judgment. Thus says the Lord: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and have walked with outstretched neck, and with winks of their eyes, and in the walking of their feet, at once dragging their tunics, and at once playing with their feet, God will also humble the ruling daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their form in that day. The discourse has previously shown us that for the leaders of the Jews it was a matter of utmost diligence to be rich, and to have a reputation that was conspicuous in this. And they were full of injustices and greed, so that they themselves made splendid processions in the city, and indeed also in the country, riding on horses, and being immoderately puffed up by the outward show of their accustomed bodyguards. For he accused them in the preceding parts, saying: And the land was filled with horses, and there was no number of their chariots; and the land was filled with silver and gold, and there was no number of their treasures. Then it came to pass that the women of the wealthy, living in luxury, sought to be wanton, and with adornments of gold and stones, and to be exceedingly brightened by variegated robes and expensive garments.

For somehow the female sex in excessive prosperity is both ambitious and ostentatious. And she is most pleased to be well-dressed, and indeed also adorned with gold, and raising her eyebrow high, she boasts in the beauty of her body. And for this very reason, the pride of those living with them is often inflated; and some make the extravagance of their wives their own glory. This is perhaps what the illustrious men of the Jews suffered, having neglected piety towards God. For in order that they might always have remaining for them the resources for being rich, with the people bringing what was according to the law, they did not accept the faith in Christ, nor indeed did they want others to believe, shutting the kingdom of God, as it is written, neither entering themselves, nor allowing those who wish to enter. For this reason they have been given over to the Roman armies for desolation, for plunder, and for destruction, together with their wives, and their dearest ones, their homes and wealth. For the things gathered with the greatest diligence have become the property of others; and they themselves are pitiable and wanderers, and are seen in the utmost misery. The discourse therefore runs down the women among them, that is, the daughters, as it were, especially of the rulers, and the more illustrious, who also belonged to the powerful, and says: ”Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and have walked with haughty neck, and with winks of the eyes,” and so on.

But they were exalted not according to virtue, but as in a carnal and most earthly mindset. For it seemed to them, as I said, a great thing to be proud of wealth, and glory, and external adornments, which they collect from stones and gold, and varied apparel. The prophetic

word describes for us in these things both the mindset and the appearance of a pleasure-loving and immodest woman, adorned with resplendent finery, as if showing from one, the arrogance of every woman among them. For they walked, he says, with haughty neck, and with winks of the eyes; and yet for the most well-behaved woman, who honors a life of modesty and decency, shame is most especially dear, and it would be fitting not even to be seen by the eyes of men; but they strayed into both corruption and shamelessness, so as to show off in their processions, and to raise their necks high, and to wink at those who see them, sometimes smiling, and all but promising an encounter to those who see them with their laughter. For the mind of a prostitute is always fickle, and is much loosened toward a readiness for pleasures, and he adds to their accusations of idleness, saying they have committed fornication, at the same time trailing their tunics, and mincing with their feet. And it was likely to suppose that this also contributed to their adornment; but the practice is whorish, and a proof of the utmost abomination.

For where the sound of feet echoes with rhythmic songs, there surely also resounds the clapping of hands, and every kind of shameful practice, and a provocation to impurity for those who see. At that very time, therefore, he says, God will humble the ruling daughters of Zion, and will uncover their form, that is, he will either strip away their adornment, or will make their shame manifest. And this will be, when desolate and stripped of all adornment and clothing, they are caught in the hands of the enemy, as slaves and captives, and full of all misery. And the Lord will take away the glory of their clothing, and of their adornment; and their fringes, and their braided hair, and the crescents, and the pendants, and the ornament of their face, and the composition of the glory of their adornment, and the necklaces, and the bracelets, and the hairnet, and the armlets, and the rings, and the earrings, and the garments bordered with purple, and the garments of purple ground, and the mantles, and those for after the house, and the transparent Laconian garments, and the fine linen, and the hyacinth-colored, and the scarlet, and the fine linen, woven together with gold and hyacinth, and the summer garments for reclining. Saying that on that day their form will be uncovered, he goes through precisely in what way their form will turn out.

For he further persuades that they will be in want and loss of all things that were extravagantly devised, and of that former prosperity and luxury, adding that they will be stripped of every adornment, having lost their fringes, and crescents, and pendants, and the things connected with them. Through which it is possible to see them insatiably disposed to adornments, and to a worldly mindset, or rather now a whorish one. For to women who are good in mind, and friends of modesty, such practices are altogether hateful, and those things by which they might be in an immodest state are to be fled from and hated; but they are rather disposed to be praised for good deeds. But for courtesans who are seen to love whoring and lusting, the mind has turned to the complete opposite, and their zealous pursuits are of a contrary nature. And with all diligence they adorn themselves, and from every quarter gather things useful for this. And it would be fitting for each of such women to hear: She is flighty and profligate. And Solomon also makes mention of such an immodest and haughty

woman, saying: "The woman who is a snare and whose heart is a net, whose hands are bonds; he who is good before God shall be delivered from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. And these things indeed For the present, we will speak about unseemly and wicked women.

But it must be known that through the voice of Ezekiel, God speaks to the Synagogue of the Jews, as to a single woman; whom He also says He adorned with varied ornament. For it is written thus about her: "And I spread my wings over you, and covered your nakedness, and swore to you. And I entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord Adonai, and you became mine, and I washed you with water, and washed the blood from you, and I anointed you with oil; and I clothed you with embroidered garments, and shod you with jacinth, and girded you with fine linen; and I covered you with silk; and I adorned you with ornaments, and put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a crown of glory upon your head. And you were adorned with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work. Therefore, God brightens the soul that is joined to Him with varied ornament, and crowns it in many ways with boasts of virtue. But for those who keep their way of life blameless, and continue in holiness, the things of intelligible seemliness will be in greater increase, and will remain unshaken.

But for those who readily fall into what is improper, and lightly turn aside to the works of wickedness, it will surely happen that they will be in loss of every good thing, and suffer the desolation of what was formerly given. For she will fall into the hands of wicked and unclean lovers, the rulers of this age, and the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness, who indeed especially hunt for virtuous souls. For it is a delicacy for them to destroy them. Just as, for instance, to bird-catchers, the more beautiful of sparrows seems to be a worthy prize. And it is written somewhere also concerning Satan, that his foods are choice. Therefore it is fitting for us to be vigilant and to be courageous with God, and to remember the blessed Paul saying: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. And indeed, in addition to this, approaching God who is all-powerful, we must say in our prayers: "O Lord, in your will you have given strength to beauty. And instead of a sweet smell there will be dust; and instead of a girdle, you will be girded with a rope, and instead of the golden ornament of the head you will have baldness on account of your works; and instead of the purple-bordered tunic, you will gird yourself with sackcloth. And your most handsome son, whom you love, will fall by the sword.

And your mighty men will fall by the sword, and will be humbled, and the repositories of your ornament will mourn, and you will be left alone, and you will be razed to the ground. Not in vain in these things might one think our prophetic word speaks too plainly, but it accurately goes through each of the things that give pleasure to luxurious women, both the kinds of ornament, and their former luxuries themselves. Then, because it will happen in every way and altogether that they will suffer the loss of such very pleasant things, he wishes them to be disposed, as it were, wasting away in grief, and artfully brings them back

to the memory of their prosperity as if they had already suffered it, so that by the expectation of what is to come, and by the fears from it, or rather by the unbearable calamities, having terrified them sharply, he may convert them to seemliness, and persuade them to turn back to what is pleasing to God. It will happen then, he says, that such luxurious women will not only be in deprivation of their ornament, but there will also be, instead of a sweet smell, dust; that is, instead of perfumed houses, long and dusty journeys, as they are carried off into captivity with still delicate feet.

And not only this, but they will also be in a state, and in a condition most dishonorable, so as to be bound with a rope only instead of a golden girdle, and in nakedness of head, that is, baldness, though formerly it was bound up with golden headbands. And he gives them a garment, which is fitting for captives, both coarse and cheap, which he also calls sackcloth, and this for them instead of the of a purple-bordered tunic and of delicate garments. And he adds to these things, that "And your most beautiful son, whom you love, will fall by the sword. For it is the custom of those who capture a city or a country to seize the females from it and, from the bosoms of mothers, to cruelly murder the small and nursing infants, so that their mothers might march on unburdened, and not weighed down by the care of their infants. Therefore, he says that their beloved son will fall by the sword either in this manner, or otherwise while fighting, and having died by the hand of the enemies. And indeed he said that the cases of their adornment would mourn, not as if the perceptible cases were able to mourn, but as one might say a house mourns when no one dwells in it. And he adds to these things, "And you will be left alone, and you will be leveled to the ground," that is, you will be pitiable and cast down, and as it were, lying on the ground.

For such, in a way, is the life of those in captivity and misery, and in harsh and unbearable slavery. Therefore, it is a truly terrible thing to offend God and to despise the beauty in souls. For God removes every adornment from those who have turned too much towards indifference, and it is clear that this is the intelligible adornment, and having shown them to be naked of all virtue, he hands them over to their enemies. Thus we say that some have been given over to a debased mind, and to dishonorable passions. For when the God over all holds us together in spiritual strength, we preserve in ourselves the brilliant beauty of our own nature. But when he withdraws his help, we will be completely naked of every good thing, and having cast off the comeliness of the boasts of virtue, we will be subject to the passions of dishonor, and we will serve our enemies. And seven women shall take hold of one man, saying: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let your name be called upon us, take away our reproach. Having brought the argument to a very good conclusion concerning the women of the Jews who will go from luxury and wealth into captivity, he tries to show that the cities of Judea will be left destitute of men, and there will be a great scarcity of those who were once most warlike. For he said that, "All your mighty men will fall by the sword.

What then is the proof of what I have said? It is very cleverly and gracefully contrived. For indeed, since the law through Moses says to the sons of Israel, "There shall not be among

you a barren or sterile woman; it was considered among the Jews the utmost reproach for a woman not to bear a child, that is, for one of those reckoned among men to be childless. For the blemish of being childless and sterile was immediately rubbed in their faces. And the law was spiritual. For the God of all promised that the spiritual Israel, that is, the mind seeing God, will not be fruitless, nor sterile, but rather fruitful and like a land that is good and excellent. But the Jews understood it carnally, for they were soulish, not having the Spirit. Therefore, he says, there will be such a scarcity of males in the land, since the war consumed the race, that seven women, or many, will take hold of one man and say: "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let your name be called upon us, take away our reproach. Do you see how they fear the reproach of childlessness, and how they greatly shun the name of barren and sterile? For they do not approach seeking the usual things, and what it is customary for women to receive from those who live with them;

for they say they will be sufficient for themselves in this, but they ask only, as I said, for the removal of the reproach. Consider therefore the depth of the argument. For if the one being entreated were rich, the women would not have said: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel. But since they know that those who have been saved from the war and have barely escaped have fallen into extreme poverty, and have great misery, they seek nothing at all from them, but ask only to become mothers of children And the historical account is in these things. But some, I know not how, bring the present matter into a spiritual contemplation, not doing so very correctly; for either they would have been worthy of all praise. For they say that the seven women are the seven spirits; and that the one man is Christ. Then, having given little thought to what is fitting, they say the seven spirits speak thus: Take away our reproach, and we will eat our own bread, and we will wear our own apparel. And yet how is it not better to say, that the seven women are many souls, who also have taken hold of Christ through faith, seeking him as bread and as a garment of salvation, and seeking the fruit from him. For the blessed David said something of this sort concerning Christ, the Savior of all: "He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.

And it is said that a barren woman bore seven, that is, many. For virtues are diverse, and not one rather, but many, of which the God-loving souls are mothers. And in that day God shall shine forth in counsel with glory upon the earth, to exalt and to glorify the remnant of Israel. And the remnant in Zion, and the remnant in Jerusalem shall be; all who were called to life in Jerusalem shall be called holy. Since some were in doubt at what time the things concerning the women of the Jews, that is, of their whole country, foretold through the voice of the prophet, would be, whether before the coming of the Savior, or after it, the force of what is set forth has assured us unerringly, that the prophet indicates to us no other time, than that very one in which, on account of their impiety toward Christ. For the wretched ones have acted outrageously against him, and they have paid the penalty that was most fitting for them, when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. At which time we say the mind of the Jews was brought to such a state of fear, as to say to the mountains: "Cover us, and to the hills: Fall on us. In that day, therefore, he says, that is, at that time

in which the things foretold will come to pass, God will shine forth in counsel, with glory upon the earth, to exalt and glorify the remnant of Israel.

For the Word from God the Father did not consider it robbery to be equal with God; but he planned something deep and ineffable for us. For being in the form and equality of God and the Father, he became like us, and appeared to those on the earth; yet not without glory, even if he became flesh. For he worked things befitting God, and became a performer of signs, which indeed are worthy of all speech and wonder. For having shone forth, he had mercy on Israel, for it has not perished completely. But the remnant has been kept, and has been exalted and glorified, and has been written in the book of life, having shone in holiness. One might see the word of the prophecy as true, as in the first fruits of those saved by the holy apostles, who were also truly exalted, and being made splendid by divine gifts, they have become rich in manifest glory. For they received power over unclean spirits, so as to cast them out. For they healed many who were in sicknesses; but they were also written in the book of life. And so they rejoiced that the demons were subject to them, and Christ met them as they said this, and taught them to rejoice in yet greater things: ”Do not rejoice,” he says, ”that the demons are subject to you; but rejoice rather that your names are written in the heavens. Therefore those from Israel were exalted, as in the portion of the remnant, having been saved;

for they were counted worthy of the honor and grace from Christ; they have been called sons of God; his brothers and friends; they have been made partakers of glory; and they have been deemed worthy of the registration from above and in the heavens, and they have been called citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, the mother of the saints, of which the prophet Isaiah himself makes mention, saying: ”Your eyes shall see Jerusalem: a rich city, tents that shall not be shaken. Because the Lord shall wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion; and shall purge the blood from their midst, with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. The word of the prophet becomes sober again, and at times reveals the coming superfluous cavils of some, and not permitting some to rise up in any way against the judgments of God, he usefully makes a defense beforehand; just as if someone were crying out that; The sons of Israel will be exalted again; and they will be glorified, and they will gain the heavenly registration, although they have acted impiously not moderately, they have killed the prophets, they have stoned those who were sent, and finally they added Christ himself, and their hands have become full of blood. What then does the prophet say? ”The Lord,” he says, ”will wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion, and will cleanse the blood from their midst, with a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning.

For they have admittedly transgressed; but the grace that is through Christ justified all, and granted amnesty even to those who had murdered him. And indeed the divine Peter addressed the crowds of the Jews, saying, at one time, that ”But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And at another time again; ”And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. Repent therefore, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and you

will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; for the promises are for you and for your children. Therefore, he says, the creator and Lord of all, who is great in mercy, who overcomes human faintheartedness with gentleness; who does not desire the death of the one who is dying, as much as that he should turn from his wicked way and live, will wash away the filth of those who have sinned, and will cleanse the blood from their midst with a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning. And we say the spirit of judgment is the verdict brought forth upon us from God with right judgment, that is, righteousness. For thus somewhere the Savior says; "Now is the judgment of this age. For he judged this age and Satan; and he cast out the one as having done wrong; but he has justified those in the world through faith as having been wronged.

And we say the spirit of burning is the grace in holy baptism, which does not come to be in us without the Spirit. For we have been baptized not in mere water, nor have we been sprinkled with the ashes of a heifer for the purity of the flesh alone, as the blessed Paul says, but in the Holy Spirit, and with the divine and intelligible fire, that consumes the filth of the wickedness in us, and melts away the pollution from sin. Another of the holy prophets also foretold to us such an advent of the Savior, saying; "For behold, he enters like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's herb, and he will sit refining as silver and as gold. For concerning the Jews, who have remained liable to the charges of disobedience; "The bellows," he says, "have failed from the fire, the lead has failed, in vain the silversmith refines. Their wickednesses have not been melted down; call them rejected silver, because the Lord has rejected them. But upon us who have believed, the silversmith has not labored in vain, nor indeed have the bellows failed from the fire or the lead, for we have been cleansed by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.

But if one should wish to say that the cleansing by a spirit of burning has happened to the peoples of the Jews, through the calamity of the war and what they have endured (for punishments do cleanse, and to suffer justice from the judge of all at times frees from many transgressions); the saying will in this way also bear the truth. And he will come, and it shall be, every place of Mount Zion, and all that is round about her, a cloud will overshadow by day, and as of smoke, and as of the light of a burning fire by night, with all the glory will be covered. And it will be for a shade from the heat, and for a cover and for a hiding place from hardship and rain. Concerning what, then, does he say, He will come? Whether of the time in which these things will be, or concerning the one who brought himself to emptiness, and came down from heaven to save the human race? It will be fitting therefore the word, even if someone should say that these things were said about the time of his sojourn; or even if one wished it to be about Christ himself. For upon arriving, crowning the sons of the spiritual Zion and of the free Jerusalem with the grace from himself, he declared them blessed, and he became like a protector to them, all but raising up that ancient cloud that long ago overshadowed Israel in the wilderness; for this reason, he says:

And he will come, and every place of mount Zion will be, and everything round about it a cloud will overshadow by day. For in order that those who inhabit the spiritual Zion, that

is, the Church, might escape the scorching heat of the present life, and the trials or fiery tests from temp- tations, Christ, he says, will be a protector like a cloud almost hanging over them; and he himself again drives away the darkness from ignorance and diabolical wickedness, shining into the mind, as a light in darkness, and as the brightness of a fire. And it is written about the sons of Israel, that He led them by a cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire. But those things were types, and images of spiritual things; but the truth is the things through Christ. For he himself is the truth. Having been deemed worthy of his help, they will be in every way and altogether, he says, as in a shadow from the heat, and in a shelter and in a secret place from hardship and rain. And to hard- ship and rains he again compares the brilliance and most vigorous assault of temp- tations. For thus somewhere Christ says: ”Everyone therefore who hears these words and does them, will be likened to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the rivers came, and the winds blew; and they fell upon that house, and it did not fall;

for it was founded upon a rock. And adding that he will be cov- ered with all glory, he gives us to understand that the grace from Christ to those who have believed in him will not be partial, but will be with complete readiness of forbearance towards them. And they will be in the covering and tent of him who is able to save, and who puts away all evil. I will sing now to my beloved a song of the beloved for my vineyard. The first verse of the proposed text would be like a definition and an inscription of what is about to be said. For what the prophet wishes to do, he indicates, saying: I will sing now to my beloved; that is, to Christ. For so God the Father also named him to us, say- ing: ”This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Shall we then, O prophet, listen to your voice? And do the words gush forth as from your thoughts alone? but tell us where the pur- pose of the song looks. Therefore, though it is through me, he says, yet the word is not mine, but is of the beloved; and it is made for my beloved vineyard; or, as the other interpreters say, for his vineyard. But if indeed he should say for my vineyard, he says such things not as if the vine- yard were perhaps his own, but as being one of those who belong to the vineyard.

For we shall find the prophets at times using such expressions about the people of God. For instance, the pro- phet Jeremiah: ”Who will give me in the wilderness a final lodging-place, that I may leave my people, and go away from them? For as being one of the people, he calls those related by blood and race his own people. Therefore the prophet sings to the be- loved, and his song is spoken for the beloved vineyard, that is, of Israel. For it is writ- ten, that ”The vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth is the man of Judah, a beloved new plant. A vineyard came to be for the beloved, on a horn, in a fertile place. And I put a hedge around it, and I trenched it, and I planted a Sorek vine, and I built a tower in its midst, and I dug a winepress in it, and I waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced thorns. Having likened Israel to a vineyard, he persists throughout with the metaphor of the word; ”Therefore a vineyard came to be,” he says, ”for the beloved, on a horn, in a fertile place. They say that the other interpreters were con- tent to say in a fertile place, as if the horn signifies nothing other to us than this very thing. But to some it seems that ”as in a horn” is to be understood as ”in the power of God.

For Israel inherited the land of the promise, having conquered through God those who formerly dwelt in it. Therefore, he says to him, in the forty-third psalm: "In thee we will push down our enemies, and in thy name we will bring to nought them that rise up against us. But the horn is taken in the divine Scripture for strength and for power, and for royal glory. For it is possible to hear the blessed David at one time saying, as from the person of every righteous man: "My horn shall be exalted like the horn of a unicorn; and at another time again concerning Christ: "His horn shall be exalted in glory. For the kingdom of Christ is most glorious. That the land of the promise is fertile, the holy Scripture has testified. For everywhere it calls it a land flowing with milk and honey. And the divine Psalmist also confirms the word, singing and saying about Israel: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Do you see "in a horn" signifying "as in the power of God" in these things? For it was planted after the nations were cast out. But to others it seems that "in a horn" is said, as in a high and elevated place; for such is Sion, situated on a mountain. Having planted the vineyard, therefore, he says, I both put a hedge around it, and dug a trench, and planted a Sorek vine.

And Israel was bound around as with a hedge, both by angelic powers and by helps from above. And besides this, it was staked. And what is this? Those skilled in the cultivation of vineyards, artfully fixing a stake by each, both raise them up high and tie them up from the ground. For thus the fruit from them will be sound and unharmed. Such a thing God of all has also done, having staked, as it were, the spiritual vineyard with the law through Moses, so that, not being cast upon the ground and minding only the things of the flesh, it might not be corrupted in many ways, but might also be able to mind the things above. For the law of God carries away from earthly things, as if holding up high the mind of those being instructed. And that the vineyard is also noble, he makes clear by saying, not simply that any chance vine was planted in the fertile place, but a Sorek, that is, a choice one. But to the Hebrews it seems that both a species of vine, or rather the name of a beautiful and most fruitful one, is signified by Sorek. "And I built, he says, a tower in the midst of it, and dug a winepress in it. For that famous temple was raised in Jerusalem, like a tower and dwelling-place of God, and indeed a winepress was also dug.

And an altar was placed in it, and the Corban, which is the treasury, in which every offering of those who came was collected. But since, he says, I had made the vineyard well-appointed in all respects, I expected it to produce grapes. For I thought, I thought, it would produce nothing else than the noble fruit of the vine; but it produced thorns. Therefore he missed the hope, and was deceived, and Israel brought forth thorns instead of grapes. For he was not a keeper of the law, nor was he adorned with the fruits of gentleness, but he went astray in a foreign manner, and produced thorns, that is, works of fire, or rather, such things as strike those who touch and approach them. And whatever sin may come from us grieves God, and what the thorn is to us, this is a form of wickedness to him. But as the blessed Paul writes: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. And

now, O man of Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, judge between me and my vineyard. What shall I do to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Because I waited for it to produce grapes, and it produced thorns. He attempts to show the...

of the Jews to be completely without excuse. indolent and in addition to this, shamelessness towards the law. For when it was possible for them very easily to go the glorious and reputable path of life in the law, that is, of the commonwealth in Christ, they themselves have honored the crooked one. And indeed, abandoning the ability to bear fruit as something stale, they have become like a certain land, not a nurse of cultivated fruits, but rather wild and thorn-bearing and overgrown with wood. Let the wise among you come, therefore, he says, let them judge between me, the master of the vineyard, and the vines themselves. What good thing, then, was lacking to them that they have become useless? For if any of the necessary things for their benefit was perhaps overlooked by me who planted them, let someone refute me and I will cease. I will withdraw my accusations, and I will not ask for judgment. For what shall I do, he says, that I have not done for it? But since I made it full of useful things and lacking in nothing, it then became thorn-bearing, although I expected to see it flourishing with beautiful fruits. What then will be the verdict from the one who judges? Will he call the vinedresser careless and indolent, or will he rather blame those who, having partaken of my care, have so neglected their own fruitfulness as to bring forth useless wood and a mass of thorns instead of clusters of grapes?

But that his discourse is not about the perceptible thorn, nor indeed of clusters or of the grape, is clear to everyone. For if the vineyard is intelligible, such surely are also the fruits. But now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be for plundering; and I will break down its wall, and it shall be for trampling. And I will let my vineyard go, and it shall not be pruned, nor shall it be dug; and thorns shall come up into it, as into a wasteland. And I will command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it. Not unwonderful, as it seems to me, is the form of the discourse. For almost even while those called to judge are silent, he then decrees for them the judgment between himself and the vineyard, and clearly foretells in what things it will consist. For when nothing useful for its well-being was lacking at all, it was laid waste by its own will. It was necessary, therefore, that those who had descended to this point of worthlessness should then be outside the hand and care, and indeed also the help of the Master. Therefore I will take away, he says, its hedge, and it shall be for plundering, and I will break down its wall, and it shall be for trampling.

And a vineyard bare of hedge and wall will certainly be set before those who wish to plunder as a most ready feast and a path for passers-by, with no one to keep them out. For when God hedges us about, and almost builds a wall around us with certain ineffable aids, we shall not be accessible and in the order of a path to the unclean spirits; nor indeed ready for plundering by the beasts of the field, and a delight for foxes. Concerning which it is written also in the Song of Songs: ”Catch for us the little foxes that destroy the vineyards. And some are said to have become portions for foxes. And when God gives way to those who wish to

do wrong, and divests us of the care from above, we shall come to the trial of every evil; and anyone whatsoever will revel in what is ours, even if it be some intelligible robber, or if it be the law that rages in the members of the flesh; and every movement of our mind will bear fruit for Satan. Therefore a vineyard without a hedge, and indeed unwalled, will be given up to those who wish for plundering. And it shall not be pruned, nor shall it be dug, that is, it will receive no care capable of correcting and restoring it to the better, and of delivering it from so terrible a wasteland.

For I will also command the intelligible clouds, that is, the holy prophets, or the angelic powers, that they rain no rain upon it; it is clear that this is the intelligible rain, which is wrought as an exhortation to the mind and heart, and by the divine word. However, from this it is especially possible to see that the prophetic word says to us that such things would not happen to the sons of Israel before the times of the visitation, but when they have behaved outrageously towards Christ. For it is not, it is not possible to say, that is, to point out a time, in which Israel was without holy prophets. For they became captives at times, and departed to the land of the Persians and Medes together with their wives and dearest ones. But they did not descend into Egypt without holy prophets, when at times the Babylonians had captured the renowned Jerusalem, but the prophet Jeremiah was with them, ministering the words from above and from God. But since they have behaved outrageously towards Christ, they have remained destitute of a fence, and all their security has fallen. For this, I think, is what is meant by saying that his wall is pulled down. And every word of the holy prophets to them has ceased, and has been held back, as it were, like rain; and the voices of the saints have died away; and this, I think, is what was said to them by God through one of them:

”Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will bring a famine upon the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. And they will run about from the East even to the West seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it. And these things, as I said, have happened to those of Israel, and very rightly so. For they themselves rejected the Lord of hosts, who waters souls and hearts spiritually, and makes them fat with spiritual dews; of which the blessed David also made mention, saying: ”Like the dew of Hermon that descends upon the mountains of Sion. But a new vineyard has been raised up instead of that one, that of those called through faith to sanctification. And concerning them the Bridegroom from heaven, that is, Christ, says: The vines are in blossom, they have given forth their fragrance. And he himself is the first and all-holy and true vine. And we are attached to him like branches, being filled with the life-giving richness from him. And so he said clearly: ”I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. But since we have been joined to him through intimacy, clearly spiritual, we have been made fruitful; and to this he strengthens us, saying:

”Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. Therefore I say that it is necessary to be firmly attached through faith and love and obedience in all things to the true vine, that is, to Christ. For he will make us fruitful, he will place a fence around, and raise up the wall, and will turn away those who pass through. And somewhere a sacred oracle says to him: ”And your eternal ruins will be rebuilt, and a memorial for generations of generations, and you will be called the builder of fences, and you will restore the paths between. For the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth is the house of Israel, and the man of Judah, a beloved new plant. I waited for it to produce justice, but it produced iniquity; and not righteousness, but a cry. He has shown clearly in these things that his discourse was not about a perceptible vineyard, but about an intelligible one. For the divinely-inspired Scripture always somehow takes the visible things of its examples as an indication of more hidden and intelligible matters. For the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth, he says, and the beloved new plant, is the house of Israel, and the man of Judah.

But although deemed worthy of my forbearance and love, and having enjoyed every care, it did not become rich in clusters, not a noble vine, it did not honor the law, nor did it live a gentle and holy life; but it belied, as it were, the hope of the husbandman. For I expected justice. that is, the right and blameless choice, or judgment, from a sincere mind in all practical matters. But he, it says, has produced lawlessness. And yet how could a vine bear thorns? Therefore he lied, just as I said a moment ago. For from where it was fitting for the fruits of righteousness to grow, from there an unexpected life has come forth, which is both outside the sacred laws and holds the divine commandment in contempt. Therefore it produced lawlessness, and not righteousness, but a cry. And he says ”a cry,” I think, showing that their life has become agitated into rages and full of tumult. Wherefore also the divine Paul commands the sanctified, saying: ”Let all clamor, and wrath, and anger, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice. For it would be fitting, not for those who have a stable mind, to use disorderly cries, but rather for those whose life is not secure; or rather, for those easily turned to any evil whatsoever, and governed by anger rather than by understanding. And it seems also to allude to the very harsh cry of the Jews, which they made against Christ himself.

For when Pilate reproached them, asking if they indeed wished to crucify their own king, they, having spared neither decorum nor love of God, cried out: ”Away with him, away with him, crucify him! We have no king but Caesar. An evil cry, therefore, is the fruit of the synagogue of the Jews, on account of which it has been deprived of its fence, and wall, and the watering from the holy clouds. And they have been deprived of all care. For he said, that I will let my vineyard go, and it shall not be pruned, nor shall it be dug. And it became entirely desolate, having brought forth thorns, which are fuel for the flame. Woe to those who join house to house, and bring field near to field, that they might take something from their neighbor. Will you dwell alone upon the earth? For these things have been heard in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. So that no one might think he has spoken against Israel in vain

and rashly slandered the vine, as having produced not grapes at all, but rather thorns, that is, instead of judgment, or rather just judgments, lawlessness, and instead of righteousness, a cry; he usefully enumerates the things for which it was fitting to see it condemned, not moderately, and not for ordinary things simply, but for the most exceedingly lawless things, and those that are especially hated by the virtue-loving God. For this reason he says:

"Woe to those who join house to house, and bring field near to field, that they might take something from their neighbor. For it is generally characteristic of those who wish to be rich, and indeed have also obtained the power for this, to always want to add still more to what has already been acquired, and to make their substance appear in unceasing accumulations. And so they continually encroach upon their borderers and neighbors; and striving to make their houses in the cities more spacious, they overpower the owners of the bordering lands, and join them to their own. For a rich man is an insatiable thing, if the power to easily achieve whatever he wishes should somehow be his. For he in no way ceases from encroaching on his neighbor's property; and he always thirsts for what is not yet present, and covets what has not yet been acquired. Woe, therefore, he says, to those who wish to join their own houses to others', and fields to fields, that they might take something from their neighbor. For they are somehow always eager to make a pretext for the need to be greedy, that others ought not to be their neighbors; then they overpower the weaker, and unrighteously take advantage of them as they sometimes lament and cry out against the coarseness that is in them. What then does the prophetic word say to them? Will you dwell alone upon the earth?

For do you think, he says, that you alone exist upon the earth, with God not watching over and observing what is done? And yet the Master of all is very near; the things from you have been heard. And in what way? perhaps you will say. Clearly, from the crying out of the wronged. Something of this kind the Savior's disciple has also written to us: "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. And in addition to this he says: "Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields. Which you kept back by fraud, will cry out, and the cries of the harvesters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth have entered. For the all-holy and evil-hating nature receives very readily the cries of those who are taken advantage of. That he is not far from those on the earth, he himself will confirm by saying: "I am a God who draws near, says the Lord, and not a God from afar. Let them hear, therefore, who wish to be greedy, and to do violence, and to plunder their brothers: Will you dwell alone upon the earth? For the God of all is present. But it must be known that, although likely in a very witty manner, the prophet hints to us in these things: For, O rich men, he says, why do you seize the things of your neighbor, and hate him who is near?

It will certainly happen that you will indeed dwell in the land alone, with all others being driven out. Therefore you will render the land desolate of its inhabitants. It is best and wise, therefore, to be content only with what is measured for self-sufficiency. For a small portion with the fear of the Lord is better than great revenues with injustice. And if indeed we must say something taken from the sacred writings, a certain king of Israel in Samaria at one

time, who indeed also built a most costly house for himself, falls from it and is immediately destroyed. But God, rebuking him as one who had acted in vain, says: You have built for yourself a well-proportioned house, airy upper rooms, spaced with windows, paneled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shall you reign, because you are incensed against your father Ahaz? It was better for you to practice judgment and good righteousness. "For treasures will not profit the lawless," as it is written: "but righteousness delivers from death. For if many houses are built, the great and beautiful ones will be for desolation; and there will be no one dwelling in them. For where ten yoke of oxen work, it will produce one jar; and he who sows six artabas will produce three measures. For it was admittedly heard, he says, in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, the charges of the more powerful concerning greed against others.

Why then has he been silent, has he let it pass in quiet, and put a bridle on his wrath? Not at all, he says. And a clear proof of this is that he renders futile the effort of those who covet others' things. For what is the benefit of joining house to house, and of building hearths splendidly and lavishly, if there will be no one, he says, to dwell in them, as the war has consumed small and great? And what is the use of the broadest fields to them, when God does not allow them to be fruitful, because of the greed of those who acquired, or rather seized, them? For there will be, there will be such a barrenness in the fields, that twenty calves, or ten yoke toiling in the vineyards, will with difficulty produce one jar; and when six measures have been sown, to see a yield of fruits at half the sowing of the seeds. But, I think, for the labor of ten yoke of oxen, a great deal of vineyard land and likewise very many arable lots would suffice. Therefore the possession is useless, and the labor of being greedy is in vain, if no one will inhabit the houses in the cities. Nor indeed will the things in the fields be fruitful, as God destroys them, and reproves the injustice of the insatiable. But since each of us also has in his own soul an intellectual field, and works the seed of righteousness, let us be careful not to offend God.

For then, then, like a safe and well-founded house, we shall inhabit manifold and various virtue, and we shall abound with grain like the valleys; and the God of all will bless our seed, and will increase the fruits of our righteousness, as the divine Paul says. Woe to those who rise early in the morning, and pursue strong drink, who stay late; for the wine will consume them. For with lyre and psaltery and drums, they drink wine, and flutes, but they do not look upon the works of the Lord, and do not consider the works of his hands. He connects to the first things other very grievous accusations against the rich. For it will be their lot, in addition to wishing to be greedy and insatiably doing violence to the weaker, also to be given to drinking to love, and to rejoice in luxury, and in unceasing revelries and drunkenness, and to be defiled by the evils that come from the love of the flesh; and to think that they must do this continuously at every opportunity. For wealth is sufficient to sharpen one for luxury, and to destroy the satiety from it. But "he who sows to the flesh," as Paul says, "will from the flesh reap corruption. For the end of temporary luxury will be long and perpetual weeping, and of carnal pleasure, destruction is the fruit. Therefore the prophet

writes to us of the arrogance of the Jews, and their fading into luxury, and their dissipation into debauchery.

For, he says, allotting all their time to gluttony, in the morning they seek strong drink, and they extend their drinking bouts with the course of the sun, and continue until the evening itself. For wine will burn them. For admittedly, wine, when drunk to excess, causes a certain burning in the bowels. But it will burn the lovers of drunkenness in another way too, for it will be for them an occasion for Him who punishes. And they will be utterly and completely burned, being sent into the eternal flames, which have been prepared for the devil and his angels. For this reason also the drunkard, along with the other profane ones, will be disinherited by God, and will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. For see how great the fading of the Jews has been at times toward the need for luxury. For where there is the sound of the lyre, and the sound of drums, and the concord of flutes, with good rhythm and applause, there certainly is also every kind of impurity, and the things done in secret by them, which it is shameful even to speak of. But this harms them: that they cannot behold the glory of God, nor gaze upon His works. For just as the eye of the body, whether from dust getting into it, or discharge being poured in, or a wound bothering it, cannot see clearly;

so also the human mind, if it should be fattened by the luxuries of the flesh, cannot look up to God, nor indeed fix its sight accurately on the things done by Him; through which it is possible, and very clearly, to be able to understand who and how great the Creator is. For He is known from the beauty of created things; and one who gives his wonder to the things made by Him would marvel at Him very richly. For as the blessed Paul writes: ”For his invisible attributes, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, both His eternal power and divinity. It is likely indeed that the prophet accuses the Jews as loving drinking bouts, and gathering very eagerly for luxuries; but not yet also having in mind, that is, to look at the future, that is, the things that will happen to them as from divine wrath, which he also calls the works of the hands of God. For He makes peace for those who love Him, and creates evils for those who provoke Him. For if they saw the works of the Lord that were to be against them, they would not have endured drink, but tears would have been their concern, and lamentation a friend, and toils and prayers, and the works of repentance, more pleasant than the evils of debauchery. Therefore my people became captive, because they did not know the Lord. And a multitude became dead, through famine and thirst for water.

And Hades enlarged its soul, and opened its mouth, so as not to cease. And there shall go down the glorious, and the great, and the rich, and her pestilent ones. And a person shall be humbled, and a man shall be dishonored. And the lofty eyes shall be humbled, and the Lord Sabaoth shall be exalted, and God the holy one shall be glorified in justice. That for those who wish to live in luxury the matter ends in destruction and arrives at the very last of evils, the divine word teaches us in these things. For since those of the land of the Jews, more distinguished than the others, having abandoned as unprofitable the need

to scrutinize the works of God, and to look upon the works of His hands, having practiced considering it as nothing, they occupied themselves with perpetual revelries, and wished to get drunk most dissolutely, being accompanied by flutes, and doing this all day long; they will be gone some will be captives and will serve their enemies, and there will be such a multitude of dead throughout the whole land, having perished by famine and thirst, that Hades, as it were, indulges himself with a wide and insatiable mouth, greedily gulping down those who descend, and shutting them up in his own treasuries. For when you hear of the soul of Hades being enlarged, you must think that he wishes to indicate nothing other than what I just said.

For the divinely-inspired Scripture sometimes uses names tropically, and as if by metaphor, even for those things that do not have a soul, nor are numbered among the living, or are not even these in truth. For what soul does Hades have? But Hades is rather a place, and a grim prison of miserable souls. Therefore the souls of those who live luxuriously in this life will depart to Hades, and will fill up his soul, as it were. And the divine psalmist hints at something like this to us, speaking, I think, about every soul that loves pleasure and loves sin: He shall go to the generation of his fathers; he shall never see light. For just as holy Scripture says that the saints, when they depart from our affairs, are gathered to their fathers; for it is said somewhere to the blessed Abraham: ”And you shall be gathered to your fathers, having been cherished in a good old age; so also we say that those who die in their sins will run away to the generation of their fathers, saying that their fathers are those who live a life of the same kind and in all respects equal and similar. And if it be said that there is a multitude of dead, because of famine and thirst for water, we say that which Josephus wrote, who recounted in tragic detail in his work the magnitude of the calamity of the Jews;

that when Jerusalem was besieged, women ate the infants they had borne, and were overcome by famine and the necessity for anything that would yield to the teeth. And that this happened not only in Jerusalem, but also in the other cities of Judea, how or from where could anyone doubt? Therefore very many were consumed by the war, and fell by swords; but of those who thus perished, the savagery of famine destroyed more. And if one should say that there was also a scarcity of spiritual waters, and of divine food for the impious Jews; and that they perished in this way, and as it were reached Hades, because they were not made alive through Christ, in the likeness of those who believed in him; he would not be wrong. For it happened that they suffered this also. But who might be thought to be the ones descending, for whom Hades himself widens his own soul, and will open his insatiable mouth, he adds, saying: The glorious and the great, and the rich, and her pests. For since they were the leaders throughout the whole land and the more distinguished, it was fitting that the subject people be well instructed through them; but they did not do this. But they became like types and a pattern for the others of the accursed life, and a holy oracle says somewhere to them: ”For you have become a snare on the watchtower, and like a net spread upon Itabyrion, which those who hunt the prey have fixed.

You see how they have become a snare and a trap for the rest, because the subject people are always wont to follow both the clemency and certainly the negligence of their leaders. Therefore, as being the cause, for themselves and for all the others, of the necessity of their perishing, they will be the first to descend and will advance into Hades, the divine wrath in a way leaping upon them even before the others. But they will be punished not because they became rich and glorious, but because they were pests, that is, corruptors and destroyers, both of themselves, as I said, and of the common multitude. But those who are puffed up with pride, he says, will be humbled and dishonored. For whom does the terror of death not humble? Or what eye that is lifted up and looks upward does a terrible and unbearable calamity not put to sleep? And when all these things have happened, he says, the Lord of Sabaoth will be exalted, in that day, that is, at that time, when the things foretold concerning them will come to an end. But the Lord of Sabaoth alone is exalted in judgment, and in righteousness, having punished with a right and holy vote the boastful people, the disobedient and pleasure-loving. Therefore we must avoid luxuries, and let us hasten to put as far away as possible the unprofitable loves of the flesh, or rather, the most abominable, so that insatiable Hades may not revel over us too. For we remember the Savior saying:

"Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. And again, that "Blessed are you who mourn now, for you will laugh; for the labor will end in refreshment, and the end of good toils will be for us a cause of eternal luxury. "For he who sows to his flesh will from the flesh reap corruption," as it is written; "but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And the plundered will graze like bulls, and lambs will eat the desolate places of the captive. When the land of the Jews was still established and at the height of its prosperity, the neighboring nations fought against those of the blood of Israel. But since the God of all was the one shielding Israel, he so prevailed over those who opposed them as to conquer without a fight, and to terrify all, and to plunder their lands, and to ravage their cities, and to take and carry off the possessions of others with authority. But since they have acted impiously against Christ, and have been given over to the Roman armies for destruction and plunder, their cities were burned, and all their possessions were plundered by the conquerors. Then, when the Roman army yielded a little, those who were formerly plundered overran them, searching cities and houses, and they gathered the rest, and carried it off to their own lands. And the God of all indicates something of this sort to us, saying through the voice of a prophet:

"Glean, glean like a vine the remnant of Israel; return like the grape-gatherer to his basket. That it will not be enough, therefore, for them to suffer only the things from the Roman army, but that the things from the cruelty of neighboring enemies will be added, he foretells, saying: "And the plundered will graze like bulls. For those who were formerly, he says, readily plundered by them, because God defended them, will graze upon their land like bulls, that is, terrible and arrogant, and having an invincible resistance. And lambs will eat the desolate places of the captive. By 'captive,' he means 'the besieged.' Therefore, he says, the desolate cities of the besieged will be grazed by lambs, that is, again, those from the nations. Since again he has made the argument to us as about bulls, he has remained

with the figure, and has added lambs, so that we may understand the very strong as calves. But those who are not so, but are inferior in lesser strength, we call lambs. So indeed also the wicked and unclean powers will graze upon the heart of each of the indolent, like calves and lambs. And their food is the love of pleasure, and the inclination of a mind looking toward sin.

Discourse 4

Woe to those who draw sins to themselves as with a long rope and iniquities as with the strap of a heifer's yoke, who say: Let what he will do quickly draw near, that we may see, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come, that we may know. The creator and Lord of all, conquering the weakness of human nature with gentleness, spoke to the ancients through the holy prophets, the things by which it was likely for them to change to the better, having left behind the worse, and to cease from wickedness and sin, and rather to live in virtue, and to choose to do what is good. And for this reason, at one time he set before them the rewards prepared for the saints; at another time he described the modes of punishment, those befitting lovers of sin, so that from all sides he might drive them for what is profitable. But there was no way capable of pushing away the worthlessness of the Jews. For having turned aside to greed and luxury, and already suffering from the utmost despair against God, they terribly attacked the holy prophets. And some, completely disbelieving the things spoken through them, would say: "Speak other things to us, and announce another delusion; while others, all but accusing the long-suffering of the divine nature, laughing at one another as was likely, would say: But the days are far off, every vision has perished. And so God said somewhere to the blessed Ezekiel:

"Son of man, behold the provoking house of Israel, they say, saying: The vision which this man sees is for many days, and he prophesies of distant times. Therefore say to them: Thus says the Lord Adonai: None of my words which I shall speak will be prolonged any more; for I will speak a word, and I will do it, says the Lord Adonai. But others again, all but despairing of their own salvation and life, grew bold in their anger, and indeed would say: Let the time of war come quickly; those wishing to ravage will not find us to be unmanly or fearful of noise. We too are experienced in war, and know tactics well. He rightly declares wretched those who have thought these things, and says: "Woe to those who draw their sins as with a long rope, and their iniquities as with the strap of a heifer's yoke. And by sins and iniquities in these words he means the punishments or chastisements for sins, which are still far off, and not yet near, because God still wishes to be long-suffering, but which are in a way drawn by them, through their wishing to fall into the stirrings of divine wrath. And I think we can most fittingly and truly say to each of such persons: "Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation and righteous judgment of God. For they draw, as I said, the time of punishment upon themselves, perhaps being vexed that He is about to punish them, and did not inflict punishments on them unrestrainedly as they were sinning. They draw, therefore, their sins as with a long rope, and their iniquities as with the strap of a heifer's yoke. For just as, bringing heifers, that is, oxen, under the yoke, they sometimes draw them with great force, and bind them for toils; in the same way, I think, those men also, bringing themselves under the things that are about to happen from divine wrath, would say: "Let what he will do draw near with speed, that we may see, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come, that we may know. Another of the holy prophets also declares wretched those who say this and think thus, saying: Woe to those who desire the day of the Lord; for it is darkness, and not light, and gloom having no brightness in it. Therefore it is necessary, upon learning that God is grieved, to repent immediately, and to appease him rather with unceasing prayers, not to provoke him further when he is moved; nor indeed to despise him when he threatens; for he is long-suffering, and full of mercy, taking away iniquities, and passing over injustices;

and is sometimes moved by the small tears of sinners to that calmness most dear to him. Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. Through these words he also convicts as being utterly foolish those who draw their sins as with a long rope. For it is necessary to deem worthy of all praise the need to repent, and through all gentleness to deliver themselves from the impending wrath, and with fastings to make their defense to the grieved God who rules over all; they have become unapproved money-changers, honoring the more shameful things, but debasing what is incomparably better, and what is most profitable for salvation for them. Therefore, woe is fitting for those who have thought thus. For they have become impious and foolish judges against themselves. For by saying that evil is good, counting darkness as light, and affirming that the bitter is sweet, and the sweet bitter, they chose to suffer the calamities of war, although it was easy to get out of the evil, but having thrust aside even the illumination through Christ, they have remained in darkness. And what does the prophet say? "They that waited for light, it became darkness unto them; waiting for brightness they walked in darkness.

And they have slipped into such ill counsel and savagery of mind, that even when the gentleness of God and the sweet hope from it was set before them for enjoyment, they themselves rather chose the bitterness of being punished, and to be worn out by such terrible evils. He says they have suffered this because they have become wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. It is true that, according to the voice of the writer of Proverbs, "Unreproved wisdom goes astray. It is burdensome and harmful for those who are accustomed to do this to love being self-willed, and to attribute to their own judgment alone the appearance of knowing what is beneficial. Thus also Holy Scripture says: But the conceited and contemptuous, arrogant man will accomplish nothing. The teachers of the Jews, having

this sickness in their mind and heart, did not accept the counsels from the Savior. For they were, they were, not prudent in the sight of the Lord, but rather in their own sight, being supercilious and high-minded because of their knowledge of the divine laws, but having understood nothing at all. For they were blind guides of the blind, according to the voice of the Savior himself. Woe to them that are mighty among you, that drink wine, and the rulers who mix strong drink; who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the justice of the just.

The more powerful and more renowned of the Jewish synagogue, who had pre-eminence over others in the knowledge of the divine laws, and who made the judgments among them, were greatly slandered for stretching out an insatiable hand to bribery, and for easily selling their vote to those wishing to wrong their brothers; although the law says clearly: ”Judge a just judgment. That what I say is true, the prophet Habakkuk will confirm, saying: ”How long, O Lord, shall I cry, and you will not hear? I will cry out to you being wronged, and you will not save? Why have you shown me toils and troubles, to look upon misery and impiety? Judgment has become before me, and the judge takes a bribe. Therefore the law is scattered, and judgment is not brought to completion, because the wicked oppresses the just. For this reason judgment will go forth perverted. And somewhere the divine Isaiah himself says to Jerusalem, that is, to Zion: ”Your rulers are disobedient, companions of thieves, loving bribes, pursuing a reward; not judging for the orphans, and not paying attention to the judgment of the widow. And they did these things, being overcome by shameful gains; and perhaps they were unholily collecting contributions for drinking parties and luxuries, and gathering them from injustices. For he accuses them through the voice of a prophet, saying: And binding their garments with ropes, they made hangings adjoining the altar, and drank wine from extortions in the house of their God.

Woe, therefore, he says, to the powerful and mighty, to those who elaborately prepare strong drink, to the lovers of drink, and who love drunkenness, to those who take away the justice of the just, that is, to those who condemn the wronged, but render a just verdict to those accustomed to be greedy. And this, I think, is to say openly that evil is good, and good is evil, and darkness is light, and light is darkness, the bitter is sweet, and the sweet is bitter. But it must be known that the mighty will be mightily tested; and from him to whom they committed much, they will demand much more, according to the voice of the Savior. For the things of punishment will not be in the same way for the leaders and for those under their hand. The For sometimes they will put forward the pretense of not knowing, perhaps, the will of their master; but others, although they knew it very precisely, have not done it. For this reason they will rightly endure a more burdensome movement from the one who punishes. Therefore, in the way that straw is burned by a coal of fire, and is consumed by a flame let loose, their root will be as dust, and their flower will go up like fine dust.

For since they themselves against themselves, he says, have drawn sins as with a long rope, and have become not upright judges of matters, condemning the good, but praising the wicked, and they were wise in their own eyes, and knowledgeable before themselves, and

looking to things even more shameful than these, they have justified the ungodly for the sake of bribes, and they took away the right of the righteous; for the sake of all these things, like easily combustible matter and in the manner of straw, they will be food for fire, and flames let loose will consume them, so that together with the roots the fruits from them are consumed, that is, that their offspring should be destroyed along with their parents, and be scattered by the gusts of a most violent wind like soil or dust. And he calls "a flame let loose" that which is extinguished by no one. For sometimes a fire falls upon standing crops or, that is, vines; but it has not become "let loose," with many defending and not allowing it to approach, nor indeed to consume the fields without hindrance. But when no one is working, that is, checking the further course of the flame, then indeed it will be a "let loose" flame, and unrestrained, and being unbridled against anything whatsoever that lies nearby. Therefore, since, when the all-powerful God was subjecting them to the misfortunes of war and punishing them by a holy decree, there was absolutely no one to defend them;

for this reason he very fittingly calls the wrath a "let loose" flame. For as the blessed Moses says: "Our God is a consuming fire, and if he shuts up against a man, who will open? " And knowing this, the divine David sings: "You are terrible, and who will stand against you from your wrath? " It is necessary therefore, using all strength, to beg off wrath; for the matter is terrible, and hard to escape; and at any rate we have been taught to say in prayers: "O Lord, do not reprove me in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. For it is not, it is not being disciplined that is difficult. But it is burdensome and hard to bear, for this to be done against us in wrath and anger; so also the prophet said: "Discipline us, O Lord, but in judgment, and not in anger, lest you make us few. For they did not desire the law of the Lord of Sabaoth, but they provoked the oracle of the holy one of Israel. And the Lord of Sabaoth was angered with wrath against his people, and he laid his hand upon them, and struck them, and the mountains were provoked, and their carcasses became as dung in the middle of the road. The most wise Jeremiah rebukes the ignorance and arrogance of the Jews, saying: "How will you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'?

In vain was the pen made, a false scribe, the wise were shamed, they were dismayed and were captured. What wisdom is in them? Because they have rejected the word of the Lord. For they in no way accepted the evangelical preaching; but neither have they honored the law itself through Moses. For as Christ himself has said: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. They have sinned, therefore, in both respects, and the wretched ones have rejected the word of God, neither accepting the prophecies through the law as true, nor indeed praising the saving evangelical word. For this reason God spoke about them through the voice of Jeremiah: "To whom shall I speak, and bear witness, that he may hear? behold, their ears are uncircumcised, and they cannot hear. Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they will not wish to hear it. For they were reproaching the word of Christ, saying to those who were listening concerning him: "He has a demon, and is mad; why do you listen to him? Therefore, since not they have rejected the law of the Lord of Sabaoth, and they have provoked the oracle of the Holy One of Israel, that is, of Christ; He was roused, it says, to wrath, and He struck them, and the mountains

were provoked. And what mountains does he mean in this? Clearly, the Roman authorities, because of their conspicuous glory and their exalted dignities?

And from the provocation of the mountains, their corpses became like dung, that is, the dead from the war, scattered everywhere, and perhaps lying in heaps, and filling all their land. And in another sense, against those who provoke the Savior God of all through disobedience. For the spiritual mountains are provoked, that is, the principalities and powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness. When this happens, it is somehow entirely necessary for those subjected to them to endure the death of the soul. For when the all-powerful God helps, even if the mountains are provoked against us, they are of no account. For it is written, that The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and will deliver them. But when He withdraws His hand, and no longer consents to save, then we shall lie down, and like dung we shall be under the feet of the enemy. For all this his anger was not turned away, but still his hand is high. Therefore he will lift up a signal among the nations that are far off, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth. And behold, they come swiftly, lightly; they shall not hunger, nor shall they grow weary, nor shall they slumber, nor shall they sleep, nor shall they loosen the belts from their loins, nor shall the straps of their sandals be broken, whose arrows are sharp, and their bows bent. The hooves of their horses were counted as hard rock; the wheels of their chariots as a whirlwind.

They rush as lions, and they stand ready as a lion's whelp. And he will seize, and will roar as a wild beast, and will cast out, and there will be no one to deliver. And he will roar because of them in that day, as the voice of a surging sea, and they will look upon the earth, and behold, harsh darkness in their distress. That the measure of wrath upon them will not be limited to these things by the One who judges righteously, but will proceed even further, the present text will make clear. For although they have been savagely ravaged, oppressed by hunger and thirst, and caught in the calamities of war, the wretched ones have remained in apostasy from God, and have not escaped His wrath. For this, I think, is what he means by saying, 'Still his hand is high,' that it is striking those who have sinned. For the hand of the one striking is somehow always raised high. Then what or how great the provocation of the mountains will be, and who will serve their wrath, and with how much courage and boldness, and with what unaccustomed cruelty towards men they will come, he reveals, saying: "Therefore he will lift up a signal among the nations that are far off. For not bordering or neighboring to the land of the Jews were those who laid it waste and burned Jerusalem and all the cities of the Jews, but they were gathered from distant lands, and from all the earth.

For they were very many; or rather, perhaps even beyond numbering were those who fought alongside Vespasian and Titus. A signal will be given, he says, as in a time of war and battle. For it is the custom for generals, when they are about to arm the multitude under their command for battle, to give a signal, raising high the so-called standards. Of which the prophet Isaiah also makes mention, saying: He shall be left as a mast upon a mountain, and as one bearing a standard upon a hill. For setting up masts on high hills, they either

raise them, or lower them, or even hang something from them, towards which the fighting force looks. And thus he saw what seemed good to the general. Therefore he raises the signal, he says, and will hiss for them. And this again he takes from the custom regarding flies. For it is somehow a custom for beekeepers to hiss for them; and thus to lead them from the hives to flowers and grasses, and indeed also to bring them back from the fields, and make them lodge at home. He will hiss, then, he says. And they will arrive winged and light, having little concern for hunger, and not fearing toils, both sleepless and most ready for action, and trained in tactics, and riding on tireless horses, and rushing like a storm, and equal to lions, and devouring like wild beasts.

And they will be so difficult to meet and terrible, that they will be able to conquer without a fight, with no one leading out against them, that is, having sufficient strength for assistance, There will be at that time a lamentation and a mingled cry, so that some will think nothing else than that the echo of the sea is scattered over the land of the Jews. And there will also be a harsh darkness, and not at all in every way that which is understood as in a mist and in the night, but rather that from terrors and perplexity. For the most difficult of evils darkens the mind. Therefore the God of all helps us through everything. For he does not make in vain the foretellings of things to come; and he goes through precisely the magnitudes of the evils; so that, since we are often unadmonished, and have made of no account the word that calls to repentance, we might at least, shrinking from being caught in such terrible punishments, receive the divine fear into ourselves, and having rejected evil things, we might transfer our heart at last to what is necessary, to choose the good. And it came to pass in the year that king Ozias died, I saw the Lord of Sabaoth, sitting on a high and exalted throne; and the house was full of his glory. And Seraphim stood round about him. Six wings to one, and six wings to the other.

And with two, they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one cried to another, and they said: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth, the whole earth is full of his glory. Not just on any single occasion, nor indeed without interval, did the blessed prophets receive the revelations of the visions from God. But rather in parts, according to what seemed good to the Lord. And in times in which he who reveals deep and hidden things, and knows the hidden things, wished to do this. For with him there is light, as it is written. Therefore, while Ozias, who is also Azarias, was still alive and ruling the thrones of the kingdom in Jerusalem, the blessed prophet Isaiah uttered the words concerning the things that had already happened. For Ozias, also Azarias, was among the most God-loving of men, for he is said to have done what was right in the eyes of God. But he did not preserve to the end the good and blameless glory of his piety. For having prevailed through God over the neighboring nations, and having accomplished very many and wonderful things against them, he was intoxicated by the ways of prosperity; and he slid into arrogance. For he came to such a state of mind as to even seize the sacred ministry, and to come, self-appointed, to the duty of sacrificing to God.

For having entered into the divine temple, he did not wish to offer the sacrifices to God through the mediation of the Levites, that is, the priests. But having leaped up to the divine altar itself, he sought to offer incense contrary to custom and the law. And he was reproved by the priestly tribe as doing unholy things, and attempting to transgress the law. But since, glorying in the boasts of his kingdom, he had also assigned to himself that it was fitting to be a priest; and making of no account the counsels of the priests, he was immediately reproved by God. For he was made a leper, the disease having broken out on his very forehead. But I think it is necessary for an accurate knowledge of what has been said to also set forth the divine oracles themselves, those written about him. And it is as follows: "In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azarias son of Amasias, king of Judah, began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem, and the name of his mother was Jecolia of Jerusalem. And he did what was pious in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Amazias his father had done. But the high places he did not remove; still the people sacrificed and offered incense in the high places. And the Lord touched the king. And he was a leper until the day of his death.

And these things are in the Books of Kings. But in Chronicles, as I said: "And When he had grown strong, it says, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. And he acted wickedly against the Lord his God; and he entered into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense; and Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him eighty-two priests of the Lord, mighty men; and they stood against Uzziah the king, and said to him; It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for us, the priests who serve, the sons of Aaron who have been consecrated, to burn incense. Go out from the sanctuary, for you have fallen away from the Lord. And this will not be for your glory from the Lord God. And Uzziah was enraged; and in his hand was the censer to burn incense in the temple; while he was enraged with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, above the altar of incense. And the chief priest and the priests turned toward him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead. And they hurried him from there, and indeed he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had afflicted him.

Since the law given through Moses commanded that the leper must by all means be sent out of the camp as unclean, and that it defiled and declared common because of the uncleanness of the leper whoever was with him, Uzziah dwelt in Jerusalem, thereby defiling almost all of Jerusalem. The Master has been silent, not dishonoring holy prophets, but rather showing those who dwell with the unclean to be unworthy of his admonition, contrary to what seemed right to the lawgiver. For so he says somewhere also to the blessed Ezekiel: "And I will bind your tongue, and you shall be mute; and you shall not be for them a man who reproves, for it is a rebellious house. Therefore he has become silent, although showing his indignation. For Jerusalem has been shaken, and the whole land of the Jews was quaked. And we shall know this through what the prophet Amos wrote. For it is as follows: "The words of Amos which were in Akkarim in Tekoa, which he saw concerning Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel two years before

the earthquake. But when Uzziah died, the time of silence ended with him. And again the God of all gave visions of God to the holy prophets. For this reason the prophet Isaiah says: "And it came to pass in the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord of Sabaoth sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

That the prophet therefore beheld the Son in the glory of God the Father, no one would doubt, as John writes clearly concerning him: "These things Isaiah said, when he saw his glory, and spoke of him. But consider for me the dignity of the God-befitting excellence, and the power over all creation. For he is upon a high and lifted up throne, very well crowned with the most distinguished boasts of his kingship. But the highest powers, after which nothing beyond created things is said to exist, stand around in a circle, holding the rank of servants, and honoring him with praises. And he says that the whole earth is full of his glory. But I think one must not suppose the divine throne to be set in local heights. For the thing is utterly foolish and unintelligible. But the divine throne is set on high, inasmuch as the glory of God's kingdom is also conceived to be beyond all intelligible nature. But the sitting upon it seems to signify a kind of stability and the establishment and permanence of good things in sameness. For thus also the divine David sings in the Psalms: "God sits upon his holy throne. And indeed the prophet Jeremiah also says to him somewhere: "For you sit forever, and we perish forever. For always and in all time, created nature is corruptible, and in these things is the measure of created beings;

but, as I said, the wisdom that is the artisan and creator of all things sits, that is, it has an unshakable permanence in sameness. And he says the house is full of his glory. For Israel had not yet acted impiously toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of God filled the house in Jerusalem. But when they denied his kingdom, and fell into impiety of ways. For this reason they heard the voice saying: "Behold, your house is left to you. He says that each of the Seraphim had six wings, so that with two they covered their face, and with two their feet, and with the remaining they flew. Seraphim is interpreted as burners, or those who make warm. For there is nothing cold among the powers above, which would be especially near to God. In this way, therefore, we ourselves, cleaving through faith and a good and most lawful conduct, are made fervent in the spirit, and warm in our love for God. And the Seraphim covering both their face and their feet with their wings, and flying with two, is a symbol of no one being able to see either a beginning or an end of the thoughts or words concerning God. For the head and the face signify the beginning, but the feet the end. For the Divine is without beginning and knows no end. But we with difficulty approach the things in between, I mean those according to the times in which things that once were not were brought into existence.

They fly, indeed, as having nothing that is cast down. But their thought is always lifted up to God. For they do not, like us, think on things below, but the highest powers have their own mind in certain ineffable heights of thought. And their mouth is also for praising. For they offer doxology, and this in turn, not because they grow weary, as I suppose, but rather they yield the honors to one another, and exchange the doxologies. For all things

above are in order. And saying "Holy" three times, they conclude the doxology with, "Lord of Sabaoth," placing the holy Trinity in one nature of divinity. For we confessedly say that the Father subsists; so also the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And no reasoning divides each of the named ones into a different nature, but one divinity is understood in three hypostases. And this has been testified to us by these holy Seraphim, who also say that the whole earth is full of his glory, proclaiming beforehand the things to come, and foretelling the mystery of the economy which has come to be through Christ. For before the Word became flesh, the wandering demon, the dragon, the apostate, held sway over the world under heaven. And creation was worshipped instead of the creator and Maker; but when the only-begotten Word of God became man, the whole earth has been filled with his glory. For to him every knee shall bow, and every tribe, and tongues shall confess, and they shall serve him, according to what is written.

And the blessed David also proclaimed this beforehand in spirit; for he said: "All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord. This, therefore, has been fulfilled by the calling of the multitude from the nations; and all worshipping him who for our sake became as we are, while remaining for his own sake above all. And the lintel was lifted up at the voice which they cried, and the house was filled with smoke. For the prophet has seen the Lord of Sabaoth sitting on a high and exalted throne, with the holy Seraphim standing around in a circle, and praising him with unceasing doxologies. And it was confirmed that the house was full of his glory. But now he says the lintel was lifted up, and the house was filled with smoke, and from the voice with which the holy Seraphim cried out. Shall we then say that the voice was the cause of the things that happened to the house? And yet how is it not exceedingly unseemly to choose to think this? In what way, then, shall we approach the meanings of the things set before us? Most excellently and wisely. Before the incarnation and advent of our Savior, while Israel was still conducting its life under the law without hindrance and without rebuke, that famous temple in Jerusalem which Solomon built was full of the glory of God. For they performed in it the sacrifices according to the law.

But since the they did not receive him who arrived from heaven in human form, and was proclaimed through the law and the prophets, but rather even killed the author of life; he abandoned his house, he left his inheritance. For he has turned aside to the nations, and indeed the whole earth has been filled with his glory. But the land of the Jews has been given over to desolation, and the temple itself has been burned. When therefore, according to the prophecy, or foretelling, or voice of the holy Seraphim, the whole earth was filled with his glory, then was the lintel of the temple lifted up, and it was filled with smoke. Therefore, the phrase, "from the voice with which they cried out," is indicative of time rather, not at all the work and result of the doxology. But I think the phrase, "The lintel was lifted up," signifies that the temple has been abandoned. And that it has also been burned is indicated by his saying that it was filled with smoke. But if someone should wish to understand such things in another way, and to say that they were done intellectually against the entire nation of the Jews, he would not err from a fitting interpretation. For when the whole earth was filled with the glory of our Savior, as the nations were called through faith, then all

spiritual security of the Jewish mind was dissolved. And like smoke, the wretched ones, having received the mist of ignorance into their mind, have become intellectually blind.

For this reason also the Savior proclaimed to them, saying: "While you have the light, walk in the light, that darkness may not overtake you. And that the mind of the Jews is insecure and vulnerable to any passion whatsoever, being devoid of help from above, how could anyone of sound mind doubt it? And I said, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips; and I have seen the King, the Lord of Sabaoth, with my eyes. The law commanded through the all-wise Moses that the profane should not mix with the holy, and there was very great observance of this among the Jews. And so to the holy apostles while they were still fishing, the Lord proclaimed, saying: "Let down your nets for a catch. When this had happened, a great multitude of fish was indeed caught, and the divine Peter, marveling at the power of the word, "fell," it says, "at Jesus' knees, saying: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" But Peter would not have wanted Christ to depart from him. But since he knew the purpose of the law, he confessed that he was a sinner, and he was afraid to be with the holy one, according to the custom that always prevailed among the Jews.

And when Christ had once come into the country of the Gergasenes, and then had healed those who were savagely possessed by demons in the tombs, they marveled indeed at the divine sign. But Matthew said that "The whole city went out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to depart from their region. And yet how was it not necessary rather to lay claim to the one who had healed, and to beg him to remain with them, and to become the creator of many other wonders? But at that time it was a proof of reverence and a way of the honor owed to the holy ones for some to decline to approach them. When Matthew had been called and had followed Christ, and then had invited him into his house; "And behold," it says, "many sinners and tax collectors came and reclined with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples: 'Why does your teacher eat with sinners and tax collectors?'" You understand then how they accused Christ as one who had neglected the law, precisely for being willing to live with wicked men. And somewhere God also blames those allotted to preside over the Synagogue of the Jews, saying through a prophet: "They did not distinguish between the holy and the profane.

Therefore, it was a manner of reverence, as I said, and a tradition of the legal commandments for those with a reputation for worthlessness, and whose conscience is not free from sins, not to wish to be with the holy ones. The blessed prophet is also seen to have suffered something of this sort, for this reason he says: "Woe is me, for I am pierced to the heart. And not wretched for this reason, that he has been pierced to the heart; how is it not foolish to understand it this way? but that he has been pierced, he says, by his conscience, and it is clear that for this reason he said: "Woe is me, for being a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people having unclean lips; and I have seen the King, the Lord of Sabaoth, with my eyes. For since the holy Seraphim uttered the doxologies with pure and all-holy mouths, he himself, being taught by God, feared the matter, not being ignorant that

praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner, as it is written. For admittedly the lips of Israel were unclean; for they had blasphemed against our Lord Jesus Christ.

But if indeed the prophet says that he himself also has such lips, although he was completely without share in the impiety of Israel, we say that he moderates himself as a saint, and it is likely that, as one who is of the blood of Israel, he does not place himself outside the charge. But he submits to the common offense of the people, saving through this the ones who have sinned; that is to say, he confesses the sickness of human nature. Such is that which is said by the blessed David against all mankind: "I said in my ecstasy: Every man is a liar. For the mind of man is sick with falsehood, even if some should be delivered from the evil, gaining the matter by sobriety. The prophet therefore was afraid that, not being so pure, as indeed are the holy Seraphim, he had seen the Lord of Sabaoth, yet had kept silent, although he ought rather to have given glory, because he did not have so pure a mouth. But that one must offer hymns with pure mouths would be clear from one of the holy disciples speaking about the tongue: "With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. It ought not to be so, my brothers. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine figs?

Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. And one of the Seraphim was sent to me, and in his hand he had a live coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: Behold, this has touched your lips, and it will take away your iniquities, and will cleanse your sins. The divine Paul writes concerning the holy angels, that they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation. And the matter is not inconsistent. For all things in the world that are among the powers above, and the measures of honor or ministry among them, and the boundaries of the glory of each have been set, by the God who distributes all things according to what seems good to Him. Nevertheless, the yoke is one upon all, and they serve the Lord's commands, not disdaining servitude, but rather counting what is genuine in these things as a portion of honor and glory. The mystery of Christ is therefore prefigured in the eyes of the prophet, being most excellently ministered by the powers above. Therefore one of the Seraphim is sent having a live coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And this, then, was a symbol of Christ, who for us and on our behalf offered himself to God the Father, as a spiritual sacrifice, pure and unblemished, and as a fragrant offering. For this reason also it is very fittingly taken from the altar.

It is indeed compared to a live coal; and it is necessary to say for what reason. It is the custom for the divinely-inspired Scripture to compare the divine nature to fire. For so he appeared to the blessed Israel on Mount Horeb, that is Sinai, on the day of the assembly. Thus also to the blessed Moses himself, while shepherding in the wilderness, he appeared and spoke at times in the form of fire in the bush. Just as, therefore, the live coal is by nature wood, yet it is entirely filled through and through with fire, and has its power and energy; in this way, I think, would also fittingly be understood our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; "For

the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. But even if He was seen as a man according to us, by economy, yet the whole fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him, I mean according to the manner of the union. For this reason also He is seen having the most divine energies through His own flesh. For He touched the bier, and raised the dead son of the widow. And indeed, spitting, He gave sight to the blind, anointing their eyes with clay. Emmanuel, therefore, must be very well likened to a coal, who, if He should somehow be on our lips, completely and in every way takes away sins, and will cleanse iniquities. Then how will He be on our lips? When we confess the faith in Him. Thus also the divine Paul writes:

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach. For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Therefore let the divine coal be on our lips, which consumes the refuse of sin, and melts away the filth of iniquity, and makes us fervent in the spirit. But if it is said to be taken with tongs, you will cleverly understand that we receive faith in Him, and indeed knowledge, as with some tongs, through both the legal and prophetic instructions, that is, predictions. From which also the word of the holy apostles is everywhere truly sealed, for using testimonies from the law and the prophets, they persuade their listeners, and, as it were, they themselves bring the coal to their lips, preparing them to confess the faith in Christ. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send? and who will go to this people? And I said: Behold, I am; send me.

When the coal touched the prophet's lips, and took away his iniquities, then he also hears the voice of the Lord, and no longer fears, and is silent about the, "Woe is me," but very swiftly presented himself for the mission, and as it were a volunteer going for this very thing, the, "Behold, I am, send me. But if God should say: "Whom shall I send? and who will go to this people? we say the voice is not of one who is at a loss, nor as it were of one who is in lack of someone to be sent, but rather of one accusing Israel as being exceedingly disobedient, and yielding to none of the previously sent, but rather killing them. For some they insulted, some they stoned, and some they killed, as Christ says, composing for us the parable in the Gospels. Whom then shall I send? he says. And who will go to this people? who having been disobedient to those already sent before, are both hard and difficult to meet, and have shown by their very actions, that it would not be for any ordinary person to approach them, but perhaps only for one who despaired of his own life. That Israel has become inflexible, and exceedingly unadmonishable, one might learn also through what God said to the blessed Ezekiel. And it is thus:

"Son of man, go, enter the house of Israel, and speak my words to him, because you are not sent to a people of obscure speech and a slow tongue, to the house of Israel, nor to many peoples of foreign speech, or foreign tongues, nor of a hard language, whose words you will not hear. And if I had sent you to such, they would have listened to you; but the house of Israel will not want to listen to you, because they do not want to listen to me, for the whole

house of Israel is contentious, and hard-hearted. Rightly therefore, as it were, at a loss, or rather, as I have just said, accusing those of Israel for their very great cruelty. Whom then shall I send? The prophet therefore, having hesitated in no way: ”Behold, I am here,” he says, ”send me. Therefore, whenever the divine coal touches us, we shall be clean of our trespasses, and eager and youthful for the mission, which is indeed what the divine disciples have done. For although they were from the Jews, and before their love for Christ, their lips were surely unclean along with the rest, but when they accepted the faith, and made the good confession, and the coal touched them also, then they were also called to the mission, and they followed without delay, even though the all-wise Moses said: ”I pray, Lord, appoint another powerful one, whom you will send; and Jeremiah again:

”O Being, Lord Master, behold I do not know how to speak, for I am a youth. Therefore, those in Christ are more ardent for mission and ministry than the saints of old. And a clear type of this matter would be the blessed prophet Isaiah, who after the touch of the coal cried out and said: ”Behold, I am here, send me. And he said: Go, and say to this people: Hearing you will hear, and you will not understand; and seeing you will see, and you will not perceive. For the heart of this people has grown dull, and with their ears they heard with difficulty, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I should heal them. That a hardening in part has happened to Israel, the divine Paul writes; explaining, as it were, in what way it happened that they suffered this hardening. ”For until this day, he says, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. For it was consistent for those who had henceforth slipped into such savagery of ways, to be very sick with disobedience, and to be willing to yield neither to the writings of Moses, nor indeed to the holy prophets; and I would add that not even to Christ himself, being seized by the darkness of an intelligible mist, and differing little from insensible stones.

Therefore, God of all makes this prediction, and instructs the prophet to proclaim beforehand to them: that ”Hearing you will hear and will not understand; and seeing you will see, and you will not perceive. For they were hearers of the Savior’s voice; he taught in synagogues, he spoke in Jerusalem many times, but they were the same as those who had not heard at all. They were spectators of the things miraculously accomplished. For they saw lepers freed from their affliction, the lame leaping up, the blind recovering their sight, the dead rising from tombs; but they were benefited in no way, and the wretched ones continued as if deprived of their own eyes. For this reason they are also reproached through the voice of the saints, as having always been stiff-necked, and disobedient in heart, and killers of saints. And indeed he says the hardening was given to them, so that they might not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and he might heal them. And this was very clearly what Christ said to those who chose to disobey: ”Do not grumble among yourselves; no one can come to me unless my Father who sent me draws him. And again: ”Everyone who has heard from the Father, comes to me. Therefore they are not called to the knowledge of the Son, through the revelation of God the Father, because they were not worthy of salvation and life through him.

But if someone should wish to approach the meanings of what has been said in another way, he will understand thus. For God of all foretells, as knowing the hidden and future things, and says that in every way they will both see and hear, yet they will remain as if neither having heard nor agreeing, and suffering this themselves from their own wicked opinion. And he adds to this, that in doing these things, they plot against their own heads. For they have become sick with deafness, and the inability to see, "Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and they will turn, and I will heal them. Therefore, they themselves have become the cause of their own of destruction, neither lending a sharp ear to the things said by Christ, nor indeed opening the eye of their own mind. For if they had done this, they would have returned, and having obtained the appropriate healing, they would have preserved their own mind sound and healthy. And I said: How long, Lord? And he said: Until cities be laid waste because they are not inhabited, and houses, because there are no people, and the land shall be left desolate. And after these things God shall remove men far away, and those who are left shall be multiplied upon the earth. The prophet feared, lest perhaps the hardening brought upon those of Israel be continuous and unceasing.

For this reason indeed he thinks it right to learn the time during which this will befall them, and until when the sickness extends. And in response to these things, God foretells the devastation of Jerusalem itself, and of the whole land of the Jews, and says: "Until cities be laid waste because they are not inhabited, and houses because there are no people. which indeed has come to pass, when Vespasian and Titus devastated Judea after the cross of the Savior, and the ascension into heaven. But that the punishment for the disobedient will not be measured out until they suffer these things, nor indeed will Israel utterly, that is, root and branch, perish, he reveals, saying: "And after these things God will remove men far away, and those who are left, will be multiplied upon the earth. For they were removed far from God, both having killed the saints, and adding to them the author of life. But those who were left, that is, those who were saved, and have believed in Christ, who are also the remnant of Israel, will be in great multitude, he says. For not a small part of Israel has believed, and this at the beginning of the book the blessed prophet Isaiah himself has revealed, saying: "And unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we should have become as Sodom, and we should have been made like unto Gomorrah. But it seems to some to understand the meaning of the things set forth otherwise.

And when the prophet asks, and wishes to learn to what and how long a time the hardening will extend, God answers: "Until the cities be laid waste, because they are not inhabited, and houses, because there are no people, and after these things God will remove men far away; so that through this we may understand the time of the consummation. For we must first hear of wars, and rumors of wars, and nation rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and cities and houses be laid waste, and then the end; after which men are then removed far away, that is, after the time of the resurrection, living a pure and long-lasting life, corruption having been entirely done away with, and death having been abolished, and all sin having been removed. But that Israel has been hardened, yet will be called in the last times of the age, since the divinely inspired Scripture says it clearly and plainly, I think

it is vain to insist, and to seek for things that lead to full assurance. And yet there is a tenth upon it, and again it shall be for plunder, as a terebinth, and as an acorn, when it falls from its husk. And now the prophetic word reminds us of a history, which it is necessary, as it seems, to relate; for thus what is signified will be clear.

For when they campaigned against the land of the Jews, as I have already said, Vespasian and Titus, the land of the Jews was consumed, being burned up along with its cities and houses, it was a terrible sight, and full of all pity to those who saw it, their nation had then come to this point of depopulation, so that he who says it does not err from the truth, that scarcely a tenth of the whole people was left in it. Then they passed some time being sustained in peace, yet not without fears, of suffering devastation again, which indeed also happened. For Hadrian in his time, administering the throne of the Roman empire, and indeed Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes, overran the land of the Jews, and it was in no way less than the former ca- of the remnants being further desolated, of the captured being sent into captivity, when also the sufferings of the Maccabees happened to occur. God of all again makes mention of such accounts to us in a prophecy and says: ”Yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and be for a spoil. For it will not lie outside of his care, he says, even if it should be in remnants, and these small, the people of the Jews; but it will again be for a spoil. And the land will then again become to them like a terebinth, and they themselves like an acorn when it falls from its cup.

For the terebinth is a plant, but if a shedding of its leaves should occur, it has a very great unpleasantness, having the driest branches. In this manner, I think, a land also that has suffered the desolation of its inhabitants will be in every way like dry plants, not having their bloom upon it, but also having suffered the shedding of its foliage. Likewise the acorn is the fruit of an oak; but when it falls from its cup, it will then be available to the animals accustomed to consuming it. Therefore, the land of the Jews has imitated the terebinth that has shed its leaves. But those who have fallen away from it by going into captivity will lie like acorns, having all but fallen from their own cup which bore them. Solomon also says something like this: ”Like a bird when it falls from its own nest, so also is a man when he is separated from his own places. For what could be more wretched than those in captivity? And what is so pitiable and trampled upon as for men to fall under the hand of their conquerors? And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but could not besiege it.

Those who reject the history in the divinely-inspired Scriptures as stale, naturally flee from being able to understand, in the proper way, the things written in them. For spiritual contemplation is both beautiful and profitable, and by brilliantly illuminating the eye of the mind, it makes men very wise. But when something of what has been done historically is brought to us through the sacred Letters, then indeed the useful thing from history must be sought, so that from every side the divinely-inspired Scripture may be seen to be saving and benefiting us. Therefore, in these things the prophetic word relates to us what happened in

the times of the reign of Uzziah to those from Judah and Benjamin, and to the ten tribes in Samaria, which were also named Ephraim, and indeed also Israel. And since the whole word of the prophecy came in the times of four kings, the prophet sets down the events in the times of each, and necessarily marks them, imposing the best order on the visions, that is, on his words. Therefore, when Azariah, that is, Uzziah, died, Jotham succeeded to the kingdom, and he followed the purpose and the practices of his own father. For he too is said to have done what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as Uzziah did, except that he did not remove the high places, but the people still burned incense in the high places.

And Uzziah sought, beyond what was permitted, to act as priest to God and to offer incense, and he was struck with leprosy for this reason. Jotham, however, was not so. But when he also died, Ahaz succeeded to the kingdom, while Pekah the son of Remaliah was ruling over Israel, that is, of the twelve tribes. This one stirred up war against Ahaz and Judah, and killed one hundred and twenty thousand in one day. For the God of all was provoked by the impieties of Ahaz, concerning whom it is also written in the fourth book of Kings, that he walked in the way of the king of Israel. For he became an impious man, and worshipped idols, and made his children pass through the fire, sacrificing to the unclean demons. Therefore in the times of his reign, they conspired against both Jerusalem and Judah, both Pe- Pekah the son of Remaliah, and Rezin king of Aram, that is, of Syria. And they came as if to lay it waste, but they did not take the city. But Ahaz, fearing the assault to be unbearable, makes a great collection of money, and sends an embassy to the king of the Assyrians, Tiglath-pileser, asking him to come to his aid and to campaign against Rezin, which indeed was brought to completion. And the Assyrian came and took Damascus, and he also killed Rezin.

And when Pekah son of Remaliah, who had reigned over Israel in Samaria, died, Hoshea son of Elah succeeded to the scepter, and during his reign, Shalmaneser the Assyrian came against Samaria, and he took all of it, and carried Israel away captive, and settled them in the mountains of the Persians and Medes; then he ordered some of those under him to inhabit Samaria, both the one from Cuthah and the one from Sepharvaim. For it is written thus in the books of Kings, and the account for each of the things said is long in the divinely inspired Scripture, but I have made the narrative concise as far as possible. But we will speak of each thing in turn, following the meanings of the text before us. In the days, then, it says, of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, both Rezin king of Aram, that is, of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, conspired against Jerusalem, and they came to lay it waste, but they were not able to besiege it. And these things have been said for now with the force of an introduction, and as in a narrative of what happened. For it reveals the plan and the attempt itself, and it adds immediately also the outcome of the matter: For they were not able, it says, to besiege it.

And it was reported to the house of David, saying, ”Aram has made a pact with Ephraim,” and his soul was shaken, and the soul of his people, as a tree in a forest is shaken by the wind. Having defined, as I said, the occasion of the narratives, and having stated summarily in a

brief chapter the attempt of the two kings, and that their purpose did not come to fulfillment, he then begins to detail each thing in his account. For it was reported, he says, to the house of David, that is, to the one who was reigning, and they announced that Aram had made a pact with Ephraim. And by Aram he means the Syrian, and by Ephraim likewise the ten tribes in Samaria. Since these things are this way, the house of David, that is, Ahaz, learned of it and believed it. His soul was shaken, and the soul of his people, as a tree in a forest is shaken by the wind. And the term, "was shaken," he uses commonly, instead of, "was terrified," and almost fell out of his mind. For the dreadful of terrors are somehow able to shake the mind, and to agitate the soul, and to seem to suffer something of the sort that a tree in the woods would suffer, being tossed this way and that by the blasts of wild winds. And the occasion for the cowardice, or rather for his distress, was what had happened.

For I have already said that during his reign, Pekah had warred against Judah, and in one day killed one hundred and twenty thousand from the people. When, therefore, even Pekah alone was so great as to easily overpower those in Jerusalem; how was it not necessary for him to show the utmost fear, both Ahaz himself and the people under him, when the Syrian had conspired and was arming with Ephraim against Jerusalem? And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son who is left, at the pool of the upper highway of the fuller's field. And you shall say to him, 'Take care to be quiet, and do not be afraid, nor let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands. For when the anger of my wrath occurs, I will heal again.'" Truly the Lord is compassionate and merciful, and wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; and he manages all things clearly, and... preparing for each one the way of salvation. And this we can see is so from the facts themselves. For Ahaz became an idolatrous man, abominable and profane.

But when he was already in inescapable evils, and the compassionate one saw him almost drunk with calamities, He immediately adds the possibility of partaking of the salvation from Himself, and He promises aid, so that he might cease from idolatrous madness, and be prepared to abstain from the things he had already stumbled in, and to receive the light of true knowledge of God. Therefore the prophet commands him to meet him with Shear-jashub, which is interpreted as a remnant and what is left behind; almost as if the type signifies as a symbol to Ahaz that the remnant of Judah that has remained with God will be saved. For the prophet is taken as a type of God, and very well does He make the promise of aid at the pool of the upper conduit of the fuller's field. And again the pool is a type of the saving font of holy baptism, which both brings us to the way above, and of the spiritual fuller, that is, of the one who wipes away all our filth and frees us from defilements. Therefore the promise is secure, and as in a type of the particular the universal and through Christ, a wise riddle has been given to the prophet. And it says, "Take heed to be quiet, and do not be afraid, nor let your soul be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands. And to command him to be still and to continue without cares, and indeed to be free from harsh fears;

was then a call very prudently to obedience, and as it were referring to the first principles of the need to honor the words concerning God, and to readily affirm as true whatever he might say. And he calls those who conspired against him firebrands and smoldering pieces of wood, as those who are about to cease both from being and from their kingdom. For just as a piece of wood, that is, a firebrand, when it is taken out of the fire, smokes, yet it is at its end of even having fire in itself; in this same way, I think, a person who is about to come to the end of either life or a matter, might reasonably be called a still smoldering firebrand or piece of wood. And since he would know that they had become especially fearful, and in great dejection, because of being defeated having fought against Pekah, when also, as I said, one hundred and twenty thousand from Judah fell in one day; he also removes them from these fears, and says: "For when the wrath of my anger comes, I will heal again; that is, not even they would have fallen, if my anger had not given them into the hand of their enemies. But if, he says, the things from anger should come upon some, I will heal again those who have suffered. For He who delivered them over out of anger, will easily deliver them through His innate gentleness and love for mankind.

And the son of Aram, and the son of Remaliah, because they have devised an evil counsel concerning you, saying: We will go up to Judea, and having spoken with them, we will turn them to us, and we will make the son of Tabeel king over them; thus says the Lord of Sabaoth: This counsel shall not stand, nor shall it be. He neither allows the report of the plots against him to be disbelieved, nor does He permit him to be excessively crushed with fear. But rather having confirmed and declared as true the agreements, that is, the conspiracies of the two kings against him, He promises aid, shifting him to the need to rely on them rather, and not to be attached to the worship of idols, and to the words of false prophets, who say countless things according to the mind of those who bring them inquiries, but they speak nothing of the truth. Therefore that they have counseled, he says, to go up to Judea, and to speak with those under your hand, and to persuade them to follow their opinions, is true and acknowledged. For they wish to set up the son of Tabeel. But this will not be, he says. And who is the one promising? The Lord of Sabaoth, that is, the Lord of hosts, or of armies; with whose assent the must prevail, with whomever he might happen to choose, who will overturn the things decreed? And to his divine judgments, who is able to resist?

Therefore, he strengthens for faith those who are still unbelievers. For those who are healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, just as the Savior himself has said. But it must be known that he calls the Syrian the son of Aram, that is, Rezin, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, who had ruled over Israel, that is, of the ten tribes in Samaria. But the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; but yet in sixty-five years, the kingdom of Ephraim shall fail from being a people, and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. And if you will not believe, surely you shall not understand. For those wishing to clarify the things in the divinely-inspired Scripture, there is certainly a need for historical narrative, so that from every side the truth may follow the divine words. Therefore the prophet explains the things in the sacred Writ-

ings, through which it is especially possible to best approach the meanings of the things set forth. Therefore in the times of the reign of Ahaz, both Rezin king of Syria and Damascus, and Pekah son of Remaliah, reigning over Israel in Samaria, conspired against Judah and Jerusalem. Therefore Ahaz, fearing the attack, persuades with money Tiglath-pileser the king of the Assyrians both to defend him and to overturn the attack of those who had conspired. And he came and took Damascus, being the metropolis of the Syrians, and killed Rezin himself.

And when Pekah, who was the son of Remaliah, died in Samaria, Hoshea son of Elah succeeded to the kingdom, a wicked man, and given over to the deceits of demons. While he was administering the kingdom, Shalmaneser the Assyrian came up against all of Samaria, and immediately captured Hoshea, and put him in the rank of a servant; and having ravaged the entire country, and having made it destitute of the sons of Israel, he established in their place some of his own inhabitants, that is, of those under his hand, both the Cuthite and the Sappharvaean; and I think these nations are Persian. For it is so written in the books of Kings. The prophet gives us the narrative of this history, saying: ”Thus says the Lord: This counsel shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, but the head of Ephraim is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; but yet in sixty-five years the kingdom of Ephraim shall fail from being a people. And the composition of the words is obscure; but one must approach it thus: The head, he says, of Aram, that is of Syria, is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin, that is, Rezin; for the head of both the country and the city is their king. And the kingdom of Ephraim will fail from being a people; yet in sixty-five years the kingdom of Ephraim, that is, of Israel, will fail;

the head of Aram, that is Damascus, will also fail, and the head of Damascus, that is Rezin. For, as I said, Tiglath-pileser took both Damascus and Rezin, and Shalmaneser took Hoshea the king of Ephraim, that is of Israel, and Samaria, that is Samaria, the word ”will fail” applying to both in common; and the head of Ephraim, Samaria, will fail again. And he calls Samaria the head of Ephraim, that is Samaria; for the metropolis of Samaria is Samaria. And when he says Ephraim, he means Israel; and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah, that is Pekah; and again the word ”will fail” applies to all. And to these he adds: ”And if you will not believe, surely you shall not understand. And the word is very plausible. For to those who insult the word of God with unbelief, understanding from him could not be produced. Therefore one must receive without delay the things from God, and readily assent to what he promises and speaks. For thus good understanding will be in us, and the illumination of the wisdom from him will shine around the mind. And the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying: Ask for yourself a sign from the Lord your God in the depth, or in the height. And Ahaz said: I will not I will ask, nor will I tempt the Lord.

He tries in every way to move Ahaz, who held the throne of the kingdom in Jerusalem and who had strayed far too much toward the unruly and loved to be devoted to the false worship of demons, to what is better, and indeed to the necessity of attaining the doctrines of truth, and to choose to think rightly about God. Therefore, since it was of great importance to

the worshipers of idols, and a matter of diligence, to be overly curious about the outcomes of events, and to ask for oracles from temples, and to be deceived by the words of false prophets, with dangers hanging over them, he in a way prevents Ahaz, who was about to do this, and directs him to have requested a sign, not from their usual sanctuaries, nor from the false prophets any longer, but rather from the Lord God. And he has assigned the manner of the request to his own choices, saying: "To the depth or to the height," that is, either to heaven, or to earth, and even to the things below. And through this he has given full assurance, and gives one to understand that being God and Lord of all, He works what seems good by His authority, whether one might wish to see something in heaven, or something on the earth. But Ahaz refuses, not as one revering God, but rather the wretched man is being utterly insolent, even if he made himself seem venerable with words of piety.

For I will not ask, he says, nor will I tempt the Lord. For since God commands him to ask, the wish not to ask clearly has impiety. He feigns that he does not want to be tempting Him, and puts forward a legalistic saying, as it were: "For you shall not tempt the Lord your God. And yet, how will reason not cry out against all the foolishness of Ahaz? For when God Himself permits him to ask, how is it not better to choose rather to do that which He has commanded, than to invent excuses perversely, and to make the flimsy pretext of obedience, "I will not tempt the Lord"? But his purpose was not to accept the words from above and from God, but rather, crowning the oracle-giver with the superior vote, to be overly curious about falsehoods and perhaps the flights of birds of omen, and to ask for help from demons. And he said: Hear then, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men? And how do you weary the Lord? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. When Ahaz had refused the request for the sign, and would not endure to honor or know the God who is by nature and truly, and Lord of all, he tries to teach him that He will not be entirely unknown by Israel, nor indeed will He lose His own inheritance, but they will come to know Him in due time.

However, he no longer deems Ahaz, who was insolent and hateful to God, worthy of a word, but has addressed rather the house of David, that is, those from the tribe of Judah, from which Christ Himself was born according to the flesh. But as God, He makes the prediction with extreme forbearance. For after first charging that it has been treated as nothing to offend the all-powerful God Himself, and, as it were, to try to stir up struggles and toils for Him, as far as it depended on them, by not being willing to walk uprightly; then indeed, then he makes the proclamation of the universal and most general help. O, therefore, he says, house of David, if offending men is not without penalty, why do you weary the Lord, who does not wish to punish, but is able to do this and very easily? But since you refuse the request for the sign, I come of my own accord to this, he says; and even if you wish to be sick, I bring the cure, since I am good and a lover of mankind. The Lord Himself will give you a sign, giving full assurance that the straying Israel will also be saved in due time, and will not be ignorant of the Master, but will be a worshiper of the God who has saved. And this has been accomplished through Christ, who called Israel to full knowledge, and delivered him from all sin, and from the will to worship wood and stones.

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel. Butter and honey he shall eat; before he knows or chooses evil, to choose the good. For before the child knows good and evil, he refuses evil, to choose the good. And the land which you fear shall be abandoned, desolate before the face of the two kings. Some of those who have interpreted the divine Scriptures have published, "Behold, the young woman shall conceive in her womb. It seems, however, to the Jews that the Mother of the Lord must be designated by the name of 'young woman,' and not rather be called 'virgin.' For they think that the power of the mystery is nullified if she is called a young woman, and not rather a virgin. But one might see them being ignorant in many ways. For first, even if the virgin were called a young woman, she will not cease to be a virgin. Then they say that the prophet spoke about the wife of Ahaz, "Behold, the young woman shall conceive in her womb, and shall bear a son," so that we might understand this to be Hezekiah who was born from him. But not examining the words of the prophecy, they seize upon what seems inconsiderately right, and then think to establish their own aim through this alone. But, O excellent sirs, one might say to them, who called Hezekiah Emmanuel?

Or whence could they show that before he knew good or evil, he refused evil in order to choose the good? Therefore, having bid farewell to their triflings, we shall accept what is right and true, believing that the holy Virgin is designated by God through the prophecy set before us. For thus the sign will be truly wondrous and exceedingly great, reaching into the depth and the height at once, according to the divine promise. For the only-begotten Son, who was begotten from above and from God the Father according to nature, emptied Himself, and was brought forth from a virgin's womb in the flesh, not from human seed receiving its origin, but from the power and operation of the Holy Spirit. For thus it was said to the holy Virgin by the voice of the blessed Gabriel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, he says, she will bear a son. And you, O house of David, who now, he says, refuses to trust in God, and to ask a sign from Him, for the confirmation of what He has promised, because you are more inclined to idols, you shall call his name Emmanuel, that is, you will confess God revealed in human form. For when the only-begotten Word of God appeared in our likeness, then He was also with us. For He who is above all creation, became in our likeness.

But see how, in order to show that He is at the same time truly God and man, he applies to Him both divine and human things. For that He truly became in the flesh, he tries to assure us, by saying that His food was that which is suitable for infants, both butter and honey. But that, although having become flesh, He will be no less superior to sin as God, he teaches again, immediately adding: For before the child knows good or evil, he refuses evil, in order to choose the good. For humans who have not yet reached puberty, nor indeed arrived at a measure of age that is honored with wisdom from time, would not be at all suited to be able to discern what is bad and what is good; but when the time already calls for this, then they make a free choice of what must be done. But the divine and most high nature, not in our condition, but in its own and fitting heights, is always inaccessible to evil; and it casts off the ways of wickedness, not being tempted at all, not enduring disturbance, but rather

naturally and essentially refusing evil. And in no other way, I think, than as someone might say about light, that it surely refuses to be darkness. For it does not endure suffering not to be light. Therefore, it signifies the ever-fixed state of the divine nature towards the good, saying, that "He refuses evil in order to choose the good.

And this is true also of Christ Himself. For even if He was born according to the flesh through the holy Virgin, being by nature God and the Word revealed from God, yet He was holy as God from the womb and before it, or rather, even before every age, not having slipped from His own advantages because of His humanity; but neither did He neglect human things on account of the economy; so that He might be believed to have truly become like us, and might sanctify our very birth. But He says that the land will be abandoned, which he suspects and fears because of the two kings. It is as if he were to say clearly: When the Virgin, having conceived in her womb, shall bear a son, you, O house of David, shall call his name Emmanuel; then all those who trouble the holy land will abandon it. For it will no longer be accessible to those who wish to ravage it. But the saying is spiritual. For when Emmanuel was born, the truly holy land and city, that is, the Church, was established in the beauty of hope, and has trodden down every enemy, who, knowing her to be unconquerable, have withdrawn, having abandoned her as one saved by God. For I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in her midst.

Discourse 5

But the Lord shall bring upon you, and upon your people, and upon your father's house, days that have not yet come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah the king of the Assyrians. Since Ahaz was greatly troubled by the alliance of the two kings, Rezin and Pekah, the God of all promised assistance; but since He wished to confirm him in faith, He commanded him to ask for a sign, "either in the depth or in the height. But when Ahaz refused, and said most perversely, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord (for he sought rather the deceptions of the false prophets), God, in a way, went over of His own accord, and Himself gave a sign to the house of David. For He said: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel. But when the discourse about these things was well concluded, He turns the prediction of things to come again to the person of Ahaz himself. For it was necessary, it was necessary for the announcement of the salvation through Christ to be made to those of the house of David, that is, those of the tribe of Judah, from which Christ Himself also sprang according to the flesh;

but He makes the announcement of the terrible and dreadful things that would happen at times to those who chose to disobey, so that they might know that it is truly bitter, and not without penalty for those who dishonor the divine glory to give trouble to the Lord, and to choose to worship other gods beside Him who are not gods. Therefore, that at times, both Jerusalem itself, and all the land of the Jews, were about to fall into the utmost miseries, and to come under the hand of their enemies, He subtly foretells. But I shall try, as far as I am able, and before all else, to clarify the rather obscure composition of the words. "God, he says, will bring upon you, and upon your people, and upon your father's house, days that have not yet come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah. The meaning of the verses is as follows: In the time of the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, Ephraim departed, that is, tore himself away, that is, again, the ten tribes, from the tribe of Judah. For the ten tribes were separated from the tribe of Judah, and have inhabited Samaria, but the tribe of Judah and the half-tribe of Manasseh have remained in Jerusalem. But as time went on, many dreadful things happened to them. For Samaria has been sacked, and the neighboring nations, Idumeans, Moabites, and those from Philistia, have overrun Judea. Therefore they have suffered many terrible things, and have experienced hard days, both these and those.

Therefore, he says, He will bring days God, the like of which have not yet occurred, that is, have come upon you from that time, from when Ephraim removed, that is, separated himself from Judah. But what is this time for us, or what are these days? The king, he says, of the Assyrians, that is, Nebuchadnezzar, who sacked Jerusalem, and by force conquered all of Judea, and also burned the divine temple, and omitted absolutely nothing of beast-like cruelty, which he is not found to have committed against the entire nation. And it shall be in that day that the Lord shall whistle for the flies, that which holds sway over a part of the river of Egypt, and for the bee, that is in the land of the Assyrians; and they shall all come, and shall rest in the valleys of the land, and in the clefts of the rocks, and into the caves, and into every ravine, and in every tree. He expands the narrative, and goes through in detail the assault of the war, and that those coming against them at the appointed times will occupy all their land, both villages and cities. And I think it is necessary to repeat what has been written in the fourth book of Kings, for the accurate clarification of the things that will be. Therefore, the son of Ahaz, to whom the discourse is now addressed, was Hezekiah; and of Hezekiah, Manasseh; and of Manasseh, Amos.

And his son was Josiah, a pious man, but he died in the following manner. Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, leaving his own country, set out with his whole army and hastened against the land of the Assyrians. Therefore Josiah, fearing lest somehow he might also come against Judea and take it under his own hand and rule over it, wanted to lead his army out against him, although Pharaoh was declining battle with him; but resisting, he died in the war, and the Egyptian prevailed over the land of the Jews, and he advanced to such a point of strength that he even removed from the kingship Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who was reigning, and brought him in chains to his own country, and appointed Eliakim as king, and imposed tributes on the nation, and demanded a great collection of money. Then after Eliakim had reigned over Judea for eleven full years in number, his son Jeconiah succeeded to the throne; then after him, Zedekiah, during whose reign Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against Judea, who, having burned them all, and adding Jerusalem itself to the other cities, took Israel captive, together with the sacred vessels, and did those things which are also recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The force of the preceding words gives us the narration of these histories.

"Therefore, he says, it will be in that day (that is, at that time), the Lord will whistle for the flies, that which holds sway over a part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee, that is in the land of the Assyrians. The discourse, therefore, is constructed from a metaphor based on the experience of beekeepers, who with whistling both lead the flies out of the hives into the fields and bring them back again, as if shutting up livestock in certain pens. And he compares the Egyptians to flies, as I suppose, on account of their multitude and the not very melodious sound of their voice. And to the bee, the nation of the Assyrians; for the bee is variegated, both colorful and marked in many ways. Such, in a way, as far as it pertains to garments and dress, are both the Assyrians and the Persians; for they are lovers of ornament, and always esteem being variously attired, and are indeed spurred on towards this. These, he says, will all come, and will rest in the valleys of the land, and in the clefts

of the rocks, and in the caves, and upon every ravine, and in every tree. For since he has framed his words as if about flies, he continues with the trope. But it certainly shows that they will search their entire country, so that none of those in hiding can escape notice;

even if they should happen to hide themselves in rocks, or in valleys, or also conceal themselves in thickets and glens. And in another way also, in those who provoke the God of all and do not shrink from offending Him, the wicked and opposing powers, like wasps, make their abode and take up their lodging, and the no one warding off the strange passions within us, that is, defending and having the strength to save. For if God wishes to do harm, who is able to help us? In that day the Lord will shave with the great and drunken razor, which is beyond the river of the king of the Assyrians, the head and the hair of the feet, and he will take away the beard. It is necessary for us first to put the text together in these matters; then, finally, to speak what is signified by the thoughts. Therefore in that day, he says, that is, at that time, with the great and drunken razor, which is of the king of the Assyrians, who is beyond the river, clearly the Euphrates, the Lord will shave the head, and the hair of the feet, and will take away the beard. And he calls the great and drunken razor of the king of the Assyrians, who is beyond the river, his sword, which, as it were, shears unsparingly, and rejoices in being drunk with the blood of the fallen. And this is the meaning of the words.

But we say that it was a form of extreme dishonor for some to be seen at one time with their head and beard shaven. And indeed God of all threatened somewhere the daughters of Zion, who were exalted and walking with a high neck and with winks of their eyes, with the removal of their prosperity. For he said that, And it shall be, and instead of a sweet smell there will be dust, and instead of a girdle you will gird yourself with a rope, and instead of the golden ornament of the head, you will have baldness on account of your works. And some did this, dishonoring themselves also over the dead; whence also the law through Moses enjoins those who have received the divine ministry not to be shaven over the dead in the same way as others, nor indeed to destroy the appearance of the beard. For it is written thus. And when Jerusalem was sacked under Nebuchadnezzar, men went up from Shechem, and from Salem, and Samaria, as Jeremiah says: Eighty men with shaven beards, and with their garments rent, and cutting themselves, and manna and frankincense in their hands, to bring it into the house of the Lord. Therefore, to shear the head and beard with a razor was a form of mourning and at the same time of dishonor. The prophetic word said that the land of the Jews would suffer this at times. For it will remain, he says, when its children have perished, both mourning and most dishonored.

But if someone should wish to approach the contemplations in another way, he will think of something like this. For by the hairs of the head, he perhaps means those who are most honored in wealth and who have risen above the others in preeminence; for nothing is higher than the head; and by the beard, those in intelligence and understanding; for thus is beard always understood in the divinely-inspired Scripture. And when he names the hairs of the feet, he signifies somewhere, as is likely, those who are placed in the last and lowest rank.

But the drunken razor spared no one at all, but together with those who were superior, it sheared off the middle and the last, and the intelligent of the land of the Jews, so as to leave it naked and bare. For Nebuchadnezzar transported almost all of Israel to the mountains of the Persians and Medes. And it shall be in that day, a man will nourish a heifer of oxen, and two sheep; and it shall be from the abundance of milk produced that he will eat butter and honey, every one that is left upon the earth. His purpose is to make manifest the working of the great and drunken razor, that is, of the Babylonian sword.

For he says that the whole land of the Jews will be stripped bare, and will come to such a state of poverty and lack of men, that the one who is left and has been saved from the hand of the enemies, and has remained in the land, will be the master of one heifer and two sheep, although in the past those throughout all Judea were accustomed to possess and pasture very many flocks of sheep, and indeed also of oxen. Therefore, this is a clear proof of extreme poverty. And he further proves that they will be exceedingly few in number in places, saying: ”And it shall be from the abundance of milk produced, that everyone who is left will eat butter and honey- slain upon the earth. From two sheep and one heifer, he says, there will be so much milk that it will be sufficient for all who are left behind to have their fill, if indeed they should wish to make their meals from milk. Is it not clear, then, that those who escaped the razor are altogether few in number, and have remained in each place of Judea? For how many would they be, for whom the [milk] of two sheep and one heifer would be enough for food and satiety? What then from this will result for the benefit of us who are spiritual, it is possible to see through the matters themselves.

As many as practice what is hard to hear, and raise a haughty neck to God, will both be consumed by a lack of spiritual goods, and will become altogether few, and will be found in need of everything that knows how to nourish to spiritual well-being, and is able to bring them up, and very quickly, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. But such men will hear God saying through the voice of a holy one: Behold, those who serve me will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, those who serve me will drink, but you will be thirsty. For very abundant is the participation in every good from God for those who have resolved to think his thoughts, to whom he himself has also spoken, saying: ”Eat, and drink, and be drunk, my neighbors. And it shall be in that day, every place, where there shall be a thousand vines for a thousand shekels, shall become a waste land and a thorn; with arrow and with bow they shall come there; because all the land shall be waste land and thorn. This would be the work of the great and drunken razor, and a clear proof of the nation’s scarcity of men. For the war has so consumed the inhabitants of Judea, that barely a few in number were left behind in it.

For this reason, he says, both the most beautiful and choicest of their possessions will be neglected, and will become waste land and thorn, since there are evidently none who know how to farm. For if there should be, he says, in one place a thousand vines for a thousand shekels, so that each vine is worth one shekel (and this is a measure of value), it will become waste land and thorn; so that even if someone should wish to approach the place, and only

enter, he would not be able to do this without arrow and bow. For the thorns, lacking nothing of arrows and darts, would immediately wound the feet of one wishing to walk around. Therefore, wishing to do what is not right will be for us a cause of every evil. For we shall be laid waste in a way, not shrinking from offending God. For by doing, and indeed by being willing to think those things that are pleasing and dear to him, we shall bear the fruit of virtue, being deemed worthy of his care. For we shall hear Christ saying: ”I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. But having turned aside without restraint to impiety of ways, we are filled with spiritual thorns, with every kind of wickedness springing up in us. But the end of the thorn is fire;

and the food of fire, or useless matter. And this the blessed Paul will make clear to us, saying: ”For the earth which has drunk the rain that often comes upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whom it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it brings forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to a curse, whose end is to be burned. And every mountain that is plowed shall be plowed, and fear shall not come there. For it shall be from waste land and thorn for a pasture for sheep, and for the treading of an ox. He says that those left behind in Judea will be few, and that they will come to such cowardice, and indeed lack of manliness, that under a terrible and unbearable dread, they will spend their time in the mountains, and will depart from cities, and from the dwellings long desired by them, and will hasten to hide in woods and thickets. For this is the custom for those throughout all the country and city to do, if indeed there should be any of the enemy expulsion. For running up to the high and impassable parts of the mountains, they make the difficult terrain their weapon, and a remedy for cowardice to be in the clefts of rocks. This is what the Savior himself said to the people of the Jews: ”Then,” he says, ”let those in Judea flee to the mountains.

Therefore the most beautiful of places will become wasteland, he says, and thorns, since those who are left behind fear even to enter them alone, or are not even permitted by the thorns; but having fled instead into the mountains, there, groaning, they will take up the labors of agriculture. For every mountain and every hill will be plowed, since those who have fled to them desire to gather, not things for wealth and luxury, but whatever serves the necessary need of the body, and provides meager and hard-won sustenance. What then is the reason for living in the mountains and wanting to farm them, even though the choice lands have been overlooked? ”Fear shall not come upon it,” he says, ”there. They will reckon these things among themselves, that fear would not come upon them if they wished to dwell there. Then he points out the magnitude of the utter desolation. For he says that the whole land, from the wasteland and thorns, will become pasture for sheep, and a place for the ox to tread, that is, for the grazing of cattle, the rich, the well-vined, the olive-bearing, the most beautifully treed, the one always abounding with fruits, the one flowing with milk and honey, according to what is written. Therefore, by pleasing God with obedience in everything whatsoever, we shall dwell securely, as in some country or city, in virtue, and we will prevail over our enemies. And nothing at all will terrify us.

But we shall rather be caretakers of all reasonableness and good works, and full of the fruitfulness that pleases God, and freed from the intelligible thorn, and a desirable land, according to the voice of the prophet, and truly God's husbandry. And the Lord said to me: Take for yourself a great new scroll, and write on it with a man's pen, to quickly make a plunder of spoils. For it is at hand, and make for me faithful men as witnesses, Uriah, and Zechariah son of Barachiah. Having made a very sufficient prediction of the things that were about to happen in due time to the land of the Jews, and having shown the magnitude of the disaster, he usefully adds the things concerning Emmanuel, and having revealed the mystery concerning him, God makes it clearer to the prophet. For he said: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive in her womb, and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel. For that he will be the mediator of a new covenant, the first one obviously being abolished, as it had much weakness, and was grown old, and perfected no one according to the conscience, he hints, saying: "Take for yourself a great new scroll. And what could "for yourself" signify, if not surely that? For not, he says, to those who have chosen to disobey, but to those who in faith have honored the word concerning him will the things in the new scroll be given. That is, the mystery of Christ will be revealed.

Therefore the scroll is new and great. For the new covenant speaking the mystery of Christ is not composed according to the first covenant, nor indeed will it be seen having the lowliness of the legal history, but as in excellence and height of knowledge and of doctrines. Whence also the divine Paul says most gladly, that he had suffered the loss of all things in the law for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ. It is clear then that when the first had grown old, as I said, a new and great scroll of the second covenant is taken, which is received upon better promises, as the most holy Paul says. And the scroll is written with the pen of a man. For what reason? When with the eyes of the mind we investigate the mystery of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, then at times we attempt to speak to others of the ineffable generation of the only-begotten Son of God; then indeed, then we have need of a pen not human and according to us. For what Would a word suffice to be able to make clear what is beyond mind and reason? But that reed alone is sufficient for such powerful narratives, which are beyond all understanding, concerning which God the Father says through the voice of David: "My tongue is the pen of a swift scribe. For no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know who the Father is except the Son, and to whomever the Son wills to reveal Him.

But when we make discourses concerning His incarnation, then indeed, then there is need of a human pen; which indeed the wise John has also done, saying: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. It is not at all difficult also to announce in our own voices His death in the flesh and His resurrection from the dead, and that as a kind of first-fruit and first-offering of human nature being renewed into incorruptibility, He ascended to the Father, and has sat down in the heavens. And He will come at the appointed time, and will be seated as judge. Therefore, the Spirit-inspired writers write with a human pen the things concerning the incarnation of the Only-Begotten. And he further commands, saying: "Make for me faithful men as witnesses, Uriah, and Zechariah the son of Barachiah. It should be

known that at that time, when the word concerning these things came from God to the blessed Isaiah, Uriah was a certain prophet, and Zechariah was a priest and a teacher of the law. Therefore, the initiation into the mysteries and the understanding through the law and the holy prophets, that is, the prediction, are taken as a witness to Christ. For Christ is the end of the law and the prophets. We say that something of this kind was shown to the holy apostles at the time of Christ's transfiguration on the mountain.

For it is written that, "After six days Jesus took Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves; and was transfigured before them. And His face shone as the sun, and His garments were white as the light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Observe, then, how Moses and Elijah, that is, the priesthood and the law (for Moses was both), and indeed also Elijah, being taken as the representative of the holy prophets, were speaking with one another concerning His departure, he says, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. And what departure? Clearly, the end of the economy: the cross, the death, the resurrection from the dead, the ascension into heaven. For the law prefigured all these things through a shadow, and the splendid and great chorus of the holy prophets also foretold them. And he went in to the prophetess, and she conceived, and bore a male child. God revealed to the prophet that the birth of Christ according to the flesh was not of blood and of flesh, nor of the will of man, but was something new and unusual, and beyond the laws of human nature. For He Himself, he says, who said, "Take for yourself a new, large scroll," went in to the prophetess. Observe, then, how the mystery of Christ is written with a human pen and in our own words.

For the divine Scripture is accustomed to say, "went in," instead of "came together," that is, had marital relations. Therefore the prophet sees a form of union having taken place with the holy Virgin, whom he also says is a prophetess, teaching a true matter; then he also says that a conception has occurred, and that a son has also been born. And the rendering of the vision is very swift, setting forth all things to the prophet for his knowledge. For that that all-holy body which was united to the Word was formed from the Holy Spirit, how could anyone doubt? Therefore the energy of the Spirit, through which the body was formed in the holy Virgin, was signified indirectly by the form of the union. For in this also Christ has become the first-fruit of those sanctified in the spirit, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Therefore He Himself was born of the Spirit according to the flesh and before the others, in order that also we are in these things through him. But it is necessary to note, that he commanded Uriah and Zechariah to be his witnesses, for making a swift distribution of spoils. And he added that, "For he is present.

For the law has testified, and indeed the foretelling of the holy prophets, that Christ, having been born, will despoil Satan, and will plunder his goods, as he himself says, that is, he will make his own those who were once his worshippers. For Christ himself also said this, speaking as in the manner of an example: "Or how can someone enter the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will

plunder his goods. And saying, "For he is present," he announced that the manifestation of Emmanuel would not be far off. This is what he is found saying to the blessed Habakkuk: "Yet a little while, and the one who is to come will come, and will not delay. And the Lord said to me: Call his name, Spoil quickly, Plunder swiftly. For before the child knows how to call father or mother, he will take the power of Damascus, and the spoils of Samaria, before the king of the Assyrians. Having said above, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in her womb, and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; he now commands his name to be called, Spoil quickly, Plunder swiftly. Is therefore the first name for him, that is, Emmanuel, meaningless? and would 'Spoil quickly, Plunder swiftly' be most fitting? We do not say this, but rather that.

It is the custom of the divinely inspired Scripture to call the God of all beings by different names, and sometimes to devise appellations from the things done at various times. This is observed also in the case of Christ himself. For he is true God, and that the Word, being God by nature, became with us, when he appeared as one of us, the name Emmanuel would signify very clearly. But since he became man, he despoiled Satan, and indeed rescued from his wickedness those who had long been plundered and were enslaved to him through sin, 'Spoil quickly, Plunder swiftly' would show. That as God he was about to accomplish with ineffable power the redemption of those on earth, he prefigures, saying: "For before the child knows how to call father or mother, he will take the power of Damascus, and the spoils of Samaria, before the king of the Assyrians. But the meaning of the preceding is very deep, and the narrative is spiritual. For the divine word is always somehow hidden in obscurities; for we will not find, as in a history and in perceptible things, that Christ, immediately after being born, despoiled Damascus, or the country of the king of the Assyrians, ransoming those who had been carried away from Samaria to his country. But when we take it spiritually, then indeed we shall certainly see the truth. Therefore Damascus, that is all of Syria, and indeed the land of the Assyrians, that is, of the Persians and Medes, was full of idols;

and for this reason it is called the land of carved images; for there were altars and sacred precincts everywhere, and those accustomed to frequent the precincts, I mean the races of false prophets, and those whose art was sorcery. But all their power was the demons worshipped among each of them, and their leader, Satan. When, therefore, Christ was about to seize, as it were, both the power of Damascus and that of the king of the Assyrians, that is, Satan and the evil and profane hordes of demons, and to free the deceived from slavery under him, and before he came to that bodily age at which it would be fitting for him to know how to call father or mother, he made it clear, saying: "For before the child knows how to call father or mother, he will take the power of Damascus. And 'He will take' is in place of 'He will subdue.' And likewise he will take the spoils of Samaria. That is, he will free the captives, having fought for them. Before the king of the Assyrians. Of the spiritual one, clearly, I mean Satan. For he was also the Damascus, and the power of Syria. Because even the worshipers of idols have all their hope of salvation in them; But that Christ despoiled Satan, having been born immediately, is easy to see. For Matthew writes:

”Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. They worshipped him, then, and offered gold, and frankincense and myrrh. Do you see how he despoiled Satan, and plundered him quickly? And that the purpose of his coming looks to the redemption of those who were in spiritual captivity, Christ himself would indicate, speaking through the voice of Isaiah: ”The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. And the blessed David also sings somewhere about him: ”Having ascended on high, he led captivity captive. And he himself taught this, saying: ”When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. And the Lord added to speak to me yet again: Because this people does not desire the water of Shiloah that goes softly, but desires to have Rezin, and the son of Remaliah as king over you, for this reason, behold, the Lord brings up upon you the water of the river, strong and mighty, the king of the Assyrians, and his glory.

And he shall come up over all your valleys, and shall walk over all your walls, and shall take away from Judaea a man who will be able to lift up his head, or able to accomplish anything. And his camp shall be so as to fill the breadth of your land. That, contrary to what is customary for men, the birth of Emmanuel will be strange and wonderful, that through the holy Virgin, and having stated very well that very many and truly most manifest divine signs would be accomplished at times, he reveals finally to the prophet, also the future madness of the Jews against him at the time of the incarnation. Indeed, the only-begotten Word of God came into this world, in the likeness of sinful flesh, not having the glory of his God-befitting excellence manifest and visible; nor indeed, according to his custom, dwelling in light unapproachable; nor being clearly attended by angelic powers; nor even perhaps in the glory of an earthly king; but very moderately and humbly, and with very much quietness. And this God the Father has declared to us through the voice of the saints, saying: ”Behold, my beloved Servant shall understand, in whom I am well pleased; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench. And this is the manner of the economy of the Only-begotten in the flesh.

But the wretched Jews, either not understanding at all the mystery concerning him or else impiously rejecting it, were terribly enraged, and sought to kill him, saying: ”For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. And they have continued always hard and stubborn, and even beyond this in impiety. For they brought him to Pilate, saying: ”Away with him, away with him, crucify him. And when he all but smiled at these things and said, Shall I crucify your King? they cried out, saying: ”We have no king but Caesar. See then how they denied being ruled by him, and inscribed Caesar and men as their kings. Therefore God makes this very thing clear to the prophet in a riddle. But since I think it is fitting also to make the interpretation of the discourse suitable to the matters of that time; we say that by the water of Shiloah he likens

the kingdom under God, which the Jews, having dishonored, have come to be under another, and have been given to the to enemies. For this reason he says: ”Because this people did not want the water of Siloam that goes quietly, but want to have Rezin, and the son of Remaliah as king over you, for this reason, behold, the Lord brings up upon you the water of the river, the strong and the abundant, the king of the Assyrians.

They say that the water of Siloam flows so quietly as to be poured out without any sound. And Siloam is interpreted, ”sent”. It receives him therefore as an image and type of the coming of our Savior, which happened without noise, as I just said. And Christ is truly the ”Sent One”. For the wise Paul also names him Apostle and High Priest of our confession. And likewise Siloam is received simply as a type of the kingdom under God. Therefore, since this people, unbending and unruly, does not want to have the water of Siloam that goes quietly; for it shakes off the yoke under God; but desires rather to be under the kingdom of men, and for those who wish to take advantage of it to prevail over it, I mean Rezin and Pekah; for this reason I will send up upon them the water of the river, that is, of the Euphrates. And since the saying was somewhat unclear, he immediately adds and says, The king of the Assyrians, and his glory; that is, all those under him, and every nation that has submitted its neck to him. And he compares the multitudes to water. And this is a custom for the divinely-inspired Scripture. And indeed concerning Nineveh, and its innumerable multitude, he says through the voice of the prophets: ”And Nineveh is like a pool of waters, her waters. And he continues with the figure and says:

”As upon water and a river, and he shall come up over all your valleys, and shall walk over all your wall, and he shall take away from Judea a man who will be able to lift up his head, or be able to accomplish anything. And his encampment shall be so as to fill the breadth of your land. And all these things were brought to fulfillment, while Jeremiah was prophesying, when Nebuchadnezzar marched against the land of the Jews; and he took the renowned Jerusalem; and having burned the temple, and having killed the notable men of the Jews, along with the sacred vessels he carried off all the other multitude le- ft from the war to his own land. It is clear therefore that upon those who do not wish to have the water of Siloam that goes quietly, that is, Christ, or the kingdom under God, the king of the spiritual Assyrians will certainly leap, that is, Satan, and taking them captive, will place them under his own yokes, and will make them slaves, binding them with the chains of manifold sins. God is with us, know, O nations, and be conquered; hear, unto the end of the earth; you who are mighty, be conquered. For if you are strong again, you will be conquered again. And whatever counsel you shall take, the Lord will scatter it; and whatever word you shall speak, it shall not abide; because the Lord God is with us.

The mind of the prophet leaps for joy, having clearly understood the mystery of Christ. Then taking up at once the person and the word of the holy evangelists and indeed of the apostles, he practically testifies to both Greeks and Jews, that for those who have made him their weapon, nothing will be able to resist. He commands the nations, therefore, to accomplish these two things: to recognize the mystery of Christ, and indeed that they must be

conquered by those who teach it. For "know," he says, "and receive the word in him, and be conquered," that is, yield, and do not resist the holy mystagogues; but rather obey them to the end of the earth, that is, you who are in every city and country, even to the very ends of the world under heaven. And those who are conquered and are willing to yield the victory to the teachers of the truth, will easily receive the word from him, and having believed in Christ they will walk straight toward every good thing, and having achieved the virtue most dear to him, a brilliant and enviable they will inherit glory. And these things the prophet says to the multitudes of the Greeks, as from the person of the holy apostles and evangelists: But you, O Jews, having been strong, are defeated. For as far as the purpose of the Jews was concerned, they prevailed against Christ, the wretched ones having delivered him to the cross.

But they planned a plan which they could not establish, according to what is written. For it was not possible to encompass with death the author of life. Therefore, even if you thought, he says, that you prevailed by killing the Lord, you were nevertheless defeated then, and show obedience by accepting the faith, or rather, know this, that even if you prevail again by not tolerating the teaching, but savagely rebuking those who proclaim the Gospel, you will be defeated again by the Judge who will then punish you, demanding penalties for such great folly. Which indeed has been done. For after Christ came back to life and ascended into heaven, they also plotted against the holy apostles themselves; and indeed bringing them into the councils they would beat them, accusing and saying: With a command we commanded you not to speak to anyone in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. Therefore, they seemed to prevail in this as well, but everything was useless for them, both plan, and thought, and word; for the divine disciples conquered, saying, because The Lord our God is with us. But they paid bitter penalties, being unwillingly defeated by the Roman armies. Thus says the Lord: They disobey the strong hand, the course of the way of this people, saying: Let them never say, It is hard. For whatever this people says is hard.

I said that the blessed prophet, putting on himself the person of the holy apostles and evangelists, advised both Gentiles and Jews to be defeated by Christ, and for those to the ends of the earth to obey him. Then God to him, almost wondering at the foolishness of Israel and its great ignorance, says, They disobey the strong hand. "For all-powerful," and unbreakable, and all-prevailing is the right hand of God the Father, the Son, through whom are all things, and in whom are all things; who abolished death, and crushed Satan, and plundered Hades, and grants incorruption to those under corruption, and renews all things to their original state. Thus also through the voice of the psalmist those saved in Christ say: "The right hand of the Lord has exalted me, the right hand of the Lord has wrought strength. And it is also said in the Odes: "Your right hand, O Lord, has been glorified in strength; your right hand, O Lord, has shattered enemies. Therefore, they have progressed to such a point of impiety and also madness, as to choose to readily disobey the strong hand that saves, and to consider the matter of no account. And they likewise disobey the course of this people, he says; whose person he took up and said immediately: God is with us. And

what kind of course of the people is it? Of those who have Emmanuel, the faith in him, the evangelical way of life, the one in the law and as in shadows having been disregarded.

And they disobey the course of this people, saying: May you never say, It is hard. For whatever this people says is hard. For the word of the holy apostles seemed somehow hard to the Jews, because, setting aside the shadow at the proper time, they did not permit living according to the law of Moses, but rather evangelically and spiritually. But do not fear their fear, nor be troubled, sanctify the Lord himself, and he will be your fear. And if you trust in him, he will be a sanctuary for you, and you will not encounter him as a stumbling stone, nor as a rock of offense. Having first accused those of Israel as choosing to disobey the course of the people, that is, the one in Christ, and the mystagogies of the holy apostles, he turns the word of exhortation to them, and works in them an unbreakable mind, saying that they should not fear those who disobey them, nor at all receive the tumult from their foolishness; but rather having courage in God, to act insolently against the enemies; knowing well that He will be to them both a weapon, and a tower of strength, and they will easily prevail over their opponents. For this reason, he says: ”But you shall not fear their fear, nor be troubled. But if one should wish to apply a slender mind to the thoughts of the preceding matters, he will understand it in another way. And it is thus.

For the Jews feared not a little, lest they should somehow offend God, by rejecting the way of the life in the law; and accepting the word of the Savior, who drew them away from the types and commanded them to consider the shadow as nothing. And so they said about him: ”If then this man were from God, he would not break the Sabbath. Therefore, that even if the divine disciples were from the Jews, they ought to renounce the fear of the disobedient, who feared, as I said, to offend against the law, by choosing rather to live according to the Gospel, he exhorts, saying: ”But you shall not fear their fear, nor be troubled; ”but rather,” he says, ”let the Lord of glory be sanctified by you,” that is, Christ, ”and let him be honored by faith, and let him be feared by you. For thus he will be a sanctuary to you, and you will not encounter him as a stone of stumbling, nor as a rock of falling. He sets two great and excellent things in him. For first, he says, he will sanctify you who believe, and will make you partakers of his divine nature through the Holy Spirit; and in addition to this, you will gain the benefit of not falling upon him as a stone, nor indeed as a rock of offense. Which is indeed what the wretched Jews have suffered through their exceeding great ignorance, saying: ”We know that God has spoken to Moses;

but as for this man, we do not know where he is from. Therefore, since they neither sanctified him, nor were willing to trust in him, they have remained completely without share in sanctification, and having stumbled as against a stone, they have fallen, and have come to be in every evil. But the house of Jacob is in a snare, and sitting in hollow places in Jerusalem; for this reason many among them will be weak, and will fall and be shattered, and they will draw near, and people who are in safety will be captured. Then will be manifest those who seal the law so as not to learn. The wise Proverb-writer said: ”My son, let not your heart envy sinners, but be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For it would

be fitting for those who are truly of sound mind to become imitators not of the foolishness of the wicked, but of the gentleness of the good. Therefore, since he advised the holy disciples to make Christ a sanctuary, and to trust rather in him, and to consider the madness of their persecutors as nothing, he necessarily added what great and terrible injuries will befall those who have chosen to disobey. For the house, he says, of Jacob, that is, the Jews, suffering from a very great and unceasing madness against Christ, will be like those who have fallen into a snare, and have been hunted for destruction.

Or also like those in hollow places, that is, those who have slipped into a pit. And for this reason many among them will be weak, and will fall, and will be shattered, and they will draw near, that is, they will be near and not far from that which is naturally destructive. For they will be powerless and shattered, and easily captured by their enemies. And this was, then, what was said about them by God through the voice of a prophet. ”Behold, I am bringing weakness upon this people; and fathers and sons together will be weak among them. Neighbor and his fellow will perish; and yet it is not so with those in Christ who are called to sanctification. For their strength and praise is the Lord, according to what is written. And the divine Paul will confirm this, saying: ”I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ”Therefore the unbelieving,” he says, ”will be captured, people who are in safety. For as much as pertained to the help from above which always belonged to those of Israel, they were in some ways indestructible, and hard to fight against for their enemies, both visible and invisible. For God said somewhere concerning Jerusalem: ”And I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in the midst of her. But since they have stumbled by treating Christ with insolence, they continue in the world destitute of all security, both spiritual and sensible.

For the grace of the Savior has passed over to others, that is, to those from the Gentiles. ”Then,” it says, ”shall be manifest those who are sealing the law so as not to learn. And who might these be again? Clearly, those justified and sanctified in Christ through the Spirit; to whom it would be fitting to say: ”The light of Your countenance, O Lord, has been signed upon us. For the Son is the image and likeness and, as it were, the face of God the Father. And the light sent from Him to us is the Holy Spirit, through whom we have been sealed, being re-formed into the first image through sanctification. For we have been made according to the image and likeness of God the creator. Therefore, they will be manifest, it says, that is, distinguished and most well-known to God, and eminent in the world; those who are being sealed by the Holy Spirit, so as not to learn the law. Shall we therefore abstain from the legal readings? And yet how is it not ignorant to think thus, when Christ says clearly: ”Therefore I say to you, that every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a rich man who brings out of his treasure new things and old. Therefore, we do not refuse to know the law; but to know it in such a way as to choose to live legally, that is, Jewishly, is to be avoided.

For we will not sacrifice an ox, nor will we honor the God of all with sacrifices of blood. But rather we will offer to him spiritual worship as a fragrant aroma. For as the Savior says:

”God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. And that for those sealed by the Holy Spirit unto newness of life, it is a great loss to still wish to live and conduct oneself Jewishly, that is, according to the shadow of the law, the blessed Paul will confirm, saying to those who, after faith, go backwards as it were, to the worship in shadows: ”Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh? And again: ”But I say to you, that if you are circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. You have been estranged from Christ, you who live by the law, you have fallen from grace. For we through faith eagerly await the hope of righteousness. And he will say: I will wait for the God who has turned his face away from the house of Jacob, and I will be confident in him. That there is much obedience in those in Christ, and through these things the prophet tries to fully convince us. For the God of all was addressing them concerning Emmanuel: Sanctify him as Lord, and he himself will be your fear. And if you are confident in him, he will be to you for sanctification.

And they, having very gladly received the word of initiation into this, without any delay promise obedience, and placing all their hope in him say: ”I will wait for God, who has turned his face away from the house of Jacob, and I will be confident in him. And what might ”I will wait” mean? Or surely that which the divine David also said: ”Waiting, I waited for the Lord, and he attended to me. And he waits for the Lord who has chosen to think what seems good to him, and who follows his commands, and who most gladly endures the struggles for piety towards him. For to this the Spirit urges them through the voice of the psalmist, saying: ”Be courageous, and let your heart be strengthened, and wait for the Lord. ”Therefore I will wait,” he says, ”for the God who has turned his face away from the house of Jacob” See then, see how much intelligence they have in addition to their obedience. For from the things by which others have stumbled, and indeed have suffered the turning away of the divine face, by these very things they make their own hearts more secure for the inclination toward better things. For they fear the turning away of the divine eyes. For the judge is no respecter of persons, and one would not doubt that in every way and entirely, according to the ways of each, fittingly and justly he will either bestow praise or, that is, he will bring judgment.

And those who have been insolent through disobedience, he will cast out of his presence and will consider them hateful. But those who have honored him by faith, he will consider as beloved for keeping the faith, but he will turn away from those who have abandoned the genuine thing, and he will consider them equal to those who have not believed at all, or perhaps even in a worse state. For it is written concerning some: ”For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of truth, than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. Behold, I and the children whom God has given me, and he will be for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Sabaoth, who dwells on Mount Zion. Since they have rightly distinguished the good confession (for they said: ”I will wait for the God who has turned his face away from the house of Jacob, and I will trust in him”), he immediately introduces the person of Emmanuel himself, bestowing intimacy upon those who have placed their hope in him, that is, clearly, the intimacy through the

Spirit. For the Son has sent his own Spirit into us, and we have become his own; and in him we cry, Abba, Father. He therefore names us children of the Father, as having the regeneration through the Spirit, so that we might be called brothers of the one who is truly Son by nature.

For he said through the voice of the Psalmist: "I will declare your name to my brothers. Yet even if he has become a brother and has been called our firstborn on account of his humanity, although he is God and the only-begotten Son, we have not been ignorant of his glory and his pre-eminence over all creation. And we know that we have been given to him by God the Father. And he himself is found saying this to the Father and God in heaven: "Those whom you have given me out of the world were yours, and you gave them to me. For the Son is by nature Lord of all; and he rules together with God the Father over every created thing. And since he became man, to whom all things are God-given and bestowed, he is said to have received the things of which he was lord as God: "For ask," he says, "of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. He therefore rejoices over those who trust in him, that is, those called to the knowledge of the truth through faith; and all but stretching out his hand, he points them out, saying: "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me. Who then says these things? Emmanuel, clearly. Who will be, he says, for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Sabaoth, who dwells on Mount Zion.

For so that those throughout the whole earth might believe that, being God by nature, he became man, and being Lord of all, he wore the form of a servant according to the economy for our sake; he worked very many signs throughout Judea, and made a most effective demonstration of his divine pre-eminence; the things accomplished miraculously and beyond reason: now raising the dead, now rebuking unclean spirits; and bestowing sight on the blind with authority. And the prophetic word will be an accusation of the perversity and impiety of the Jews. For he says that the signs and wonders have come from the Lord of Sabaoth who dwells on Mount Zion. But they, leaving nothing unattempted of outrageous deeds or words, dared to blaspheme, saying: "This man does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons. And if they say to you: Seek out those who speak from the earth, and the ventriloquists who speak empty things, who speak from the belly, should not a nation seek its God? Why do they inquire of the dead concerning the living? For he gave the law for a help, that they might say: Not like this word concerning which it is not possible to give gifts concerning it. Emmanuel himself weaves a catechetical discourse for those who have placed their hope in him, who have been reckoned as children;

and they have been given to him by God the Father, as to a Savior and Redeemer and Life-giver, and able to enlighten, and to deliver from every evil; and it completely turns them away from their ancient customs, and their former madness. For it is the custom of the idol-worshippers to love the oracles from the demons, and to be fond of attaching themselves to certain vain-speaking necromancers, who say nothing true; but they simply belch out whatever comes to mind. But you, he says, even if someone should approach, saying: Seek

those who speak from the earth, that is, those who pretend to bring up the dead; and to make their divinations as if from Hades; that is to say, the ventriloquists; who pretend to have certain gods in their belly, and thus to speak to those who approach them what comes from them, do not accept the advice. For they speak only from their own belly, and they are not a wise nation, so as to seek God and learn something from him. But say to those who advise such things: Why do they seek the dead concerning the living? do you see how he makes them most sensible? For not only does he command them to depart from their foolishness and madness, but he also commands them to become good counselors to the deceived. For you say, he says: Why do they seek the dead concerning the living? for the reasoning is common and human.

For what sense would it make to wish to inquire about those still living from those lying in the earth, or souls who happen to be in Hades? And in another way, it is utterly ignorant to pay attention to necromancy and to the false words of sorcerers who have a dead mind and, as it were, a chilled heart. For they do not know the creator of all things, they do not have within them the life-giving word of God. They are, moreover, also supervisors of dead works. How then do the living, that is, those who have the life-giving power from above within themselves and have been enriched with the living Word of God, ask the dead about themselves? Therefore, say these things, he says, adding that he gave a law for assistance, that is, the evangelical one, so that those who pay attention to it may say: Not as this word, concerning which it is not possible to give gifts for it. For those who speak from their own heart alone sell falsehood; but the saving and true law of God, that is, the evangelical decree, which has been given for the help of those on earth, is not like this word, clearly that of the false prophets. But neither is it possible to give gifts for it. For as I just said, some people buy the false words of the sorcerers with silver. But the heavenly decree is set before those who are willing, through which we have been guided to anything good whatsoever.

And indeed, we have learned as much as was necessary of the things that are to come. For to whom is it not plain that for those who do good things for us, and keep genuine love for Christ, everything whatsoever will be according to prayer? For he declares them blessed both in this world and in the age to come. Therefore, the law given by Christ for assistance is set before those who wish to know it, without silver and any gift. And this, then, was what was wisely spoken through the voice of Isaiah: ”You who are thirsty, go to the water, and as many as have no silver, go and buy without silver and price. And a harsh famine shall come upon you, and it shall be that when you are hungry, you will be grieved, and you will speak ill of the ruler and of your ancestral ways. And they will look up to the heaven above, and down to the earth below they will look; and behold, affliction and distress, and darkness, severe anguish, and darkness so that they cannot see, and he who is in distress shall not be in want until a time. He transfers the discourse to the disobedient nation, that is, Israel, who, though they had broad and abundant consolation from God, and reveled richly in the legal instructions, did not receive Christ so as to know what leads to benefit.

Therefore they have also slipped from their intelligible and spiritual intimacy with him, and have perished as if by a famine. For the God of all said through the voice of the prophets. "Behold, I am bringing a famine upon the land, says the Lord; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord; and from the east to the west, they will run about seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it. When, therefore, he says, having killed the author of life, you endure a harsh and unbearable famine, not having the word of God, the bread from heaven, the one giving life to the world, then you will hunger. And indeed, having been brought to a sense of what has happened, you will speak ill of the ruler and of your ancestral ways. And what is this? For the teachers of the Jews, I mean the Scribes and Pharisees, did not cease from inciting the multitude under their hand against the Savior of us all, Christ. And they took as a pretext for their madness against him, reverence for both Moses and the law. For they persecuted him, saying, "If this man were from God, he would not break the Sabbath. Therefore they would persuade them to persecute him as a lawbreaker. When therefore he says:

You who have been deceived by them will hunger, then you will speak ill of all your rulers and of your ancestral ways, that is, the lawful customs. For you will remember that your leaders incited you; and the pretext of the rulers for the madness against Christ was the ancestral ways; that is, the customs and the traditions, and not at all those of the law, but they also accepted doctrines from vain observances, commandments of men. There will be, therefore, upon you a harsh famine, and looking up and down and looking everywhere, that is, turning the eye of your mind about, you will see nothing else, he says, except dire straits and darkness, so as to be able to see nothing useful, and he who is in distress will not be at a loss until the time comes. Again he foretells the calling of the Gentiles. For those who are now, he says, oppressed in distress and famine of divine teachings, will not be at a loss. For Emmanuel will grant them the blessing, and will set before them spiritual foods, and will spread the divine table for them, saying that: Eat and drink, and be drunk, O neighbors. And this will be, he says, until a time, that is, it will not now come to an end. When also the word of prophecy concerning them came to be. But at the due time in which Emmanuel will shine upon those on earth. For then the multitude of the Gentiles is called.

This first, drink, do it quickly, land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, and the rest who inhabit the seacoast and beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people walking in darkness, see a great light. Those who dwell in the land and shadow of death, a light will shine upon you; the greater part of the people, whom you have brought down in your gladness; and they will rejoice before you as those who rejoice at the harvest, and in the manner of those who divide the spoils. Saying that those who have chosen to disobey Emmanuel will be oppressed by a harsh famine and indeed also by want, having foretold that those in distress will not be at a loss until the time, according to the meaning already previously given. He begins to show also who were the first to believe, and who became the firstfruits of those called to the knowledge of Emmanuel who says: Behold, I and the children whom God has given me, who has also become signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of Sabaoth who dwells on Mount Zion. For they say somewhere that the

borders of Zebulun and Naphtali lie beside the lake of Tiberias, and are in the extremities of the land of the Jews, so as to be bordering on Galilee of the Gentiles, there being another one near the land of the Phoenicians. From these tribes, they say, the holy apostles for the most part came.

And so, concerning their calling, Matthew, the blessed evangelist, explaining to us, first brings Jesus into the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. Then he clearly adds in what manner he made the holy apostles chosen. And he writes thus about Christ: ”And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken through might be fulfilled Isaiah saying: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned for them. And he adds to these: ”And walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them: Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And they immediately left their nets and followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him. It must be known that the Holy Scripture calls the Sea of Galilee the Lake of Tiberias; where also the divine disciples were found, practicing the art of fishermen.

Therefore the God of all makes these statements through the voice of the prophet for the present time, as to the regions, that is, the cities of the tribe of Zebulun and Naphtali, which lay beside the Lake of Tiberias; and, as it were, giving them the cup of salvation, and bringing the wine that makes glad the heart of man, that is, the preaching about Christ. Drink this first, he says, do it quickly, that is, O land of Zebulun and Naphtali, receive the saving proclamation. But do it quickly, that is, without any delay. And the disciples, as I said, were sharp, and went very readily to believe in Christ. For they followed immediately, leaving their nets and their father, and did not need a long initiation. For they heard: ”Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men, and they followed him. In the same way we will find other of the holy apostles were called, and made the account of the initiation in Christ. For John writes thus about the Savior of us all, Christ: ”The next day he wanted to go out to Galilee; and he finds Philip, and Jesus says to him: Follow me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, from the country of Andrew and Peter. Philip finds Nathanael and says to him: We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth. And when he came to Jesus, then he heard him saying:

”Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” he believed immediately, and indeed cried out, saying: ”Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel. And Bethsaida, from which Philip was and indeed Nathanael, again lay beside the Sea of Tiberias. And the blessed David also remembers the proclamation of the disciples, and says: ”There is Benjamin, the younger in ecstasy, the rulers of Judah their leaders; the

rulers of Zebulun, the rulers of Naphtali. And that not only the divine disciples were to be called at times, but also the flocks of the Gentiles, he reveals, saying: And the rest who are by the sea and beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwell in the region and shadow of death, a light will shine upon you. For they walked like those from the Gentiles, and they lived in this world; like those in night and in darkness, because of not having the light of true knowledge of God in their mind, but falling as if into every pit; and stumbling as if against every evil stone. And he says they dwell in a region and shadow of death, because there was among them, that is, in their lands, nothing other, except only mist and darkness, the intelligible darkness, that is, and being as if in the likeness of the dead, although still living.

For the shadow of bodies in every way imitates their forms, and does not differ at all in any way, as far as it concerns resemblance, which I speak of as in form; but not to know the God who is by nature And truly, it is in a way an imitation and shadow of death. But upon those who were sick with those things a light has shone, that is, after the one from Christ, and the evangelical oracle. From there came the greatest part of the people, whom you brought down in your gladness. For far more numerous are those called from the nations than those who believed from Israel. Therefore, he says, the greatest part of the people saw a great light, whom you brought down in your gladness. And he has put 'You brought down' instead of 'I have called back,' and 'I have redeemed,' as if they had been captives from diabolical rapacity. "They will rejoice before you, as those who rejoice in the harvest; and in the way that those who divide the spoils do. We shall understand the meaning of the preceding words in two ways. For if it is the divine disciples who are rejoicing in the harvest and dividing the spoils, we say that gathering those from the nations like some wheat into the Master's storehouse, and cutting them off from their ancient error, they rejoice in the same way as those who harvest in the fields;

and snatching like from a tyrannical greed those deceived by Satan, and transferring them through faith to piety, they rejoice as those who divide the spoils. For some persuaded these, and others those; and to each the saved are a gain, just as to the victors are the spoils from the war. But if these things are said to be spoken concerning those who have believed, let us understand that at the time of their wandering, having no fruit of righteousness, they have been enriched with it by believing in Christ. But also, having been formerly ravaged and plundered by both the demons and Satan, they have conquered through Christ those who formerly despoiled them, and have become superior to their wickedness. Therefore they themselves also rejoice, as the prophet says, as those who rejoice in the harvest, and in the way that those who divide the spoils do. Because the yoke that lay upon them shall be taken away, and the rod that was upon their neck. For the Lord has scattered the rod of the exactors, as in the day of Midian. Those on earth being free, and having been made very well in the divine image, and created, as the blessed Paul says, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them, the inventor of iniquity has taken great advantage of, and having turned them from the love of God, he made them his own worshippers, having placed upon them the hard-to-escape yoke of sin.

Therefore, Christ rescued those who had acted wretchedly, and were in these evils, especially those from the nations, and again declared them free. For this reason, he says: "The yoke that lay upon them shall be taken away, and the rod that was upon their neck. And I think he means by 'rod' either the scepter, that is, the kingdom, clearly that of Satan, or perhaps the compulsion, and as it were the blow and the scourge. For the vile and profane host of demons, and their leader Satan, constrains us to its own will, all but beating us with a rod by the tyrannies of the passions, which it brings upon the mind, and forces the heart to wish to do what is not lawful. Therefore, he says, they will shake off the yoke from greed, and indeed also the rod, which they have always had upon their neck, just as servants are subject to the blows of the master. And again he mentions a story found in the book of Judges. And it is this. For having abandoned the God of all, those of Israel in the days of the Judges turned to unholy ways, and having greatly grieved the defending God, they were devoted to idols, and offered worship to the works of their own hands. For this reason they were given over to the Midianites; who plundered all their land, pillaging both cities and villages, and the things in the fields.

And they instilled such terror in the wretched people, that they chose to dwell in rocks, and the impassable parts of the mountains, and to search out the recesses of the caves, and were afflicted by a severe and long famine. But God had mercy on them when they were greatly wearied, then has saved them by the hand of Gideon, who conquered the Midianites, and freed Israel from the necessity and rod hanging over them. Thus, therefore, the Lord scattered the rod of the exactors, as in the day of Midian. For as he then rescued those who were ensnared by unbearable greed, having driven out the covetous nation, so he has saved those from the nations, having driven away the rod of the exactors. And by 'exactors' he means Satan himself, and the demons, whose purpose and entire effort is to demand from people, as a kind of tribute or tax, their customary sins. For they always seek, from the one accustomed to fornicate, fornication, and from the one who steals, theft, that is, simply to strip clothes, and from each of those who are in passions, the things that are customary and dear to him. Whence I think the sacred Scripture blesses some, as not having heard the voice of the tax-collector. For every garment gathered by deceit, and every cloak with a change they will repay; and they will wish that they had been burned with fire.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us, whose government was born upon his shoulder, and his name is called angel of great counsel. For I will bring peace upon the rulers, peace and their health. Great is his government, and of his peace there will be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it, in justice, and in judgment, from now and for all time; the zeal of the Lord of Sabaoth will do these things. The remnant of Israel has been called to the knowledge of Emmanuel through the holy apostles; and the nations have also been called. And so he said: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali; then to these he added, Galilee of the nations; the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, that which is clearly through Christ, illumining intellectually, no longer one nation from Israel, but rather the whole world under heaven. That the enlightened were about to cast off the yoke of the devil's malevolence, and to escape the rod, he has fully

assured by setting forth: Because the yoke that lies upon them shall be taken away, and the rod that is upon their neck. But we see that upon those who had served creation and had worshipped the works of their own hands, the yoke of diabolical malevolence was cast; and indeed upon those from Israel, the hard-to-bear burden of the law, and a truly unbearable load.

And so the blessed disciples, to those who after the faith persuaded some to keep the things in the law, rebuked them saying: "And now why do you test God by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear? Therefore, the yoke of the law was very unbearable for those from Israel; and in addition to this, even more burdensome, the malevolence of the Pharisees was crushing them, not moderately, shattering them with their insatiable greed. For the leaders of the synagogue of the Jews were lovers of money, and had one purpose, to collect from everywhere, and to oppress the peoples under their hand. Therefore, it would be very right to say also concerning those from Israel: "Because the yoke that lies upon them shall be taken away, and the rod that is upon their neck. And by 'rod', as is likely, he names the greed of the leaders, because of their terrible inclination towards love of gain. For this reason, the wretched ones also killed the Son himself. For though they saw that he is the heir, they said among themselves, he says: "Come, let us kill him, and let us take his inheritance for ourselves. Therefore, since they had this impious and unholy purpose, they would have most gladly endured the loss of all their possessions. Or that they saw Emmanuel shining upon the world, he hints at, saying:

"For every garment gathered by deceit, and every cloak with reconciliation, they will repay, and they will wish that they had been burned with fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. For from deceit and guile, and from not judging rightly, they made their collection of money, he says; but it was sweet and dear to them, even up to the very of their robes and garments with exchange, that is, with addition. to send away and to cast off, or rather he says they wished to be consumed even by fire, being exceedingly vexed, because a child was born to us, a son. For having been entrusted with the master's vineyard, they wished to have the fruits for themselves and alone, offering to the master nothing at all. But by saying a child has been born, he clearly refutes the inertness of the Manichaeans' opinion, who refuse to say that the Word became flesh; that is, that He wore our flesh for our sake, according to the economy. But if they wish to think rightly, and to condemn their own ill counsel, let them not dishonor the words of the prophet, who says that a child has been born to us. For where there is a true birth from a woman, what place could there be for the idea that His sojourn came to be in appearance and shadow, and, so to speak, in fantasies alone? but he says the son has been given to us.

For the only-begotten Word of God became man not for His own sake, but rather renewing our condition to what it was from the beginning, and as a ransom for the life of all, offering His own body as a fragrant aroma to God the Father. And he says that his government has been upon his shoulder, and it seems to some to mean something like this. For since, he

says, our Lord Jesus the Christ, carrying the cross for Himself on His shoulders, went to the saving passion, and through it was exalted and has ruled over what is under heaven, for this reason it is also said that His government came to be upon His shoulder. The argument has plausibility, and the concept, being correct, should not be dishonored, even if one should choose to praise it. But it seems that in these things the prophetic word wishes to signify to us strength by the shoulder. For all our strength is in our arms and shoulders. And so the Son has been called the right hand and arm of God the Father. ”Lord,” he says, ”who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, Christ ruled over what is under heaven through His own power; for He is the strength of God the Father. He has also been called the Angel of great counsel, clearly that of God the Father. And the wise John will testify concerning Him, saying: ”He who receives His testimony has certified that God is true.

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God. And He Himself somewhere says to the holy apostles: ”You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his Lord is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. Therefore, for this reason, He names Emmanuel the angel of great counsel. And since He became man, He Himself attributed to God the Father the energy and power in all things done by Him, and through these things God the Father Himself is for us, which He makes clear by saying: For I will bring peace upon the rulers, their peace and health. Christ indeed gave the existing peace to the holy apostles as His own. For all that belongs to the Father is His, and indeed He said: ”My peace I give to you; my peace I leave with you. But if Emmanuel Himself should be said to receive peace and health, understand again the skill of the economy with the flesh. For He received peace, clearly from the world, as the Father brought all to Him, and persuaded them to be at peace with Him, by worshiping Him, and accepting the yoke of His kingdom. ”For no one can,” he says, ”come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him. And the wise Isaiah also cries out somewhere:

”Let us make peace with him, let us who are coming make peace. He receives, then, peace from the Father, in this way, as I said. For we have heard Him saying to the Father and Son in the heavens: ”Those whom you have given me out of the world, they were yours, and you gave them to me. And He receives health, that is, the revival from the dead. For since it is said that he became weak for a little while, because of yielding his own flesh, by the grace of God to taste death for all, receives health, that is, the return to life, and this he himself having accomplished again. For he raised his own temple, being himself the power of the Father. For if he is the resurrection and the life, of what would life have need for giving life? And if he is seen having raised the bodies of others again by his own power, how would he not have raised his own even before the others? And yet, he himself says to the Jews: ”Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. For he teaches that the kingdom of Christ is unshakable and has stability forever, saying: ”Great is his rule, and of his peace there is no end. For he no longer ruled only Judea, but rather all that is under heaven. And there will be no end of the peace offered to him by us.

For we are at peace with him, we worship him, as I said, and through him and in him to God the Father. And being eager to remove from the midst sin, the cause of war. That he came to set free the nation of the Jews, he teaches, setting forth: "Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to establish it; and to uphold it in righteousness, and in judgment, from now and for evermore. Since the blessed prophet has sufficiently made for us the discourse concerning Emmanuel, he sets forth the time of the incarnation, saying: "The zeal of the Lord of Sabaoth will do these things. But what sort of zeal and over what things, it is necessary to say. For the Dragon, the apostate, seized all that is under heaven, and subjected to his own scepters man, who was made in the image of God. Therefore, what had happened against us was truly worthy of all zeal, and full of all greed; therefore the zeal of the Lord of Sabaoth set free those throughout all the earth. And in another way, those of Israel provoked him to jealousy with what are no gods, as it is written, and with their vanities, and finally they crucified Emmanuel. They were provoked to jealousy by the gentiles, as he himself says: They provoked me to jealousy with what are no gods. They angered me with their idols, and I will provoke them to jealousy with a no-nation, with a foolish nation I will anger them.

Discourse 6

The Lord sent death upon Jacob, and it came upon Israel, and all the people of Ephraim will know, and those who dwell in Samaria, saying in arrogance and with a haughty heart: Bricks have fallen, but come, let us hew stones, and let us cut down sycamores, and cedars and let us build for ourselves a tower. The prophet's discourse concerning Emmanuel has been long, which having skillfully completed, he returns again to the things at the beginning; and they were these: For he strongly accused Israel, as being disobedient and provoking God who had always saved them, and on account of this reason, giving itself over to the worst evils; for he was saying that they did not want the law of the Lord of Sabaoth; but they provoked the oracle of the holy one of Israel. And the Lord was angry in wrath against his people, and he laid his hand upon them, and struck them. And the mountains were provoked, and their carcasses became like dung in the middle of the road. And by the provoked mountains he means the kings of the Assyrians; for they have become arrogant and boastful, and lofty in their minds. Who, having shaken all Samaria from its foundations, took Israel captive, and carried them away to the mountains of the Persians and Medes. Therefore, having completed, as I said, the proclamation of Emmanuel, he follows again the purpose set forth in the beginning, and relates the destruction of Samaria, saying:

"The Lord sent death upon Jacob, and it came upon Israel. It must be known that both the Hebrew edition, and other interpreters, have put "word" instead of "death. For it says, "The Lord sent a word upon Jacob, and it came upon Israel. But what kind of word? Evidently, one that condemns the impious, and subjects to punishments those who had abandoned him, and had worshipped the works of their own hands. So whether it is said, God sent death, or a curse, or a word, the force of the concepts will not be inconsistent, but will rather proceed to one and the same purpose. He mentions, however, a history in these things, which I will relate briefly. For thus and with difficulty will the meaning become clear. Therefore, at various times in Jerusalem, both good and evil men have reigned over Judah, that is, Jacob; and no less so over Israel from the tribe of Ephraim in Samaria. For from the tribe of Ephraim was also their first king, Jeroboam the son of Nabat, who also persuaded them to worship his golden calves. Therefore, of those who reigned at various times both in Jerusalem and in Samaria, very many have become, as I said, fearlessly offending God, profane and idolaters, worshipping the host of heaven, and having unholily served wood and stones; such a one was also this Ahaz, who also made his own children pass through the

fire, and wrought a great many evils against Jerusalem, and he also transgressed against the divine temple itself.

But when he was removed, seized by death, Hezekiah succeeds to the scepter, while Hoshea son of Elah was reigning in Samaria over Israel, that is, the ten tribes. While he was governing the kingdom, the king of the Assyrians marched against Samaria. And along with it he also captured many other cities of Judaea. Then after this, while Sennacherib was overrunning Judaea, God miraculously saved Jerusalem, as Hezekiah was pious. And it is written thus in the fourth book of Kings: And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. And they took it at the end of three years, in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel. And Samaria was taken, and the king of Assyria carried away Samaria into Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the mountains of the Medes; because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and transgressed his covenant, all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and they did not hear, and did not do. And in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against the fortified cities of Judah, and took them. And these things are from the holy Scriptures.

But that Sennacherib destroyed Samaria, coming up against Jerusalem, we will effortlessly see from what the blessed prophet Isaiah himself has written. For Rabshakeh addressed those sitting on the wall thus: Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying: Your God will deliver you. Did the gods of the nations each deliver his own country from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where is the god of Hamath, and of Arpad? and where is the god of the city of Sepharvaim? Were they able to save Samaria from my hand? Therefore Sennacherib destroyed Samaria along with the other cities and countries; then he besieged Jerusalem. For because he had spoken foolishly of the divine glory, an angel went out from the Lord, and killed from the camp of the Assyrians in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Therefore, since Sennacherib came against Jerusalem, but had already destroyed Samaria when God delivered it up, because it chose to do worse things than those in Jerusalem, he necessarily says: "The Lord sent death upon Jacob, and came upon Israel. But Samaria has been burned, in which Israel dwelt, that is, the ten tribes, and it has utterly perished. And it was, I think, wise for those who remained in it to consider that offending God is truly most difficult; then, having understood this, it was by all means necessary to appease the one who was grieved, and by changes for the better to soothe the one who was provoked.

But they did not do this, nor did they take it to mind at all; but being senseless, they spoke even more greatly: "Bricks have fallen, but let us hew stones, and let us cut sycamores and cedars, and let us build for ourselves a tower. O what great ignorance. For why was it not necessary rather to say: We have offended through foolishness the all-powerful God? And for this reason, our cities and villages were captured. Come, let us by repentance unload the wrath. But they did not say these things; but rather, insulting the security that comes from God's help, they said that the walls of the cities in Samaria had been made of crumbling

brick. But if we hew stones, and the incorruptible woods, I mean sycamores, and cedars, and fit them together and raise a tower, we will be invincible to our enemies, and we will remain unassailable. Therefore, those saying these things, he says, with hubris and a proud heart, will know, that is, they will learn again, where their plan will lead, and that their counsel will again end in destruction. It should be known that after the sack by Sennacherib in the time of Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar made war on Judea and took it all by force. and he sacked Samaria, both it and Jerusalem. Therefore, the prophet Jeremiah says: "Cursed is he who puts his hope in man. And makes flesh his arm. For no one will save the one who has come under divine wrath.

"For the high hand, who will turn it back," according to what is written? And God will dash those who rise up against Mount Zion against them, and will scatter their enemies; Syria from the rising of the sun, and the Greeks from the setting of the sun, those who devour Israel with a whole mouth. When God strikes because of many sins, he brings dressing to those who have suffered, so that he might appear in every way to be calling them to repentance, I mean, both through pain and consolation. He promises something of this sort now to those who suffered the devastation. The passage before us has a historical explanation, which it is necessary, as I said, to speak of briefly. For the last war by Nebuchadnezzar was waged against all of Judea together, and indeed of Samaria, and they were carried away captive, and they served their enemies for seventy years. But when the time of wrath was completed, the God of all again had mercy, and indeed he arranged for them to be released, after Cyrus the son of Cambyses had conquered the Babylonians. And when those who had suffered arrived at the holy city, they wished to rebuild its walls. And indeed they did so, and they built their divine temple. But no less, although they had suffered so much, and had paid the penalties for their ancient transgressions, the neighboring nations rose up against them again out of envy. For they did not want Jerusalem to become strong.

But most of all the others, those from neighboring Syria and Damascus attacked fiercely. Yet they were conquered, as God saved and defended those from the captivity. For they had overcome their enemies. Then, as time went on, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, king of Asia, was aggrieved at Ptolemy, who was then king of the land of the Egyptians; and having stirred up a war, he was conquered, and was saved with difficulty. And so that he might not run home completely empty-handed, having no memorial of victory, he campaigned against Judea, took Jerusalem, and having it under his hand, and having plundered all the holy vessels, he established a certain general, Lysias, in Judea, ordering him to guard the province. But when the aforementioned Antiochus into the has run his own kingdom, the Jews have warred against Lysias the general, and have been victorious. Indeed, learning these things, Antiochus died from grief. Therefore, the God of all promises aid to those who were ravaged by Nebuchadnezzar, and who barely escaped captivity, he says: "And God will dash to pieces those who rise up against Mount Zion, against them. Do you hear how he who strikes also binds up? Who then are those who rise up? Syria from the rising of the sun, and the Greeks from the setting of the sun. For Antiochus was a Greek by race, coming from Macedonia. And this is in the west.

For the land of the Macedonians is part of the West, especially when it is considered in comparison, according to its position, with those from the rising of the sun. And these are Syrians and Damascenes. And since he says concerning the Greeks, "those who devour Israel with their whole mouth," it must be known that Antiochus treated the Jews cruelly and inhumanly, and killed countless numbers wretchedly and pitiably, when the Maccabees also contended, and the glorious victories of those men were accomplished. And Josephus recounts these things in his book about them. But indeed, the children of the Greeks devour Israel in another way, and it is necessary to say how. For their poets and orators, having reached the height of eloquence, and as far as it pertains to words, being clever and wise, sometimes seize the spiritual Israel, that is, a mind that sees God, and deceive those who have already believed in Christ, so that they choose with them to worship the creation rather than the creator. These devour Israel with their whole mouth, to whom one must not pay attention. For if the brilliance of speech is seen to run together with good works, it will be both acceptable and pleasing to God. But what else would it be, bare and alone, than, as the most wise Paul says, "a resounding bronze, or a clanging cymbal? For all these things his anger has not turned away, but his hand is still raised high.

And the people did not turn back until they were struck, and they did not seek the Lord. For the God of all saved even a sinning Israel, and granted aid, so that they became greater than those from neighboring Syria, and from the setting of the sun, who were devouring him with their whole mouth. Yet the Lord's anger against them, he says, did not turn away, that is, it did not cease, but rather the hand of the one who strikes remained high, evidently ready to inflict other blows upon them. For what reason? For the people did not turn back, he says, nor did they abstain from their own sins. He did not seek out the Lord, because he wished to think and to do what seemed good and pleasing to himself. But they remained holding such an opinion, until the high and all-powerful hand was brought upon them. But what again was the subsequent blow, how is it not worthwhile to see? For last, as I said, Nebuchadnezzar took all of Judea. And he relocated Israel to the mountains of the Persians and Medes. And since, as I said, the times of the captivity had already passed, they were brought back to Judea, and have inhabited Jerusalem, the tribes no longer being divided into two, but all henceforth having become one kingdom. For this was what was said by one of the holy prophets: "And they shall come up out of the land, and shall appoint for themselves one ruler.

Therefore, after all returned from captivity to Judea, those from Syria and those from the rising of the sun warred against them, yet they themselves were also defeated, as God defended the redeemed. Then they spent the intervening time until the coming of our Savior not living auspiciously, nor indeed completely departing from those ancient sins, but rather conducting themselves improperly and unlawfully, and very neglectfully. And when Christ shone upon those throughout the world under heaven. For God appeared to us, according to the voice of the psalmist; they have kept their stubbornness, and have done what is not lawful, not accepting the word from him, not honoring it with faith. And why do I say these things? Acting with unholy insolence, they arrived at such a point of impiety, and of unho-

liness of ways, as to hand him over to the cross, and to deny the Holy and Righteous One, and to try to inflict death upon the author of life, the one who justifies the ungodly; and for this reason he shone upon those throughout all the earth, in order to abolish death, and to render inactive the sting of sin. For all these reasons, the hand of the one who strikes has remained high, and his anger has not turned away.

For they have been given over to desolation, with Vespasian and Titus warring against them, and the entire force of the Romans, at which time the wretched ones were utterly destroyed, their land being burned, and the temple itself being shaken down, and having fallen completely, so that not a stone was seen lying upon a stone, according to the Savior's voice. Therefore, since the compassionate God is long-suffering over our failings, to despair is very difficult, and I say that we ought by every means to appease him when he is grieved. And he does good to those who do not sin; but he saves those who have chosen to disobey through the gentleness that befits him. Let no one among us, therefore, be hard-hearted, nor slow to perceive his gifts, but through the very ways he has seen fit to do good even to those who are not good, coming to a recognition of his inherent love for humanity, let us repent of what is past. And let us reshape our own will toward the need to serve him, and to choose the ways of reasonableness. And the Lord will take away from Israel head and tail, great and small, in one day, the elder and those who show partiality; this is the beginning; and the prophet, and the one teaching lawless things; this is the tail. And those who bless this people will be leading them astray, and they lead them astray so that they may devour them.

By saying that the hand of the one who strikes has remained high, he clearly relates that the divine wrath upon them would never cease, and what sort of manner the torment to be inflicted upon them would be at times. For, he says, there will be taken away from Israel in one day, that is, at one time—clearly, the time of the war with the Romans—both head and tail. And what the riddle is, he interprets, saying, great and small, that is, distinguished and insignificant. And who these might be, he again showed by adding: The elder, and those who show partiality. And by these he means, as I suppose, the tribe that had obtained the priesthood, that is, those of the blood of Levi, whom the people under their authority also called elders. And indeed the divine disciples addressed them, saying thus: "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are this day examined for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been healed, let it be known to you and to all the people, that it is in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. For these elders, having the authority to judge, did not render correct verdicts on each of those judged by them, taking bribes insatiably and showing partiality to the rich, although the law through Moses cried out: "Judge righteous judgment; and also, "You shall not show partiality in judgment," placing it everywhere. This then, he says, is the beginning; and it has been reckoned as the head.

For the priest is the head of the peoples, when it is conceived as of one body. And he says that with the elder will also be taken away a prophet and one who teaches lawless things. And this, he says, is the tail, that is, what follows. For there were some among the Jews

who interpreted the law given through the all-wise Moses; but they did this in a distorted manner, incorrectly adding to the words of Moses unwritten traditions, commandments and teachings of men. These have led the people of the Jews astray, and have made them raise a proud neck against Christ. Therefore, since these also followed the opinions of the priests, who were placed in the rank of the head, he called them the tail. For as I said, when we think as of one body, it surely follows the tail to the head. But since he called them prophets, we will not reckon them to be holy and true. For he added that they teach lawless things. But we say this: For there were indeed false prophets in Israel from time to time, that is, at the times when there were true prophets. But after the times of the captivity, one could not say with certainty that there were any others at those times; unless perhaps one were to speak of those whom Gamaliel, being a teacher of the law and honored by all the people, also mentions, as it is written in the Acts of the holy apostles.

For he addressed those in the council concerning the holy apostles, saying: "Men of Israel, take care for yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For before these days Theudas arose, claiming to be somebody great, to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; he was slain. And all who followed him were dispersed, and came to nothing. After this man, Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census, and drew away people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were scattered. Therefore, he says that the head and the tail will be taken away, according to the meaning just now given by us. But he says that those who bless this people will be leading them astray, and they lead them astray so that they may devour them; for the leaders of the Jews, having been entrusted with the holy and divine tabernacle, and being ordered to perform the sacrifices according to the law, urged the peoples under their hand to bring gifts, saying that they were blessed if they brought them lavishly. And they did this bitterly, not laying claim to or caring for reverence towards God, but looking to their own avarice. For this reason, he says, they lead them astray, so that they may devour them. For being insatiable, as I said, in their desire to be rich, they did not teach the peoples that it is fitting to please the God of all by choosing to fulfill the law;

but rather they urged them to honor him with offerings beyond their means. For on account of this reason, they themselves did not accept the faith in Christ, and shutting up as it were the kingdom of heaven, they did not permit others to enter into it. For they knew that when the shadow of the law was abolished, and the evangelical proclamations were received, the worship in types and through blood would surely cease, and sacrifices would also be abolished, when the worship in spirit had been introduced. And this is a complete removal of their inherent insatiable avarice. Therefore God will not rejoice over their young men, and he will not have mercy on their orphans and their widows, because all are lawless and evil, and every mouth speaks unjustly. And now the word leads us, from clear examples, to things beyond sense and intelligible. For here he speaks of young men, not at all, of course, those in bodily robustness, or those in the prime and youth of the flesh, but he means rather those who would have spiritual strength in mind and heart, so as to be able to accomplish very youthfully the things through which they will be illustrious, and most well-known to

God, and full of all gentleness. And to those who are so disposed in their state, the blessed John has addressed, saying: ”I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and you have overcome the evil one.

But before the coming of our Savior, there were some, even among the Jews, who, in the manner I have just mentioned, had practiced acting manfully, by choosing to fulfill blamelessly the commandment that had been given, and being able to excel very richly in the glories according to the law. And they were not rejected by God. For it was still the time of the shadow in the law, and when the evangelical and Christian way of life had not yet been revealed, those things were held in much praise. Thus it is also written about both Zechariah and Elizabeth: ”Now it came to pass in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, that there was a certain priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah, and his wife was of the of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In this manner, I think, the holy prophets themselves also lived. And indeed, the divine Paul, although saying openly that he was blameless according to the righteousness which is in the law; ”But what things were gain to me? these, he says, I have counted loss for Christ. Therefore, before the coming of the Savior of us all, Christ, some who took pride in the things of the law were esteemed, and were brave and youthful.

But after His appearance, and the preaching of the gospel, the things in the law have ceased, the shadow has passed over to the truth, and worship in spirit and in truth has been brought in. Therefore, God does not rejoice in the young men of the Jews, that is, those who are still acting manly, by choosing to live according to the law. And unacceptable are the sacrifices through blood, and circumcision of the flesh, teachings of baptisms, and the idleness of Sabbaths. But we have been taught, as I said, the way of the life that pleases God. Rejected, then, and very rightly so after the cessation of the shadow are the young men according to it; and far from being pitied are the orphans and widows. He calls orphans those who, as it were, are in need of spiritual conduct and of instruction from teachers. And similarly, we say widows are souls that have become destitute of the ability to bear fruit, because they do not have the sower and provider of all good teachings. But that we will find those from Israel to have been deprived of true instruction, on account of their insolence toward Christ, no one would praise. For their eyes were darkened that they might not see, according to the voice of the psalmist. And their backs were bent. And this continually, so that they are not able to look up, but as if stooped over, they are fixed on earthly things. But they will suffer this, he says, not in vain;

but because all have become lawless and wicked, and every mouth speaks lawless things. For how are they not lawless, and full of all wickedness, who hastened to inflict death on Him who calls to life, Him who knew no sin, although the law says clearly: ”You shall not kill the innocent and righteous? How has not every tongue of the Jews spoken unjustly? For they cried out against Christ to Pilate, saying: ”Away with him, away with him, crucify him. And, ”If you do not kill this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. For all this his anger is not

turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And iniquity shall be burned as a fire, and shall be devoured by fire as dry grass; and it shall be burned in the thickets of the forest, and shall devour all the things round about the hills; for the anger of the wrath of the Lord, the whole land is burned up, and the people shall be as if burned by fire, a man shall not pity his brother, but he will turn to the right, because he will be hungry and will eat from the left, and a man will not be satisfied eating the flesh of his own arm. For Manasseh shall eat Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; for together they shall besiege Judah.

While the divine wrath is still at its height, and the very hand that brings the scourge and torments upon them is raised, he tries to foretell clearly each of the things that will happen, making the hearers more sober-minded by the terrors. For on this account God made predictions of the terrible things, so that, fearing to offend him, they might not be subjected to the evils of his wrath, but rather might be carried away from the terrible things. Therefore, iniquity will be burned as fire. And he says iniquity not the thing itself, of course; for it is foolish to think or say this; but those who have been steeped in iniquities, and have already come to such a point of depraved manners, that they should no longer be called lawless, but rather iniquity. These, therefore, will be burned as fire, he says, that is, they will become a fire against themselves. For no other will bring the flame upon them, but they themselves will be sufficient for this for one another. They shall be burned as dry grass, and as the thickets of the forests. For flames always rage somehow, when they fall upon easily flammable material; and I mean dry grass, and the wood in the forests. But I think that the prophetic word wishes to reveal these things to us in this; For when Vespasian and Titus, as I have already said, were ravaging Judea, and besieging the cities in it, there was the greatest tumult in each one.

On the one hand, famine was wasting them away, and on the other hand, the seditious in each city were plundering houses, and attacking those who seemed to be more prominent, so that the outrages from the inhabitants became more grievous than the battle from without. Josephus clearly records these things, Therefore, he says they will be burned in the thickets of the forest, calling, I think, the common multitude dry grass and the thickets of the forest. For the people were divided against each other into dissensions and factions. And that the evil will also touch those who seem to be something, he further declares, saying; And it will consume all that is round about the hills; calling hills, I think, those who are set above and stand out from the others, either in reputation, or in wealth, or in some other way. And I just said that those accustomed to sedition in each city terribly attacked those who seemed to be illustrious, so that in desperation they did things which not even the hand of the enemy would have sometimes done. And these things, he says, are because of the fierceness of the Lord's wrath. For thus has the entire land of the Jews been burned up. And what he has said enigmatically, making these things clear to the hearers, he immediately adds; And the people shall be as if burned by fire. A man shall not pity his brother.

For just as those who bring fire to calves provoke them to anger and prepare them to make more vigorous assaults against whomever they might go; so, he says, each of the people

will be as if burned by fire. For they will be impetuous and unmerciful, and not knowing brothers, they will all be terrible and savage-tempered against one another, and in the manner of beasts sharpened by hunger for savagery against certain ones; they will turn aside to the right, and they will eat from the left; that is, they will turn hither and thither, biting those on the right, those on the left, sparing no one at all, and having an insatiable desire for assaulting one another. For he shall not be filled, he says, a man eating the flesh of his own arm. O strange affair! They will not even spare themselves, he says, as if from unmitigated madness. For having once become desperate, they will proceed boldly to anything whatsoever of the most outrageous things. Then he says, that 'For Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh.' But Ephraim and Manasseh were two brothers, and sons of Joseph. But nature, he says, will not then award peace even to those joined in disposition by blood; the laws of kinship will be inactive. For brothers and kinsmen will rise up against one another, one against one, and two against another.

For, he says, 'Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, because together they will besiege Judah.' Therefore, then, all things were filled with confusion, and for all the things done out of wrath were indiscriminate, both against whom it is not right, and by whom it is not right. And these things, as I said, historically happened for the hordes of the Jews to suffer. But we must also be on guard for ourselves. For the disobedient is punished, and if anyone should fall into this, he will be burned as if by fire, fleshly pleasure and hot desire consuming him. And he will have an unbearable battle in his mind and heart; for the flesh will rise up against the spirit, and will be in great tumults. Wherefore, as the divine Paul says: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For being subject to God we shall walk in the spirit, and we shall be superior to fleshly desires, and we will conquer the flames within the mind, and we will keep the heart free from sedition. For the peace of God, as it is written, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our thoughts. For all this his anger is not turned away, but Still a high hand. Woe to those who write wickedness. For writing, they write wickedness; turning aside the judgment of the poor, and seizing the judgments of the needy of my people, so that the widow might be plunder for them, and the orphan spoil.

And what will they do in the day of visitation? For the affliction will come to you from afar; and to whom will you flee to be helped? and where will you leave your glory, so as not to fall into affliction? When the prophetic word explains to us more broadly the disasters of the Jews, and the future harms at the hand of their enemies, then indeed it adds very wisely and with good management the causes for which the God of all was grieved, and it tries to teach that a righteous decree was passed upon them, calling them to justice. For not unjustly are nets spread for winged creatures, as it is written. Woe, therefore, he says, to those who write wickedness. For writing, they write wickedness, turning aside the judgment of the poor, and seizing the judgments of the needy of my people. For there were among the Jews those who were called scribes. And it was their task to make clear the purpose of the law in each matter for those who wished to learn, and to present such things to those entrusted

with judging the peoples. And it is written that, "The lips of a priest will guard judgment, and they will seek the law from his mouth.

Therefore, being overcome by shameful gains, they made their writings unjust, impiously making merchandise of what seemed right to the divine law, and as it were mixing wine with water, and making the pure silver appear debased, so that they might wrong the widow, and seize the judgments of the needy, and subject the orphan to the evils of greed, like some plunder readily cast aside for those who wish to be rich. But these, he says, what will they do in the day of visitation? And he calls the day of visitation the time of war, in which God visited those who write wickedness and pervert the right judgments of the law. For what wealth will help you, he says? And in what way will the collection of things gathered by you through greed be of use? You have done wrong, you have corrupted the law, you have trampled on the purpose of the lawgiver. Then where will you go? And what doing or saying will you escape the day of visitation? For the affliction will come to you from afar. For the Jews fought very often against the neighboring nations, I mean the Idumeans and Elamites, Moabites, and Syrians, and those called Philistines; and it happened that they were seen to be better, prevailing over many in battles. But now, he says, the affliction will come to you from afar; that is, your battle is not against the Idumeans, the war is not against the Moabites;

nor against any of the neighbors, whom at times you have also conquered, and having obtained the better lot in battle, you bound on the crown of glory; but now the affliction will come to you from afar. And through these things, it seems to signify either the assault of the Assyrians, or that of the Romans. For both these and those are from afar. But when the affliction has been brought on, where will you leave your own glory, so as not to fall into the affliction? For you have often prevailed over, he says, your enemies, and rising up against those who came upon you, you have saved your cities and lands. But now where will you leave the glory for this? for you will all fall, your valor against others helping you in no way. For what will you do so as not to fall into affliction? And he calls affliction, that which was brought upon them as from divine wrath, and the disaster from war. For when God brings punishments upon those who sin, who will turn them away? Or what manner of help could there be for those under penalty and chastisement? There is none. Therefore, the divine David also psalms and says: "Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath. And again: "You are terrible, and who shall resist you? From that time is your wrath. Therefore, no one will turn away the divine wrath. But repentance, as it were, softens it;

or rather, it would not be moved at all in the first place, if one should wish to live rightly and lawfully, and indeed according to pleasing to the decrees from him. For all these things his anger has not turned away, but still his hand is high. Woe to the Assyrians, the rod of my anger, and wrath is in their hands. I will send my wrath against a lawless nation, and I will command my people to take spoils and plunder, and to trample the cities, and to make them as dust. But he did not so consider, and in his soul he has not so reasoned; but his mind

will change, and to destroy not a few nations. And if they say to him, Are you the only ruler? and he will say; Did I not take the country above Babylon and Calneh, where the tower was built? Did I take Arabia and Damascus, and Samaria? In the manner I took these, I will also take all the countries. Everywhere we shall find God has taken thought for his own glory. For he is angry if indeed he sees some who have chosen to be contemptuous, and are zealous to make of no account what is pleasing to him, but as it were shaking every rope, so as to incline toward the most outrageous things. But he turns such people around, almost leading them by a rein strongly, for that which most of all results in their benefit. For thus somewhere the blessed David also says:

"With bit and bridle you must bind their jaws, of those who do not draw near to you. Many are the scourges of the sinner. And he brings punishment upon those who transgress, handing over his own wrath as a kind of rod into the hands of men who are not good, so that they themselves might become the punishers of the impious. And it happens that those who have been employed for this purpose think something great against those who have been punished, or rather against the one who delivered them up. For they do not understand that they have prevailed over them because God permitted it, and brought upon them the sentence that they should suffer; but they think that they have prevailed even though he willed to save them. He therefore transfers his wrath to them, and very rightly so. And since he opposes the proud, he indeed casts down their brow, and subjecting them to fitting punishments, he attempts to convince them fully that it was not the work of their strength, but of his own commands to overcome those who were punished. The king of the Assyrians has suffered something of this sort. For since he took Judea, and sacked the cities, he has grown very proud in himself, and indeed he thought to conquer the holy land, even against the will of God who presides over it, and promises to save it.

For this reason he says, that his anger has not yet turned away, but that the "woe" will also be brought upon the Assyrians. And what is the reason for this? For the rod, he says, of my wrath, has been given into their hands, by me, clearly, so that with it they might strike those who have acted impiously against me. I commanded them, to make my people spoils and plunder, and to trample the cities, and to make them into dust. For if I had not removed my saving hand, and shown them to be naked of the ever-customary help given by me to them, they would never have been captured, having always been stronger than their enemies through me. But the Assyrian himself did not so consider, and in his soul has not so reasoned, but as far as his own mind was concerned, he will change; that is, he will destroy not a few nations. For he thinks that no one will rise up against his forces, and that he will surely prevail without effort, and he will be master of every nation, with no one leading out against him. But to one having so insatiable a soul, and always wishing to rule over all things, even if someone should approach him saying: "Are you the only ruler?", that is, will you be able alone to rule over all that is under heaven? To this, he says, he will utter an arrogant voice, saying that:

"Did I not take the country above Babylon, and Calneh, where the tower was built? "I took Arabia, and Damascus, and Samaria; in the manner I took these, I will also take all the countries. Calneh, where the tower was built by the ancients, is situated, in a way, in the farthest parts of the east, and beyond the country and land of the Babylonians. "Just as, therefore," he says, "from the very borders of my own eastern land I have set the boundaries of the kingdom, and I have taken Damascus and Samaria, which were not helped at all by the gods in them; thus I will also seize the outer lands. It is necessary to remember that Rabshakeh also, proclaiming the words from the king of the Assyrians, addressed those sitting on the wall: Thus says the king of the Assyrians. Let not king Hezekiah deceive you with words which will not be able to deliver you; and let not Hezekiah say to you, God will deliver us; and after other things, again: Have the gods of the nations each delivered his own land from the hand of the king of the Assyrians? Where is the god of Hamath and Arphad? And where is the god of the city of Sepharvaim? Were they able to deliver Samaria from my hand? Which of all the gods of these nations has delivered his land from my hand, that he should deliver Israel from my hand?

Therefore, he promises to subject to judgment the Assyrian, who has great thoughts, and has chosen to laugh down the divine wrath. For even among ourselves the passion of arrogance is hated. But when one becomes insolent even against the divine glory, then indeed the 'woe' will be brought very justly upon those willing to do this. Wail, you carved images in Jerusalem and in Samaria. For in the way I have dealt with Samaria and its man-made idols, so will I also deal with Jerusalem and its idols. He has just now introduced the Assyrian as having high and arrogant thoughts. For since he destroyed the cities of Samaria, with the falsely-named gods not helping them, and their temples and altars being burned down again. And as he was disposed to bring Jerusalem, that is Judea, under his hand, and even if Christ who always defends and saves her should perhaps not wish it, the prophetic word immediately sets before us the reasons for Samaria itself being captured, and very many cities of Judea. For this reason, and very fittingly, he recalls the ways of impiety, and commands them to wail and lament. And almost astounded at the apostasy from an excessive love of God, he exclaims: Wail, you carved images in Jerusalem and in Samaria. For where the God of all should have been honored with fitting honors, there he is overlooked, and deprived of the honor fitting and owed to him.

For the wretched ones, having assigned reverence to carved images, have dared to say to the wood: "You are my God; and to the stone, You have begotten me. Therefore, with astonishment, as it were, the aforementioned exclamation was made by the prophet; that is, carved images in Jerusalem and in Samaria. He says something like this also through the voice of Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem. What has the beloved done, an abomination in my house? And somewhere he said also through one prophet: "The watchman of Ephraim is with God, a prophet is a crooked snare on all his ways, they have fixed madness in the house of the Lord. For having set up altars and handmade things in Jerusalem, they have sacrificed to Baal, and to the host of heaven. And those in Samaria have also done these things. In the way therefore, he says, I have dealt with Samaria and its handmade idols, so will I also deal

with Jerusalem and its idols. For those whose audacious acts are kindred, an equal punishment would fittingly follow. Therefore the Assyrian took both Damascus and Samaria. And the way to this matter for him, and the pretext for prevailing, was the making of idols, both in Samaria and in Jerusalem. For this reason also for those accustomed to do such things, the most fitting punishments have been sought. Difficult, therefore, it is, and a cause of wrath from God for us, the making of idols everywhere, even if one should happen to do this in mind and heart.

For those things also carry one away from the love for God, bewitching the heart, and dragging it out to things which are not proper. And it shall be, when the Lord has finished doing all things on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he will bring [punishment] upon the great mind of the ruler of the Assyrians, and upon the height of the glory of his eyes. For he said: By my strength I will do it, and by the wisdom of understanding, I will remove the boundaries of nations, and I will plunder their strength; and I will shake inhabited cities, and I will seize the whole inhabited world in my hand as a nest, and as abandoned eggs I will take them up; and there is no one who will escape me, or speak against me. He says that the Assyrian, who has thought such exceedingly arrogant things, will not be outside of the common lot. For the Lord resists the proud, according to what is written, and for the charges of arrogance He always demands an account from those who are sick with this disease, and He shows them to be pitiable and cast down, so that they might know not to lift up their horn on high, according to what is written; but might rather be mindful of their own nature and weakness.

For when, He says, He has finished doing everything on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, that is, when the matters of wrath against them come to an end, then He will bring His hand, and the smiting rod, upon the great mind of the ruler of the Assyrians. But He called him a great mind, not placing the matter to his praise, but rather condemning him, as being nothing other than only God-hated arrogance. For he has thought nothing human; but things that perhaps even surpass all created nature. Therefore, He will bring it upon the height of the glory of his eyes; and by eyes, He means in this, instead of thoughts, or rather reasonings. For these are high, as I said, and exceedingly arrogant. But being God, and looking into the heart and kidneys, and knowing the hidden things, He also makes them clear to us, and says. For he said: By my strength I will do it, and by the wisdom of my understanding I will remove the boundaries of nations, and I will plunder their strength, and I will shake inhabited cities. Observe, then, how, as one not needing help from above, he attributes to his own powers alone the ability to do all things, whatsoever he might wish;

and he thinks that he is also so wise and skilled in strategy, as to be able very easily on his own to move the boundaries of nations, and to break their strength and make it into plunder, and to shake cities, not those without men and deserted, but even if they should have very many and countless inhabitants in them. And his arrogance does not stop at these things. For he boasts that he will also seize all that is under heaven, and very easily, readily, and without a fight, he is disposed and thinks according to what comes into his mind. For I

will seize, he says, the whole inhabited world as a nest, and I will take it up as abandoned eggs, and there is no one who will escape me, or speak against me. O terrible arrogance, O foolish reasonings! He sees the whole universe as the nest of a single sparrow, he likens those throughout all the earth to eggs left behind by the warming bird, so that coming like a serpent he might devour them. And he hates those who speak against him, and he does not expect the besieged to come to words with him at all. These things would be fitting to attribute also to the person of Satan himself. For he himself is the father of pride. And he thought that he would seize the inhabited world with no one opposing him. But it was not so at all;

rather the outcome of events for him turned out to be the complete opposite. For Christ has spoken against him on our behalf; and He has not only spoken against him, but has also contended for the life of all, has conquered the sinner, and has put him under the feet of the saints. For He said to them: "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Shall the axe be glorified without the one who chops with it? Or shall the saw be exalted without the one who pulls it? Likewise if one takes up a rod or a staff; not so, but the Lord of Sabaoth will send dishonor upon your honor, and upon your glory a burning fire shall be kindled. He clearly refutes the Assyrian, puffed up in vain, and completely ignorant, that it was in no way the work of his own hand to destroy Samaria, and to capture with it the other cities, but rather of the decree from above being brought upon them who had committed intolerable impieties, just as a certain axe, or a rod or a piece of wood. For tell me, he says, O most senseless of all, will an axe be glorified without the one who chops with it? For an axe that is perfectly sharpened and cutting would be suitably able to shear the wood in the fields.

Would anyone then praise the axe, as if it were able to do this, without the one who chops with it? What will the saw accomplish by itself, unless someone both pulls it and pushes it again? But if indeed one takes up a rod or a piece of wood in any way; will it not be so again? For the rod will lie on the ground, and the piece of wood has been cast down, but if someone takes and brings them against others, then surely they will come to be put to work. Why then, he says, have you thought lofty things? Why do you raise your eyebrow? Do you think that by your own power you yourself have succeeded in capturing the cities, having been taken up in the order of heaven by the hand that does those things, that is, the divine hand? The glory, therefore, is not yours; but rather of God, who like a certain axe, or rod, or piece of wood, brings your cruelty against those who have offended Him. You shall not, therefore, be so, he says, as you yourself thought. Nor indeed will you remain in the same state of glory, nor will you luxuriate in such delicate honors. You will not do it by strength, nor by the wisdom of your understanding will you remove the boundaries of nations. You will not seize the inhabited world like abandoned eggs. But the Lord Sabaoth will send dishonor upon your honor, and upon your glory a burning fire will be kindled.

By his honor, he means the army acting under him and subject to him. For in it he was glorified. A fire, therefore, will come against it, he says, and will burn up your honor. And

in what way this happened, he makes clear again, and not at length. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and he shall sanctify him with a burning fire, and it shall devour the wood like grass. In that day the mountains shall be extinguished, and the hills, and the forests. And it shall devour from soul even to flesh. And he who flees shall be as one fleeing from a burning flame; and those left of them shall be a number, and a child shall write them down. What has been said is very difficult to grasp, and the construction of the wording makes the interpretation most difficult. But we shall again clarify the meaning hidden in what lies before us, having said those things beforehand. For Shalmaneser the king of the Assyrians captured Samaria, and he sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, who, having come and besieged it, spoke to those on the wall the words from the one who sent him, and he added to these things blasphemies against God, saying that God shall not deliver Jerusalem from the hand of the king of the Assyrians. King Hezekiah, distressed at such things, made supplications to God, saying:

Hear, O Lord, look, O Lord, and see the words of the Rabshakeh, which the king of the Assyrians has sent to reproach the living God. And God promised them salvation. And indeed an angel of the Lord went out, and in one night killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand from the camp of the Assyrians. When this had happened, the Assyrian was struck with unbearable terror. And hearing the news that Sarsatha king of the Ethiopians had come out against his land with the very few who were left, he fled. This is what the prophetic word now enigmatically explains to us. For the God of all has become a light to Israel, having appointed the law that is able to enlighten. But this, he says, the light that belonged to Israel, will not be a light to the armies of the Assyrians, but a destroying fire. That the God of all considers the people in Jerusalem his own and dedicated to him, he will teach everyone, through the fire that was kindled among the Assyrians. And this is the meaning of, ”He shall sanctify him with a burning fire. For what is called ’being sanctified’ will not be partaking of every kind of sanctification, but rather signifies also that which is dedicated to the glory of God. As he says to Moses: ”Sanctify to me every firstborn that opens the womb, the males for the Lord. And ’sanctify’ in this context, means ’dedicate,’ he says.

Therefore, he says, the God of all will sanctify Israel God, that is, will show what is dedicated to him and chosen in burning fire; through the fire kindled against the Assyrians. And in these things he calls the unexpected destruction ”fire. For if he did not consider them his own people, he would not have kindled the fire against the enemies, which also consumed the multitude of the Assyrians like grass or wood. On that day, therefore, he says, that is, at that time the mountains shall be extinguished, and the hills and the forests, and it shall devour from soul to flesh. To hills and forests and mountains he well likens the multitude of the Assyrians itself, and its leaders, and those preeminent over the others like hills or mountains. But these will be extinguished; that is, those formerly fervent and terrible will grow cold against their will. For this the phrase ”will be extinguished” indicates. For death will devour them, all but consuming both souls and bodies. For that souls are not destroyed along with bodies is clear to everyone. But through these things he subtly indicates the

strength of the wrath. But, he says, the one fleeing will be as one fleeing from a burning flame, and those left of them will be a number, and a child will write them down. For very few, as I said, having leapt away as if from a burning flame, scarcely escaped with the king.

And he says they are so few in number as not to surpass even the mind of a young child, in being able to write or count them. For the tradition of the Hebrews holds that only ten in number were left, who with Rabshakeh announced what had happened to the king of the Assyrians. These are the wages of his arrogance. And the type is also useful for us. For if someone wishes to be outside of divine wrath, and not to be consumed by divine evils, he should earnestly refuse to be willing to suffer from things kindred and equal to their perversity. And it shall be in that day that the remnant of Israel shall no longer be added, and the saved of Jacob shall no longer trust in those who wronged them, but they shall trust in the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. And the remnant of Jacob shall be upon a mighty God. When the fire has been kindled against the army of the Assyrians, these two things will be achieved and will exist, he says: for the boaster and destroyer will cease, unwillingly, from such a terrible and odious arrogance. For he will depart in fear, and unexpectedly put to shame. He will know through the event itself, and even if he should not wish it, that he has become an instrument of divine wrath against sinners, and that he has not at all overcome them by his own strength. And these things will happen to the Barbarian.

But for those of Israel the wonder will be for their benefit, and the remnants of those in Samaria, that is, of Israel, and moreover of Jacob, that is, again of the two tribes that are in Jerusalem, will cease from their ancient error, and from cold and useless thoughts. For they will not be trusting in those who wronged them. For since the enemy has fallen, consumed by the hand of an angel, they have known precisely the all-powerful right hand of the Savior, and they will make him their savior and redeemer, and in him they will have all their hope, having spurned those who wronged them. But who these are, and in what manner they have wronged, it is necessary to say. For the God of all has saved those of the blood of Israel, presiding and defending, and showing them to be stronger than their opponents. But when they turned to resistance, and some fashioned golden calves, and others Chemosh and Baal-peor, and kindled worship for them; and they have also worshipped the host of heaven; the God of all from time to time delivered up the opponents, sometimes to the nations surrounding and dwelling around Judaea, I mean both Idumaeans and Moabites, and those from Elam, and sometimes to those far away, I mean both Assyrians and Egyptians.

When war therefore was rushing down and announced throughout the whole land, how is it not better that those from Israel should make their defense to the offended all-powerful God, and by their recourse to what is better, avert His wrath? For they should have removed the profane multitude of idols from their midst, and acknowledged him as savior and redeemer. But of these things they took little account at all. But they sent embassies sometimes to the Egyptians, and sometimes to the Assyrians, and called for aid from them. For this reason, I think, God was even more greatly sharpened against them. Therefore, they wronged both

Israel and Jacob, on the one hand, the falsely-named gods, by calling down divine wrath upon them and preparing them to trust in them; and on the other hand, those who sold them useless aid for money and gifts. When, therefore, he says, the multitude of the enemies was consumed in one night, they will finally be trusting in God, and having known by experience itself the all-powerful right hand of the one who saved them, they will not place their hope in those who wronged them, but in the Holy One of Israel in truth. And the remnant of Jacob will be upon a mighty God. For they will no longer trust in wood and stones, but will rather make him their strength, who has always been their helper and defender, a weapon and an unbreakable wall.

And if the people of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. For a word finishing and cutting short in righteousness, because God will make a shortened word in the whole world. That of those who have chosen to disobey, and who have been greatly diseased with stubbornness and intractability, there would be no account with God, but that He saves and deems worthy of all forbearance the obedient and tractable, He makes very clear to us through these words. For the Assyrian came against the entire nation of the Jews; and his purpose was to spare no one, but to utterly ravage the whole land, and to render it devoid of men, and desolate of its inhabitants. And he destroyed Samaria, and with it he captured not a few cities of Judea; but God miraculously saved those in Jerusalem. What then is the reason for this? Yes, he says, because not all of Israel had been impious, but there were perhaps some who were very distressed by those who were impious toward God, for this reason a holy and most just verdict was passed, bringing judgment only against those who had sinned. That the account is true we shall see without effort, and as from what is written in the prophet Ezekiel. For he said that he had seen some from Israel worshiping the sun, and that he heard God saying concerning them:

"Have you seen, son of man, is it a small thing for the house of Israel to commit the iniquities which they have committed here? For they have filled the land with iniquity. And they have returned to provoke me to anger. Then he says he saw a man clothed down to his feet and girded; and the God of all said to him: "Go through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the iniquities that are done in the midst of it. And to these he said in my hearing: Go into the city after him, and strike, and let not your eyes spare. And have no pity, slay to utter destruction old man and young man, and maiden and infants, and women. But come not near any man upon whom is the mark. See then how God seals with his grace the pious and genuine man, and the one who is angry and laments over the things by which others dare to offend him. Therefore, even if.... the multitude of those from Israel exists, and is compared to the sands lying on the shores, the remnant will be saved. And this indeed happened in the times of Hezekiah. For, as I said, Samaria was destroyed, and very many cities of Judea were taken along with it. And this was done also in the last times of the age, when the Only-Begotten shone upon us in the flesh.

For then indeed God also made a shortened word in righteousness in the whole world. For the law through Moses comes by long circles, and is cumbersome - he makes the declaration of what is useful, barely revealing through riddle and shadow what leads to benefit. But our saving and evangelical word is both brief and, as it were, cut short, that is, concise, having the truth naked, and making the way of life clear, there being no difficulty, nor any obscurity brought upon the proclamations. For, as I said, the matter of truth is simple. And then the remnant of Israel was saved, that is, those who by faith honored his appearance, while the other multitude suffered turning away. For they had behaved insolently towards the Savior and Lord of all, having previously killed prophets, and having stoned those who were sent; and what, indeed, of outrageous things did they not practice? Therefore thus says the Lord Sabaoth: Do not fear, my people, who dwell in Zion, because of the Assyrians, for with a rod he will strike you. For I am bringing a plague upon you, that you may see the way of Egypt. For yet a little while, and the wrath will cease, and my anger will be upon their counsel. For since with a holy vote and a gentleness befitting him, the God of all saves the genuine ones, but hands over those who have grieved him; Do not fear, he says, my people, who dwell in Zion, because of the Assyrians.

For the Rabshakeh came to Jerusalem and besieged it, and threatened to burn it down and destroy everyone. But he did no harm at all. For he departed as a fugitive, his army having fallen against all expectation, and having perished in one night. Therefore, he did not destroy those in Zion with the sword. But since he once terrified them with his attacks, and prepared them to be in fear of suffering, he is seen almost raising only a rod against them. Do not, therefore, he says, be terrified by the Assyrians, for with a rod he will strike you, and he will inflict, as it were, a short blow, the one resulting from terror, with me allowing this also to be done against you, that you may see the way of Egypt, that is, so that you may learn how much you have harmed yourself, by going away to Egypt and seeking aid from there, while God who saves was overlooked. Hezekiah, then, during whose reign the Assyrian besieged Jerusalem, did not seek the aid of the Egyptians. But Hoshea, son of Elah, reigning over Israel, is found to have done this instead. And it is written thus in the fourth book of Kings: "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place. In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel for nine years.

And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Shalmaneser king of the Assyrians came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant; and he returned tribute to him. And the king of the Assyrians found wickedness in Hoshea, because he sent messengers to So, king of Egypt; and he did not bring tribute to the king of the Assyrians in that year. And the king of the Assyrians besieged him, and bound him in a prison house, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it for three years. And it should be known that Ahaz also, the father of Hezekiah, when the king of the Damascenes was warring against him, bought the aid of the Assyrians, at which God was very greatly grieved. I am bringing, therefore, he says, a plague upon you, that you may see the way of Egypt; but yet a little while, and the wrath will cease, and my anger will be upon their counsel. For

they perished, as I said, by divine wrath. But having planned to subdue Jerusalem itself as well, they missed their aim, and their plan became fruitless for them, as God changed the outcome to the complete opposite of what was expected, And God will stir up against them according to the plague of Midian in the place of affliction, and his anger will be on the way by the sea, toward the way of Egypt.

They will fall, he says, when the wrath from above and from God is brought upon them; and there will be no need at all of toil for those from Israel. For they will survive, not by the shots of bows, not by strength of hands, not by using military experiences, but they will prevail rather by the hand of God, striking and consuming the arrogant people; just as indeed it happened to the Midianites to suffer. For they, gathered together in multitude and by tribe, were plundering nearly the whole country of the Jews, and inflicting an unbearable dread upon them, they forced them unwillingly to depart from cities and villages, and to encamp with difficulty, and this fearfully, on the mountain peaks. But God came to their aid then also, and saved those in danger through the hand of Gideon, who had very few fellow-soldiers, who also threw the enemy's phalanxes into confusion, in night and darkness shattering the pitchers, and displaying torches, and blowing the horns, so that something of this sort also happened to those from Midian to suffer. For since the battalions were thrown into confusion, with God terrifying them, they were unable to distinguish in the darkness and night who was a friend, or a kinsman, or who was the enemy, they fought with one another, and did the deeds of enemies, and perished wretchedly by one another's hands. Therefore, it will be brought, he says, according to the plague of Midian in a place of affliction.

And by a place of affliction, he means the time in which these things happened to occur. That God will all but lead astray the barbarian's wrath, and will turn it aside upon others, he reveals saying: And his wrath by the way of the sea, to the way towards Egypt. For the king of the Assyrians, Tiglath-pileser, was the one who had taken Samaria by force, imposed tribute on those inhabiting it, and demanded tolls and taxes from those who were ruling over Israel at the time. But when it came to this, and Hoshea the son of Elah had power over Samaria, he did not send tribute to the king of the Assyrians, as it is written. And since he knew that he would be completely and utterly indignant, he hired the hand of the Egyptians for assistance, if indeed the one who imposed tribute and tolls should wish to take up the law of war against them. And those who ruled the Egyptians at that time promised this very readily. Grieved at this, the Assyrian marched with his whole army against the Egyptians, laying that charge against its rulers, that Hoshea had rebelled, and had shaken off his yoke, taking as a pretext for his madness the promise of assistance from them. That God, therefore, will transfer the barbarian's wrath to others, as I have just said, he has revealed by saying: And his wrath by the way of the sea, to the way towards Egypt.

For Jerusalem is situated far from the sea, but the road leading towards the Egyptians and a very easy one, the neighbor of the sea, they call it even to this day. And it shall be in that day, their fear will be removed from you, and his yoke from your shoulder, and the yoke

will be destroyed from your shoulders. I said that the Assyrian, having conquered, imposed tributes on those from Israel, and wished to bring the people allotted to the all-holy God under his own scepters. And for this reason he was armed against the Egyptians. What then does it say? Having conquered the Egyptians, will he again impose his own yoke on those who have always had a free neck, and know only the kingdom under God? By no means, he says. For at that time his fear will be removed from you, and his yoke from your shoulder. For since that people, greater than number, has fallen, and perished in one night, an angel consuming it, how is not all fear removed? Or how was the yoke upon every shoulder not as it were both shaken off, and in addition to this also destroyed, that is, completely gone? Seeking only to be saved, and to run home, and no longer raising their former brow against Judea. For he was considering, as I said, to place it under Judean yokes. But his hopes were made vain, and what was expected has turned out to the complete opposite.

For it was gladly saved not with weapons conquered, but rather by divine commands and by the hand of an angel; and the paradox. For in order that he might appear knowing all things, and holding the end of matters in his eyes as God, even if it has not yet happened, he also announces most clearly and vividly the manner of that man's flight, the places and the lodgings, and that he will terrify most of the cities of Judea, although the wretch has run away as a fugitive. For he will come, he says, to the city of Aiath, and will pass through to Migron. These are the names of cities and villages, or places. And at Michmash he will lay up his baggage. For the Hebrews say that when the Assyrian was in Michmash, he left all his baggage there, fearing an attack from those of Israel. For he thought that they would run in pursuit. Then he says: And he shall pass over the ravine, and come to Aiath. Fear will seize Ramah, the city of Saul. The daughter of Gallim will flee, she will be heard in Anathoth; Madmenah is beside herself, and the inhabitants of Gebim. The tradition of the Hebrews has something of this sort. For they say that only [ten] survivors returned to him from Jerusalem and announced what had happened.

Then with a very few he was brought back to the land that bore him, and he had thrown into confusion all the villages and cities, and they made his mere passing, as in flight and cowardice, unbearable. But wherever God defends and is willing to save, there is nothing that causes pain, but every hand of the enemy will grow weak, and strength and experience in war and the art of tactics will fail. Encourage today by hand to remain in the way. Encourage the mount, the daughter of Zion, and the hills that are in Jerusalem. Putting the text together we shall necessarily bring out the clarification of its meaning. O hills, therefore, he says, that is , the prominent and the preeminent, and those who are exalted above others in Jerusalem. And through these he signifies either holy prophets, or even the very choir of the priests. Encourage the mountain, that is, my daughter Zion. And encourage, almost stroking with the hand, and touching the head, so that she may remain in this way. But in what way? In trust in God, clearly. For it has been promised that He will both deliver, and save easily, and cast down the Assyrian, and remove the fear of him, and destroy the yoke, and will set them free from all greed. But these things will be, he says, when they remain

in this way, that is, clearly, in trust in God. Therefore encourage today, that is, at the time appropriate to the matter, and establish this mindset in her.

For it is not possible for the truth to be deceived, God will not speak falsely. For if He should approve something, this will certainly come to pass, when we honor with faith, and with a genuine mind gladden the one who promised to save. In this same way the saints also exhort us, saying, Resist the devil, and he will flee from us, and, that The angel of the Lord will encamp around those who fear him, and will deliver them. And he himself also said through the voice of David, concerning every person who trusts in him, and places his hope: "Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him. He will cry to me, and I will hear him, I am with him in affliction, and I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. For he will glorify those who glorify him, the Savior and Lord of us all, Jesus Christ, through whom, and with whom, to the Father together with the Holy Spirit be glory forever. Amen.

Discourse 7

Behold, the Lord, the Lord of Sabaoth, will confound the glorious ones with strength, and the lofty in their pride shall be broken, and they shall be humbled, and the lofty shall fall by the sword, and Lebanon with its lofty ones shall fall. In the completed book the discourse was about both the Assyrians, and of the one who administered the power of the Persians, who campaigned against Judea and Jerusalem, but unexpectedly suffered things from divine wrath. For Israel was saved miraculously, not by drawing a bow, not by snatching a shield, not a horseman, not by leading out [phalanxes] against his phalanxes with skill, not by conquering the hand of the enemies by the law of war, but in the power and grace of God. For an angel of the Lord went out, it says, and in one night killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand from the camp of the Assyrians. Since this had clearly happened, those who were expecting to perish danced, and they offered up hymns of thanksgiving to God who had saved them, saying: "In the evening weeping will lodge, and in the morning, rejoicing. And in addition to these things: "You have turned my mourning into joy for me; you have torn my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

But the insolent one, and arrogant, and shouting that great and destructive thing, "I will seize the whole world in my hand like a nest, and I will take it up like abandoned eggs, and there is no one who will escape me, or speak against me," was convicted of thinking great things of himself in vain. For he barely escaped, and as a fugitive departed for home, having left Judea. Therefore the God of all also said: Do not be afraid, my people, who dwell in Zion, because of the Assyrians. And the manner of his flight was also described, as he was, so to speak, shaking cities and villages in his passing. And again: Fear will seize Ramah, the city of Saul. And in interpreting such things, we have made the narrative more historical, yet not outside of the truth. For it is somehow entirely necessary that the discourse of the interpretation be adapted to the quality and power of the things set forth. But since it is the custom of the God-inspired Scripture, through things that happen in short order and historically, to sometimes reveal mysteries, and to fashion images of hidden meanings, we say that the inventor of sin has tyrannized over us, and over the sanctified peoples of the Savior, that is, through the Spirit, and those purified through faith, he leaped upon them terribly and bitterly, and campaigned against the Church of God, brandishing against her the most unholy phalanx of the spirits under his hand;

and perhaps he thought he could also overthrow it, and very effortlessly, the truly venerable and holy city of God, the spiritual Jerusalem, but he was captured, having considered none of the things that were possible. For it was not possible for him to besiege the holy city, and to overpower a right hand so very strong. For who will stand against God who is powerful in all things? Therefore he perished together with his own shield-bearers, and has been driven away from the flock of the pious, he who leaped upon them like a savage beast; and he has been cast out from his tyranny over us. And the Savior taught us this, saying: "Now is the judgment of this age; now the ruler of this age will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. For the passion of Christ became the overthrow of death, the casting down of the devil, and the destruction of sin, as he was lifted up on the cross, bringing down and casting to the earth the boast of the devil. Therefore, after those things, at the opportune time now also the God of all introduces the discourse concerning the birth according to the flesh of the Only-Begotten, and reveals the mystery beforehand through the voice of prophets, so that when the events had come to their conclusion, he might receive undisputed faith from all. What therefore does he say?

"Behold now, the Lord, the Lord of Sabaoth, will throw the glorious into confusion with strength. The mystery of Christ transforms those on the earth into a newness of evangelical life, with the older customs clearly having been overturned, and those in shadows and types no longer having the power to prevail. But this was the purpose of his arrival into this world, and he has come to proclaim, and before all others to those of Israel, that the things imposed until the time of reformation, that is, the one in law in letters, is therefore completely abolished, the mind of believers being refashioned, as I said, to better things and a spiritual way of life. For all things in Christ are new. But although they should have been persuaded by him, and before all others the leaders of the Jewish synagogue, who boasted not moderately in the glories of the priesthood, they vehemently opposed him from the contrary, they acted impiously, and though always speaking of the law through the all-wise Moses, they wished to render ineffective, as far as they were concerned, the mystery of the economy in the flesh of the Only-Begotten. But it was impossible for them to do this, but setting their own will against the Savior and God of all, they perished miserably, wretches that they were, on the one hand attacking one another and plotting the law of war, and on the other falling into the hands of the Romans, who also burned the temple itself.

Behold, therefore, the Lord, the Lord of Sabaoth, will confound the glorious with strength. He calls the one who confounds "Lord of Sabaoth," terrifying the hearers with dread, so that no one might suppose, perhaps, that he would be weak, or that he used threats that would not be accomplished, and not at all things that would certainly be brought to completion. For what will be unaccomplished of the things undertaken by the Lord of Sabaoth? And he says that those who are high with pride will be shattered. For they have truly become high with pride, not only killing holy prophets, and saying shamelessly to those who give the best counsel: "Speak to us other things, and report to us another deceit," but even whetting their tongue against Christ himself, and raising their horn on high, speaking iniquity against God, according to what is written. But these will be humbled, he says, and will fall by the

sword. For they perished, as I said, on the one hand as God brought upon them the sharpest wrath, and as it were consumed them with a sharp sword, and sheared them of the glories of righteousness, and dismissed them from leading the peoples, or also in another way, he says they will fall by the sword, that of their enemies, clearly, as I just said. But also Lebanon, he says, will fall with the lofty.

In this, he likely calls the temple Lebanon, which has been torn down, and has been burned, and has fallen together with those who have a haughty brow. For truly arrogant was both the swarm of priests, and Israel itself with them, having dishonored the Savior and Redeemer of all. And we will find Jerusalem itself called Lebanon. And so the prophet Zechariah said somewhere to it: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, and let fire devour your cedars. Let the pine howl, for the cedar has fallen; howl, you oaks of Bashan, for your dense forest has been cut down. For since he likened Jerusalem to Mount Lebanon, thus he named it, necessarily adhering plausibly to the turn of speech, and he usefully names the peoples in it, and indeed its leaders, as cedars and a dense forest, to whom he also commands to howl, because their destroyers would leap upon them like forests. But if anyone should choose to grasp a hidden contemplation, and to apply the force of the preceding to Satan himself, and to the wicked powers under him, he too will not walk outside of a likely aim. For the evil-loving throng of demons has been shattered and has perished, and with them the apostate dragon himself, the lofty one, and the haughty, and as it were likened to Mount Lebanon. For before the coming of our Savior, he was conspicuous to all, and absurdly worshipped everywhere, and had seized for himself the glory of divinity.

And a rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall grow up from his root, and the spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety, the spirit of the fear of God shall fill him. The prophet, having foreknown through the torch-bearing from above the clear things that were to be he makes the prediction. For it was said in later times to the blessed David by God who rules over all: "Of the fruit of your loins I will set upon your throne. And since He who knows all things instilled in the holy prophets the foreknowledge of things to come, this too was proclaimed beforehand by them, so that the mystery might be attested from all sides, and be believed to have happened. He says, therefore, that a rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and that a flower shall also come up, and not after the glorious with strength are troubled, and the lofty are humbled, and with them Lebanon falls, then he says the rod from the root of Jesse springs up. But in the first parts, the power of the whole matter was being shown more summarily. For what was going to happen to those of Israel who had wickedly provoked our Lord Jesus Christ, we have learned in a brief account;

but now the narrative returns to, as it were, the very highest beginning of the matter, I mean the incarnation of the Only-Begotten, and His birth according to the flesh from a woman, which was to be according to the economy. He therefore called Christ according to the flesh from the root of Jesse a rod; and moreover, in addition to this, also a flower, and through the rod, as is likely, His royal dignity is indirectly signified. For the rod is a symbol

of royalty. And indeed the divine David says somewhere to Him, the Son: ”Your throne, O God, is forever, a rod of uprightness is the rod of your kingdom. And a rod in another sense, as one who possesses all things, and holds them together for their well-being, and makes what is weak stand firm, that is, human nature, which was all but shaken to pieces, and intoxicated by passions. For the blessed David sings, taking upon himself the common person of all, ”Your rod and your staff, they have comforted me. For the Lord upholds the righteous, according to what is written; and He is named by the voice of prophets a glorious staff, a rod of majesty; a rod also in another sense, since He is a good shepherd, laying down His soul for the sheep. For it is said to Him through one of the holy prophets: ”Shepherd your people with your rod, your tribe, the sheep of your inheritance.

But if it seems to anyone, and since He is a judge, and renders to each according to his works, for this reason, he will understand well, that He is also very fittingly called a rod. For it was said to Him, when Israel had acted insolently toward Him, and had intemperately turned aside to disobedience: ”You shall shepherd them with a rod of iron, and like a potter’s vessel you shall break them in pieces. Thus also the law of the all-wise Moses signifies Him to us; for the rod of Aaron that budded, and was brought into the Holy of Holies, is also taken as a type of Christ. For it blossomed with nuts, and what indeed is the meaning of the thoughts in the shadows, it is necessary to say. For some touch upon natural philosophy, and indeed say that a nut-tree rod, if it should lie by the head of some persons, is naturally productive of sleeplessness. Therefore, since Christ was about, by the grace of God, as the blessed Paul says, to taste death for everyone, and having dozed off for a short while, as it were, to be awakened again as from sleep, and to live again in a manner befitting God, death having been trampled underfoot. For this reason He is compared to a nut-tree rod. And through this divine and spiritual rod Moses worked wonders, delivering Israel from the bondage in Egypt. For he called it the rod of God.

For it became for him a rod of power, according to what is written. When, therefore, the prophet, enigmatically revealing the mystery of Christ, says that the rod from the root of Jesse has appeared to us, then indeed, then with the eyes of the mind beholding Him, the only-begotten Word of God, through whom are all things, and in whom are all things, having been made flesh and become man, and having descended into a voluntary emptying of Himself, and having endured for our sake the birth according to the economy, I mean that according to the flesh and from a woman, he says together with the prophet: ”O Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid; I considered the works, and I was amazed. Therefore, it is called a Rod for the reasons we have just stated. And again, a Flower; for in him human nature blossomed forth to incorruption, and to life, and to the newness of the evangelical life; and a flower in another way, because of the intelligible sweet fragrance. ”For I,” he says, ”am a flower of the field, a lily of the valleys. And there came to us a certain fragrance, as it were, of the knowledge of God the Father. And indeed the divine Paul writes, and says:

”Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the fragrance of his knowledge through us in every place, for we are the sweet aroma of Christ

to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one, a fragrance of death unto death, but to the other, a fragrance of life unto life. Upon this rod, he says, that is, upon the flower that will be born from the root of Jesse, the Spirit of God will rest in due season, having many operations. For he calls it the Spirit of counsel and understanding, of knowledge and wisdom, of piety and fear of God. But we say that the proclamation of the prophetic skill does not introduce to us Jesus as a mere man, then become a bearer of the Spirit, and, as if in our rank, a partaker of the gifts from God, but rather it reveals the Word of God having become man, being full of every good, as pertains to his own nature, but appropriating along with his humanity also its properties. For it is proper to humanity to have of itself and from its own nature none of the gifts from above; "For what do you have that you did not receive? is said to it, but rather to be enriched from without and adventitiously, that is from God, with things beyond its own nature.

It was necessary, therefore, for the only-begotten Word of God, having brought himself down to emptiness, not to refuse the lowliness resulting from the emptying, and, being full by nature, to receive because of his humanity, not so much for himself, but for us who are in need of every good. So that if it is ever said that he received the Spirit, although he himself is the supplier of the Holy Spirit, and does not give it by measure, but distributes it to the worthy as from his own fullness, let the receiving be understood in terms of the measures of the emptying, for thus we will arrive straight at the truth. But consider this: "For the Spirit of God," he says, "shall rest upon him. For it was given in the beginning to the first-fruit of our race, that is, to Adam, but he became negligent about keeping the commandment given to him, he neglected what was commanded, he was brought down to sin, the spirit found no rest in men. "For all have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there was none who does good, no, not one. Then the only-begotten Word of God became man, without however ceasing to be God. But since, although he had become like us, he was impervious to sins, the Holy Spirit rested upon human nature, as in him first, and as in a second first-fruit of the race, so that it might also rest on us, and henceforth remain, dwelling in the minds of believers.

For thus indeed the divine John says he saw the Spirit descending from heaven upon Christ. Just as we have become co-heirs of the evils that befell the first-formed man, so we shall be partakers of the things that were dispensed economically to the second first-fruit of our race, that is, Christ. That the Spirit which is said to rest on him did not work in him a partial grace, as in the saints, but was the fullness of the divinity, lodging as in its own temple in its own flesh, and not in something soulless, but rather in that which was ensouled with a rational soul, the prophet will make clear, saying: "The spirit of the fear of God shall fill him. And to the one Spirit he has given manifold energy. For it is not that the Spirit of wisdom is one, and another that of understanding, or of counsel, and of strength, and of the rest, but just as the Word from God the Father is one, but his operation is named in many ways; for he is life, and light, and power; so also you will understand regarding the Holy Spirit; for being one is conceived in many ways, but it also works in this way. And so the

most wise Paul, enumerating for us the forms of different gifts: ”All these things,” he says, ”the one and the same Spirit works, distributing to each one individually as he wills.

He shall not judge according to appearance, nor reprove according to speech, but he shall judge with justice for the humble, and shall reprove the humble of the earth, and he shall strike the earth with the word of his mouth, and with the spirit of his lips he shall slay the ungodly. And he shall be girded with righteousness about his loins, and with truth wrapped around his sides. Having foretold very well that Emmanuel would be born in due time, he usefully adds also the things by which he would be recognizable from his inherent God-befitting virtue, and from the splendor in his works. For it was necessary, it was necessary to persuade in advance, with an accurate prophetic foretelling, those who were going to accept faith in him, who he was, and of what sort, and through what achievements he would come. For just as if someone, wishing to describe one of us to those who do not know him, paints him with words from what he knows him to be, and says about him that his hair is not long, but moderately short, and that his eye is bright, having a slightly smiling glance, and his nose is slender, and he goes through the other parts of the body, in the same way, I think, the blessed prophet too, since his discourse is about the Word who became man for our sake, for this reason he enumerates the signs of his God-befitting excellence and indeed authority, and so he says about him:

”He will not judge according to appearance, nor reprove according to speech. The matter is God-befitting, and resembles the most high nature. For not to look at the reputation among men, but to make a right and unperverted and completely blameless judgment on each person, how would this not be fitting for the nature that is queen of all things? For it does not know how to look at the face, nor does it deem worthy of honor or account the one adorned with the coverings of wealth, or with dignities, when he wishes to take advantage of some, but it condemns him completely, and declares the worker of iniquity accursed. But he will not reprove according to speech; and it is necessary to explain in what way this should be understood, and this. For very many of us deem worthy of honor those who wish to praise, and even if some are not good in their ways, they assign them as a reward for their flattery, as it were, sometimes to serve, and they restrain the reproofs directed against them. But one would not see our Lord and God Jesus Christ having done this. Therefore, even those who chose to speak fair words, but were not yet good in truth, he often converted with sharp rebukes to choose to live more prudently. For once some of those called Herodians approached, and these were agents of the tax collectors, and then, preparing a bitter deceit for him, they said:

”Teacher, we know that you teach the way of God in truth, and you care for no one. For you do not look on the face of men. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? But he said to these things, Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the tribute coin. See then how he refutes those who flatter, and shakes off those who speak fair words. And he refuted, and not according to their speech; for they expected to be praised, perhaps speaking ironically, but practicing a clever and most talkative fine speech, but he unexpectedly called

them tempters and hypocrites. Therefore he will not judge according to appearance, that is, he will not be a judge who shows partiality, nor will he reprove according to speech. For he will not endure, he says, those who have chosen to think impious things, but who put on fine speech for themselves like a mask of deceit and guile. This, indeed, he says clearly: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. And again: "Many will say to me on that day, that is, the day of judgment: 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and many mighty works have we done? But then, he says, I will say to them: Amen, I say to you, I never knew you. What then does the impartial judge do in addition to these things?

He will judge with judgment for the humble, that is, he will not overlook any of the humble, but will render a right and blameless judgment upon him. And he will likewise convict the humble of the earth; for just as he will not blush at the face of the rich man who wants to take advantage, but will make a just judgment upon the humble one; so too if someone, he says, of those in a lowly and humble state of life, should be carried outside the divine laws, and giving himself over to the charges of injustice should be caught, he says, this one too will be convicted. For it is written that, "You shall not pity a poor man in judgment. For just as distinction will not deliver the man of wealth, and prominence, and indeed of power from accusations, if he should be condemned for any transgressions, so the humbleness of being in a lowly and humble state will not free one from being wicked, nor will it release from the necessity of being punished the one who is weighed down by poverty and lives a detestable and thrice-miserable life. And he adds to these things some other of the most divinely-fitting dignities, which he says also belong to the Savior of all, Christ, because he was not a mere man like us, but was, as I said, the only-begotten Word of God, incarnate and become man. What then will he do? he says. He will strike the earth with the word of his mouth.

And what earth? Most of all, that which he would curse. But what was said would be true also of every one. For he cursed all the earth, that is, the nature of man, saying in Adam: "You are earth, and to earth you shall return. For he no less cursed the world of the ungodly by drowning it with water. And in addition to these things he cursed Judea, when its inhabitants acted insolently toward him. For he said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her; how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is left to you. For in the words, your house is left to you, the suffering of the abandonment that came upon it is revealed. And having been abandoned by him, it has been consumed by war and fire, and by the hands of those who destroyed it. And another sign besides this, and an effect of the highest power, is to slay the wicked man with the spirit of his lips. For he rebuked the unclean spirits, and as much as pertained to the human, the voice was uttered through mouth and lips, but by the ineffable power of the spirit the multitude of demons was crushed. And he will be, he says, girt with righteousness about his loins, and with truth wrapped around his sides.

For it is as if he were to say, His power and dignity are not at all of the things in the world, but rather the God-befitting glory, and as it were, to be girt with righteousness and truth. And a girdle is a sign of authority, and to say that he has his sides wrapped would be nothing other than signifying this very thing, that he will wear righteousness as a kind of belt, and with it, truth. And it is likely that he called the new and evangelical preaching both righteousness and truth, according to what was said to him through the voice of the psalmist: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; and your law is truth. For the law too was a teacher of righteousness, but it has not remained for ever, since a better and more perfect one has been introduced, clearly that which is through Christ. And the old law was not so much truth, but a type and a shadow; but Christ and his things are purely the truth. Therefore he also said: "I am the truth. And the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the bull, and the lion shall feed together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed together, and their young shall be together;

and the lion and the ox shall eat straw together, and a nursing child upon the hole of asps and upon the den of the offspring of asps will lay a hand upon; and they shall not do evil, nor shall they be able to destroy anyone on my holy mountain; because the whole world was filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as much water covers the sea. In addition to what has already been said before, this is a great and exceptional sign, and one might, quite rightly, grant it to be a not unmarvelous result of our Savior's advent. For before the only-begotten Word of God became man like us; before he took hold of the seed of Abraham, and was made like his brothers in all things, as it is written, the entire race on earth, I mean the human race, was divided into two nations, both that of the Jews, and that of those who had served the creation rather than the creator. And God was known in Judea; but a great and boundless swarm of idols was worshiped by the others; and what seemed right to each was honored with the glory of God; "For all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, and there was no one who does good, there was not even one. But the Jews, through the instruction of the law, being somehow tamed and domesticated by the ways of righteousness, honored a life befitting humans;

while the others, that is, those who worship lifeless idols, not having the guiding law, were terrible in their thoughts, savage and rapacious, ready for greed, rushing towards pleasures and extreme excesses, and most prone to anything of the most shameful kind; of whom one was like a wolf, another similar to leopards, on account of their minds being, as it were, tattooed with very many and manifold varieties of passions; another was unrestrained in his mind, effortlessly achieving greed against those he chose, continuing through life likened to lions. But those who were nourished in such savage characters and ways, when Christ transformed them to a most gentle and holy life, ceased from the cruelty that was in them; and they too have honored the life befitting humans, that is, the one in meekness. For they have believed Christ when he said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Therefore, together with faith they have gained also the casting off of their ancient cruelty, and the being good and

meek, and the living intermingled with the saints. For they too have been called fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God; this I think the prophetic word hints at for us in many ways in these things.

For, it says, the wolf shall pasture with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, that is, through Christ the savage will be joined to the tame, those who are in no way holy to the holy and sacred. For insofar as Israel was educated by the law and knew the ways of gentleness, it was tame and meek, and at the same time holy, and like a sheep and a goat; and both animals are sacred and clean, and in addition to this have received tameness from their very nature. But a wolf and a leopard, and indeed a lion, are naturally savage and incompatible with the others; but in Christ this too has been accomplished. For they were brought together with one another, both Jews and Greeks, making as it were a common food, that is, the evangelical and apostolic proclamation, and being under one chief shepherd of all, who knows how to pasture, as the prophet says, in a good pasture, and in a rich place. But also a calf, it says, and a bull and a lion will pasture together. And it seems to call a calf the newly-grown and new people of those who have believed, that is, the one who is an infant in Christ; and a bull, perhaps, Israel, as the first-born. For a bull precedes a newborn calf in time. Or, by calf he indicates the one who is superior in knowledge and virtue.

Such as to say that the small with the great, and the old with the younger, will be blessed by the Lord, according to the voice of the psalmist. And the most wise John also knows such an age of mind and soul. For he writes and to fathers and to little children, and in addition to this also to young men, assimilating, I think, the measure of each one's mind, that is, of understanding and of the knowledge of God, to the ages of their bodies. Therefore, he says, they will feed together and at the same time, calf and bull, and lion. And he again usefully interweaves the lion with the calf and the bull, so that you might again enigmatically understand that those who have been justified in faith, and have come under the scepter of the Savior of us all, Christ, are not from the clean and sacred alone, that is from the tame and meek, that is, those who have been tamed through the law, but also from the wild, that is, clearly, from the Gentiles, with the Savior of us all, Christ, joining them together into a unity of spirit, and transmitting the good from this to the children of children, that is, to their descendants. For the peace of Christ extends to this point and among us, and the good that comes from unity of spirit and unity of faith.

For this, I think, he indicates by adding, that their children will be together, and lion and ox will eat straw together, he says. Observe that he did not say the tame would change to the food customary for the wild, but the wild to that of the tame; for admittedly the bear and lion are carnivorous, but the ox and calf, or kid, are not; rather such animals are grass-eating. But the wild, he says, will abandon its habits. It will rather change to the food of the tame, for they too will eat straw. And the food would be a type of the teachings. It is possible, then, to understand that before faith in Christ, the nations had evil teachers, who set before them beast-like learning, and persuaded them to honor the works of corruption and destruction.

But when they were called to the knowledge of the truly existing God, they were delivered from their ancient error and their familiar learnings, honoring the flourishing and easily digestible food of the evangelical instructions together with those from Israel. But also a little child, he says, will lead them, that is, they will be under teachers and guides who do not have a bitter and malicious mind, but rather are simple, and childlike in malice, but wise in their understanding. Such are all those in Christ who have the divine treasure in earthen vessels, and having their heart free from perversity and depravity, in no way lacking compared to newborn infants.

For the Savior himself says that such are worthy of the kingdom of heaven; ”Let” for, he says, ”the little children, and do not hinder them to come to me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And that they might have the greatest guilelessness in mind, and be unconquerable and invincible, and superior to all fears, he hints, saying: ”And an infant child shall lay his hand on the hole of asps, and on the den of the offspring of asps, and they shall not do evil, nor shall they be able to destroy anyone on my holy mountain. And the holes and dens of asps, I think, he calls either the evil hosts of demons, or the houses, as it were, and lairs of unholy heretics; so that we do not say churches; upon which those who are childlike in Christ, often laying their hand, easily prevail, being harmed in no way; For it is Christ who defends them, and destroying the bites of their wickedness, and rendering the venom ineffective. For they shall not be able, he says, to destroy anyone on my holy mountain. And by holy mountain he means the Church, because of being set on high with respect to glory, and the loftiness of the doctrines within her. For there is nothing lowly among us. For we are not accustomed to offer equal reverence to the creature as to the Creator, bypassing the Creator and Maker;

nor indeed do we bring down the God Word, the creator of all things, from the glory that befits him, numbering him with the created things. And he says that the whole world has been filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and so is full of piety towards him, just as, of course, the wide and spacious sea is full of its own waters is. And one might see that this is also true. For where at all or among whom is Christ not named? or what race of men has not submitted to him? For every knee will bow to him, and every tongue will confess him according to what is written, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And in that day there shall be the root of Jesse and he who rises to rule the nations, in him they will hope, and his rest shall be honor. The contemplation of the things obscurely said gradually shines forth, and what he said through riddles, these things he makes very clear to those who are eager to hear.

For in what way will the wolf feed with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the ox, and the lion eat straw together, and when at all will these things be, and who are they who were once savage and harsh, but after this will be tame and gentle, and how will they be pastured mixed with the tame and the sacred under the one chief shepherd of all, he clarifies by saying: And there shall be the root of Jesse. But what will he be and over whom? So that he may rule, he says, over the nations, and also become

a hope for those who have no hope, that is, clearly, the Gentiles, to whom the most wise Paul also writes, saying: "Therefore remember that you, the Gentiles, who are called the uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that you were at that time without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants, having no hope of the promise and without God in the world. But now you who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. But even if they were without hope, and having no God in the world; for they have worshipped the works of their own hands;

yet having been called through faith to the knowledge of Christ, they have also been placed under him, and they have had the God who is by nature and truly, and they have become partakers of the hope of the saints. And his rest, he says, shall be honor. You will understand what is said in a twofold way. For if one should choose the rest in these things to signify the death of Christ in the flesh, which he willingly endured for us, not as enduring death, for he was life by nature, but as it were causing the flesh to rest for a short time; the matter is honor, and nothing else. For the Savior of all and our Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified, having endured the slaughter for the world, and voluntarily undergoing death for the life of all. And so he said to the Father in heaven, when he was about to go to the precious cross: "Father, glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you. And again: "Now the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. For as far as it concerned the madness of those who crucified him, and the unholy and hateful undertaking, the passion was a disgrace and dishonor to him. For they perhaps thought that he suffered unwillingly.

But since he came back to life, having plundered Hades, and having shown by the very deed that he is stronger than death, we shall find the outcome of the matter ending in honor and glory for him. Therefore, he says, in this way his rest shall be honor. But if one should wish to approach the contemplations in another way, he will understand the meaning of what has been said as follows. For Christ will not be only a hope for the nations, but he will be revealed in due time, that is, he will arise not only to rule them, but he will also grant them his rest in them for honor and glory. For the mind of the saints is a beloved dwelling place for him, and he lodges with the worthy, and rests in the holy souls of those who worship him, and to those who have received this thing it is both honor and glory. For what could be equal in terms of renown to having God lodged and dwelling in one's heart? Therefore, in this way also his rest in us will be an honor to those who once are willing: "For if anyone hears," he says, "my words, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and we will make our home with him.

And it shall be in that day, the Lord will add to show his hand, to be zealous for the remnant that is left a remnant of the people, which if it be left from the Assyrians, and from Egypt, and Babylonia and Ethiopia, and from the Elamites, and from the rising of the sun, and from Arabia. The prophet, then, in these words calls "day" the time in which the coming of Christ occurred, and the mystery of the economy in the flesh of the Only-Begotten was revealed. Then indeed, then, he says, the Lord will show his hand, that is, there will be a

great demonstration of power; and this not in vain, but for "the sake of making zealous the remnant that was left of the people, which shall be left from the Assyrians," he says, and from the other nations. But it is necessary, I think, to elaborate on the meaning of what has been said to make it clearer. For in the times of old, the nation of the Jews had grown exceedingly weary, being ravaged, on the one hand by the Assyrians and Elamites, and on the other hand by those from Egypt and Babylonia, and from the rising of the sun, and from Arabia. But after this, Christ having shone forth, the most mighty hand and all-working right hand of God the Father made itself manifest through wonders, and was eager to fully convince those of Israel that He was in truth God, and the Son of the true God.

For what of the most admired things was not accomplished among them? For all things were befitting of God and extraordinary, and had a clear and most evident demonstration of the highest power. At that time, he says, therefore, the Lord will proceed to show His hand, in order to make Israel zealous, and, as it were, not to concede Christ to the nations alone, but that they also might choose to have hope in Him, and indeed also to seek to be under Him, and to make Him a ruler, guide, and teacher, who for this cause became man. And indeed He said through the voice of David: "But I was appointed king by him on Zion his holy mountain, proclaiming the decree of the Lord. For Christ came, saying He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And so He first preached among them, and He commanded the holy apostles: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But since the wretched ones, out of excessive folly, persisted in insulting with their disobedience Him who had come for this, He then turned to the nations, and the last have become first, and the first last.

For this reason now the prophet, being a Spirit-bearing man and enriched with the knowledge of future things through heavenly enlightenment, first mentions the nations, and then after them Israel, as being cast behind those sanctified by faith, and placed in the rear and among the remnants, according to what is written. And he shall lift up a standard for the nations, and shall assemble the lost of Israel, and shall gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. And the jealousy of Ephraim shall be taken away, and the enemies of Judah shall perish. Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not afflict Ephraim. In a remarkable way the prophet especially concludes for us his discourse in these words. For he takes what happened historically as an image of a spiritual matter; and I think it is necessary to state this also clearly, as far as possible. For Rehoboam, his son, succeeded to the rule of Solomon; and the nation of the Jews was split from him into discord; and the ten tribes and the half-tribe of Ephraim were relocated in Samaria, while in Jerusalem remained the tribe of Judah, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. And at times, certain men of both these and those reigned; in Jerusalem, those from the tribe of Judah; but in Samaria, those from the tribe of Ephraim; and great jealousy was kindled between the parts, and frequent wars, and uprisings against one another, as is also clearly narrated in the books of the Kings.

But since the Chaldeans and the kings of Persian Babylon, having laid waste, so to speak, all of Judea, carried away captive to their own, both Israel and Judah, that is, those in Samaria, and those in Jerusalem; then, having been freed from captivity, they returned again to their own land, and dwelt no longer divided, but all in Jerusalem; and they ceased from anointing kings and rulers over themselves in turn, and from afflicting and envying one another, as they had done before. For they were at that time under one man, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was from the tribe of Judah, and also under Jesus the son of Jozadak, who was preeminent in the priesthood. And so far, the historical account. But it was the prophet's purpose, from more manifest events and from what had happened to those of old, to show forth the achievements of our Savior's advent. For when the sign was raised, that is, the precious cross, and had become manifest to the nations and peoples throughout the whole world, there came a release for those in captivity (clearly, the spiritual one), a coming together in one mind, a zeal for concord and one faith among those formerly divided;

who, having been yoked to many unholy tyrants (for they had served unclean spirits), shook off their yoke, and have run together very eagerly to the spiritual Zion, that is, Jerusalem, which is the Church, and have come under one king, that is, Christ, of whom Zerubbabel was a type, bringing back Israel from captivity with Jesus the great priest accompanying him, so that in him Christ might be understood as king and high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, as the divine Paul says. That the sign of Christ, that is, the precious cross, became the cause of those throughout all the earth being brought together in one faith, and thus being reconciled through it to the all-holy Father, would be clear from what the divine John the evangelist has written. For he brings in the accursed Caiaphas saying to those in the council: "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish. And to these very words he added: "This he did not say on his own authority, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

For Christ has become our peace, according to the Scriptures, He who broke down the middle wall of the partition, and abolished the law of commandments in ordinances, and created the two peoples into one new man; reconciling both through Himself to God the Father, and destroying the enmity between them, so that all of us in one spirit and in one body, being of one soul and one body with one another, in Christ that is, might bear fruit for Him, the righteousness which is above the law, and the purity of the evangelical life. Therefore, coming from the things that were done historically to the spiritual contemplation, you will understand very well the mystery of Christ. And they shall fly in the ships of foreigners; they shall at the same time plunder the sea, and those from the rising of the sun, and Idumea, and on Moab they shall first lay their hands; and the sons of Ammon shall first obey. In what way, then, those from the four corners of the earth, that is, all the nations, will be brought together to the unity in Christ through faith, and to the bond of holy love, he makes clear again in these words. For before the precious cross, Christ said to the holy

apostles: ”Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. For as He Himself said again:

”I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But since, having reached the extreme of all impiety, they have acted insolently toward Christ, and have killed the author of life, and they denied the Holy and Just One; then indeed, then having trampled upon death, and having been raised from the dead, he commanded his holy disciples: ”Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And when he had ascended into heaven, and then the power from on high had descended upon them, they no longer remained preaching Jesus in Judea alone, but some went to the East and preached in the cities there; others went to the West, and others bestowed the words of instruction upon the neighboring nations; and it was somehow necessary for those wishing to travel throughout the whole world under the sun to also make use of sailing. And so the divine Paul claims to have spent a night and a day in the deep. And the one who wrote the Acts of the holy apostles says that he and those with him embarked on an Alexandrian ship with the sign of the Dioscuri. For it was a custom somehow, especially on Alexandrian ships, to have such inscriptions on both the right and left of the prow.

And since it was likely, as idolatry prevailed at that time, that the Dioscuri were inscribed on the ship , it therefore follows that the master of the ship was a foreigner, that is, an idolater. Therefore, they will fly on the ships of foreigners, he says, that is, they will cross swiftly and eagerly and as if on wings, and they will plunder the sea. And it is a custom in the divine Scripture to call the parts toward the west ”sea,” because the sea there is very great and wide. And so the blessed David, declaring the God of all to be the creator of the whole world, says, ”The north,” he says, ”and the sea you have created. And that the divine Peter, and indeed the all-wise Paul himself, having reached the parts of the west, preached Jesus, no one would doubt. And they will plunder, he says, also those from the rising of the sun, and Idumea, and they will lay their hands upon Moab. And the sons of Ammon will be the first to obey. For after the land of the Jews, all the neighboring and adjacent lands, and even those further away, were full of idolaters, and incompatible in their mindset with those who know the one God by nature and in truth. And the Idumeans and Moabites, and indeed the sons of Ammon, were neighbors to those of Israel, and they inhabited a neighboring land, but were terribly different, and among the most hostile.

And they worshiped the stars, and held the Morning Star in all reverence, and called it God, preeminent among the others. But upon them also first the true Morning Star shone into their mind and heart, and the light of the spiritual day dawned. And having cast off that ancient darkness, and having further rejected the worship of creation, they have worshipped Christ, and made those who were formerly most hostile, I mean those of Israel, their mystagogues and guides on the road that leads to salvation. And the Lord will lay waste the sea of Egypt, and he will lay his hand upon the river with a mighty wind, and he will strike the seven ravines, so that one may cross it in sandals. And there will be

a passage for my people left in Egypt; and it will be for Israel as the day when he came out of the land of Egypt. The inventor and father of sin has prevailed out of greed over all under heaven. Having led man astray from the truth, he made him a worshiper of the herd of demons, and placed him under his own yokes; But the Egyptians especially have become more superstitious than others and terrible in this regard. For there were temples everywhere and altars throughout their land, and countless shrines, and a swarm of statues, and many-formed things in their sanctuaries. For they have worshiped birds and fish, a goat and a sheep, and a calf was their object of worship.

But God visited them even in this state, and together with the others called them to the light, and to the knowledge of truth. For in it they preached the Gospel of Christ, both Mark the blessed evangelist, and others after him at various times; on the one hand, coming from the land of the Hebrews, and on the other hand, also from among those who had believed , appointed at various times as mystagogues and teachers. It is necessary to explain in what way this was achieved, broadening the account of the history. For before the Roman power prevailed over all, and each country had its own leader, that is, a king, there was great division among the nations; on the one hand, because the difference of religion caused enmity to be kindled between them, and on the other hand, because those who wished were allowed to plunder those from another land, with no one rebuking them. Therefore there was for a long time very great lack of intercourse between the nations, and for anyone to be caught within another's country was not without penalty. But when the rule of the Romans prevailed over all, and they came under one leader, they were taught to live by their laws, and henceforth intercourse between the nations became fearless, and a great civility prevailed; then, indeed, then a passage, or a way, was made for those evangelizing Jesus, so that they could also pass into Egypt.

And in what way Augustus Caesar captured the land of the Egyptians, the prophetic word explains to us. For the river of Egypt is wide and large, and flooding at certain times, it comes through seven mouths, bestowing its stream upon the neighboring sea; and being, moreover, in the parts of the marsh-men, it forms long and wide lakes, and floods all their land, so that even the grain-bearing land is navigable. So when Augustus Caesar, having conquered Judea, came to the land of the Egyptians, its inhabitants thought that even if they chose to be quiet, and to abstain from war and arms, the fact that it was girded with lakes and rivers would make the country impregnable to him. But since it seemed good to the God who rules all things to subject the land of the Egyptians also, with the others, to the Roman scepters, having pushed the water of the river toward the sea with a most violent south wind, He made the whole land passable, so that those wishing to cross both the lakes and the ravines themselves, that is, the seven mouths of the river, did not, so to speak, even have to loosen the sandals on their feet. Thus, with God smoothing the passage for the Roman army, the Egyptians were conquered. This again the prophet teaches us, saying: "Thus says the Lord Sabaoth, And the Egyptians shall drink the water that is by the sea; but the river shall fail and be dried up;

and the rivers shall fail, and the canals of the river; and every gathering of water shall be dried up, and in every marsh of reed and papyrus, and all the green sedge around the river, and everything sown by the river shall be dried up by a blight-wind."-Therefore, he says, the Lord will lay waste the sea of Egypt. It is a custom of the divine Scripture to call even the lakes seas. And He will bring His hand upon the river with a mighty spirit. For we say that the bringing of the most violent wind against the waters was the work of a hand, that is, of divine power. For He struck the seven ravines, that is, the mouths, and made them so dry, as to cross them in sandals. Then indeed, then, he says, there will be a passage in Egypt for my people who are left. And who was this? Those from Israel who believed, concerning whom also the prophet Isaiah says: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. And the firstfruits, as it were, of the remnant are the blessed disciples and those with them, of whom the divine Mark was also one. But it shall also be, he says, as the day when they came out of the land of Egypt;

that is, those of the blood of Israel, having proclaimed the divine and heavenly word to those in Egypt, will rejoice greatly, just as they certainly rejoiced on that day when they came out of the land of Egypt. For again they themselves of the in they were brought forth from the slavery of Egypt. But having become ministers of the divine proclamations, and genuine stewards of the evangelical decrees, they did not deliver the Egyptians from carnal slavery, but taking them from the hand of the devil, they made them free. And while the all-wise Moses was mediating, the river was changed into blood; but now for them in Christ the water has become saving. For we have been saved through holy baptism. Then those who pursued Israel, having assailed the Red Sea, were drowned; but through the holy apostles they were taught to swim through the surge of the present life, and to be seen as superior to worldly waves. Then the terrible and most violent hail fell upon them. But since they have been initiated into the mystery of the economy in the flesh, the divine rain has descended into their mind, making it fruitful. A deep and three-day darkness was brought upon them; but they have come to be in light. They mourned their firstborn; but the Firstborn from the dead, that is, Christ, saved them from death and corruption.

Therefore, on account of all these things it was fitting for those of Israel to rejoice, as when they themselves came out of the land of Egypt. And you shall say in that day: I will praise you, O Lord; for you were angry with me, and you have turned away your anger from me, and have had mercy on me. Behold, my God is my Savior, the Lord; I will trust in him, and I will be saved in him, and I will not be afraid; because the Lord is my glory and my praise, and he has become my salvation. Saying that those from the nations have been saved through faith in Christ, and that the most superstitious of all others have come to the knowledge of the truth, he fittingly introduces them giving glory. For of being wholly delivered from the first and initial ignorance which was in them, and of finally turning to choose to think the things that seem good to Him, even to the God who alone saves, a clear demonstration would be their haste to give glory, and to offer thanks to him like a spiritual sacrifice. Therefore, at that time, he says, when there would be a passage in Egypt, that is, for those who preach the evangelical and saving word, You, he says, who were long ago in

deep darkness, and a bitter idolater who was buried in the deceits of demons, when with the eyes of the mind you look up to the light;

when you see the glory of the one who has called you, and are brought to the perception of from what things to what things you have passed; and that though yoked to a bitter tyrant, you have escaped his greed, and have run for the aid of the all-powerful God who saves the lost; then indeed, then, rejoicing in yourself very much and quite fittingly, you will cry out, saying: I will praise you, O Lord; for you were angry with me, and you have turned away your anger from me, and have had mercy on me. And they offer up thank-offerings, and they kindle doxologies, not because they have come under divine wrath, but because having done so, they have been shown mercy. And we say that the God of all is angry with those who say such things, clearly, with the idolaters. For what reason? The divine Paul will make it clear to us, having written: ”Claiming to be wise, they became fools. And they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for a likeness in the image of corruptible man, and of birds and of creeping things, and of four-footed beasts. For this reason,” he says, ”God gave them up to a debased mind, and to dishonorable passions, to do those things which are not proper. For those who misrepresented the divine glory, and attributed the excellent beauty of the highest nature to such wretched creatures, how would they not most fittingly be subjected to the impulses of divine wrath?

But since, he says, you have turned away your anger, you have had mercy on me (for I have been called to knowledge through faith, not according to the works which we have done, as it is written, but according to his great mercy); for this reason, he says, having been brought to a perception of the great gift, I will offer you unceasing doxology, and indeed I will also say: Behold, my God is my Savior, the Lord; I will trust in him and I will be saved in him. For of old, falling down before woods and stones, and offering sacrifices to senseless statues, they besought to be saved through them. But since they have known the true God, having thrust aside those falsely named, they point to him alone, saying: Behold my God, my Savior, the Lord. I will no longer be trusting in woods and stones, he says, but in him alone, and through him I will be saved. And if he who of old took advantage and snatched away into error, comes again tempting and fighting, I will conquer, he says, because my glory and my praise is the Lord. Do you see how they have known that to give glory is a saving thing? ”Offer,” for, it says, ”to God a sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High. And, ”Call upon me in the day of your trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me. And draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation.

Generous is he who has called, ready to repay is the God who has saved, he does good to those who have known him, with divine and spiritual things he richly gladdens those who glorify him. For behold how they were confessing, saying: Behold my God, my Savior, the Lord, I will trust in him; and he immediately promises them both fountains and saving water. For it was necessary, it was necessary for those who had run from darkness to the light, for those called from Hellenic ignorance to the knowledge of the God who truly is, not to lack instruction and a gladdening word, and able to hold them fast to piety. ”For not by

bread alone shall man live," he says, "but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Therefore he calls water the life-giving word of God; and fountains the holy apostles and evangelists, and I might add also the prophets themselves; and Salvation, Christ. You therefore, he says, who with confessions unto faith gladden me who am by nature God of all, will receive in return a divine and spiritual joy, drawing the word that is able to hold you fast to this from the fountains of Salvation, that is, of Christ. For he appointed the holy apostles; concerning whom the blessed David also sings in the psalms: "The fountains of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were uncovered.

For the fountains of waters are the divine disciples, gushing forth to those under all heaven words from above and through the Spirit. And they are likewise also foundations of the world. For a chosen stone is Christ, who is also said to have been laid by God the Father in the foundations of Sion, that is, of the Church. For on him we have been set and through faith we are built up a spiritual house into a holy temple, into a dwelling place of God in spirit. And stones after him, that is, foundations of the world, would be and very fittingly so named those who proclaim him to those throughout all the earth. For their writings uphold us for stability and confirmation in faith and in truth. And you will say in that day, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his glorious deeds among the nations; remember that his name is exalted. Sing to the name of the Lord, for he has done lofty things; declare these things in all the earth. Rejoice and be glad, you who dwell in Sion, for the holy one of Israel is exalted in your midst. O wondrous thing! The one recently initiated, then having come upon the fountains of Salvation and having drawn the life-giving stream, is seen to have acquired such progress, I mean, in being faithful and genuine, that he immediately displays an apostolic ministry.

And not only did he himself hasten to give glory alone, but already also to all others he commands to do this, saying: Praise the Lord, call upon his name. And to whom he commands to call, he makes clear by adding immediately: Declare among the nations his glorious deeds. For let it not be hidden, he says, the glory of the Savior, let it be manifest to all, the god-befitting His power and authority. He saved without remembering evils; He cast down the invincible tyranny of the devil and of the demons; He redeemed the deceived; He freed those in captivity; He proclaimed recovery of sight to the blind. He has justified through faith, He has sanctified through the Spirit, He has made sons of God those who were once fugitives and living an inglorious and accursed life. He has fully convinced by His deeds that He is by nature and truly God. He raised the dead, He declared clean those with leprosy. He has healed by a nod those in sickness; He has checked the assaults of spirits. He has calmed the sea when it was wild. Therefore declare His glorious deeds among the nations, and hold them in great remembrance, because His name is exalted. For He has done lofty things. For it is truly beyond a human hand, or rather, the accomplishments are beyond every wonder. Exult, therefore, and be glad, you inhabitants of Zion, that is, those who have a firm faith in the Churches;

because the Holy One of Israel is exalted in your midst. For even if the Holy One of Israel became man, and in the form of a servant arrived for our sake according to the economy, yet from the results, and the brilliance of His works, He was exalted in a manner befitting God; and we have known who He is by nature.

Discourse 8

The vision which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw against Babylon. The vision against Babylon, and indeed also those that follow it, namely against the Idumeans and Moabites, and moreover the Egyptians, and in addition the others were made for the consolation of Israel; but they have a somewhat more historical rendering of the things signified, except that it is permitted to the more intelligent, as from a dense image even now to skillfully transform the clearest things that happened to the ancients into a spiritual contemplation; which the discourse, as it proceeds, will make the narrative for those who will encounter it, interpreting each of the written things as is possible. But I think it is necessary now also to go back to the beginning of the matter, and to first narrate the causes of the vision. For Israel, having been called through the all-wise Moses to the knowledge and worship of the God who truly is, and having a law that directs toward every single one of the wondrous things, neglected the commandment given to it, and turned to doctrines, the commandments of men, or rather, giving itself over to even worse things, it slipped into the pits of idolatry. At any rate, the God of all accused them through every prophet for choosing to do such things, and made a great outcry against its impiety. For He said: "This people draws near to me, with their lips they honor me; but their heart is far from me.

But in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And again: "What has the beloved done in my house? An abomination. And He calls the idol an abomination. Therefore, having terribly strayed into outrageous wantonness, and turning their neck from slavery under God, and raising up their own arrogant disposition against Him, as it were, He delivered them up at times, sometimes to those inhabiting the neighboring country, I mean the Idumeans, and moreover the Moab- ites, the Egyptians and those from Philistia, and at other times bringing a more grievous blow upon them, He sent against them the most savage of those on earth, I mean, of course, the Babylonians, who, after ravaging the whole land of the Jews without toil, carried off a multitude greater than number as captives to their own land. But that these things would happen when they provoked the God of all, the blessed prophets foretold from time to time. But they, although what had already been announced to them had come to pass, were no less hard and disobedient, practicing an abominable and most lawless life. Therefore, most providentially, the God of all, after the blow and scourges and the things that had happened to them from their enemies

from time to time, also makes the prediction of the most pleasant things and those that know how to bring joy;

and He promises that even those who had already become captives would return home He will prepare, and will release from the bonds of misery, and will also deliver those who formerly conquered into the hands of enemies. For it was surely very likely, even if they remained unadmonished by those things, that they would at least choose to rejoice in the second things, and being lifted up to the hope of the things they longed for, to honor the worship most dear to God, and to keep their mindset unshaken for Him. Since, therefore, although there were many who from time to time had sacked the country of the Jews, but the Chaldeans especially were harsher and more savage than the others, and those who had ruled Babylon from time to time, the word of prophecy as it were leaps upon them first and says: Raise a standard on a level mountain. But I think it is necessary, having chosen to make the rendering of the interpretation of the foregoing accurate, to first narrate some of the most necessary things. Therefore Cyrus, who was the son of Cambyses and his mother Mandane, having reigned over the Persians and Medes, campaigned against Babylon, and against the whole country of the Chaldeans, which was both wide and very large; and indeed he conquered it.

He took it not by his own powers, nor indeed being able to use a stronger hand (for the nation of the Chaldeans was something unconquerable and irresistible, both because of its multitude and because it was very well trained in tactics), but rather with God subjecting to him those who resisted, and shaking the impious powers of the Babylonians; because of the very great amount of sorcery among them; and the swarm of idols was beyond number; and indeed it has been named a land of graven images, either because of the multitude of idols, or because each of the inhabitants there was found to differ in no way from an idol, I mean, in respect to having uncontrollably and intemperately inclined towards error. Then, in addition to this, because after ravaging the holy land that had been allotted to God, that is, Judea, and burning Jerusalem and the divine temple itself, they carried off the sacred vessels to their own land, and using unrestrained wrath they killed Israel, although it was named a holy people, and a portion and inheritance of God. For that God delivered Israel, who had practiced idolatry, into the hands of enemies is not unclear to those knowledgeable in the sacred writings, but those called for this purpose punished immoderately. And indeed the God of all is found somewhere saying through the voice of Zechariah:

”I have been jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and with great wrath I am angry with the nations that are attacking, because while I was a little angry, they joined in for evil. And to Babylon he says: ”I gave them into your hands, but you showed them no mercy. So then God delivered to Cyrus the arrogant and insolent one, the mother and nurse of all wickedness, I mean Babylon. And this would be made clear by what he says through Isaiah thus: ”Thus says the Lord to my anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, that nations might hearken before him, and cities will not be shut; I will go before you and make mountains level. I will break in pieces the gates of bronze, and cut

in sunder the bars of iron. And Cyrus, having conquered, released Israel from captivity, and commanded them to go home rejoicing, and indeed also to rebuild the divine temple. And so the prophet Jeremiah, "The word," he says, "that the Lord spoke against Babylon: Announce among the nations, and make it heard, and do not hide it. Say: Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame, the undaunted, the delicate one. Merodach was delivered up, because a nation from the north has come up against it, he will lay her land waste, there shall be no one dwelling in it, from man to beast.

In those days, and in that time, the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah shall come together, walking and weeping they will go seeking their God; they will ask the way to Zion. For hither they will set their faces, and they will come, and will flee to the Lord. For the everlasting covenant will not be forgotten. And again: "Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I am taking vengeance upon the king of Babylon, and upon his land, as I took vengeance upon the king of Assur; and I will restore Israel to his pasture; and he shall feed on Carmel, and on Mount Ephraim, and in Gilead, and his soul shall be satisfied. Upon a level mountain lift up a standard, raise your voice to them, do not fear, beckon with the hand, open, you rulers. I give the command, and I lead them. They are consecrated, and I lead them. Giants are coming to fulfill my wrath, rejoicing and at the same time insolent. The blessed prophet, having his mind filled with the Holy Spirit, and being in visions of things, as if being written, he all but leaps up, crying out to the Persians and Medes, as to those who have already conquered the land of the Babylonians, to raise high the symbol of victory; for this, I think, is the standard;

and to shout against the army of the Chaldeans, as having already fallen and surrendered to them the arrogant and famous city, which the prophet Jeremiah also called the hammer of the earth, saying concerning the Babylonians: How is the hammer of the earth captured and broken? for every city and country was broken, struck in a way as if by some hammer, by their greed. And a level mountain, I think, he calls that which is, as it were, low to the ground, and on the order of a hill. For they do not ascend to the high parts of the mountains to set up the standards, that is, the trophies, or rather the sign, but on hills not very high, so that at the same time it might avoid being placed too high, and might be very well known to the whole army. Lift up, therefore, he says, a standard, as having already conquered with God as your champion. Raise your voice, that is, shout against the phalanx of the enemies, do not fear. For the hand of the Babylonians is admittedly terrible and irresistible to all everywhere, and no one would blame those who fear it. But now, do not fear, he says, since God is bringing forth his own wrath against their arrogance. Beckon with the hand. And what is this?

Perhaps it is a custom for the leaders of the troops to encourage with the hand, and to urge on the most warlike with nods, and to rouse them to attacks against certain ones, since the voice is unable to do this, being in a great tumult. Therefore he commands those in charge of affairs to make exhortations by means of hands and nods to the armies under their command, and to incite them to a certain invincible zeal. And again he cries out,

"Open, you rulers. For either he commands the Babylonians themselves, as having already been conquered, to open the gates, and to surrender the city that was once arrogant and insolent; or perhaps also to the holy powers who, by God's command, fight alongside the Medes, and make smooth for them the chariot roads, though they are very difficult. And so that he might show the invincible hand of those fighting, he adds and says: I give the command and I lead them. For he all but says something like this: It was not a multitude of the Median army that came to you of its own accord, nor did the people of the Persians come solely of their own will; or perhaps rather I have also sanctified them for this purpose. And he says "I have sanctified" in this context, instead of "I have set apart" and, as it were, "I have chosen out" for the accomplishment of what I have planned against you.

Therefore, he says, those whom I lead are coming, like certain giants, to fulfill my wrath, rejoicing and at the same time being insolent; rejoicing, on the one hand, because they are confident that they will conquer; and being insolent, on the other hand, instead of "scorning" them as greatly afflicted with cowardice, and as being worthy of nothing. For such is always the barbarian mindset, prone to the hope of being able to conquer, and always belittling those who resist. For wrath especially commands them to this, and begets the desire for courage, to despise all danger and fears. A voice of many nations on the mountains like that of many nations, a voice of kings and of nations gathered together. The Lord of Sabaoth has commanded a nation of warriors to come from a land from afar from the edge of the foundation of heaven the Lord, and his warriors to destroy the whole inhabited world. As the Medes were already shouting, and raising a voice fitting for wars, like a horse neighing and some pursuing, while others were already turning to flight, and a great and motley echo was being scattered, "A voice," he says, "of many nations upon the mountains, like many nations. Not such a voice, he says, that one might guess the shouters to be few in number, but rather to think that the multitude of those crying out is beyond number. The account shows that along with their subjects, those destined to lead were struck with terror.

For he asserts that the voice is of nations and of kings. Therefore, the shouters would be the immense populace of the Babylonians, and with them the most distinguished, seeing their city already captured by the spear, or indeed, the Persians and Medes shouting over the captured. And them, I think, he also calls warriors, and a nation coming from a land far away; from the edge of the foundation of heaven, that is, from the very borders of Media, and from the innermost parts of the northernmost land. But since they were preparing the attack according to the will of God, he calls them the Lord's warriors, and says that they have been brought to destroy the whole inhabited world, and not indeed all of our world. For we shall not find this to have happened by Cyrus and those with him. But he calls the land of the Chaldeans the "inhabited world," because it was very great and immeasurably wide, and as it were, vied with the inhabited world, on account of the multitude of its inhabitants. Wail; for the day of the Lord is near, and destruction will come from God. For this reason every hand will be paralyzed, and every soul of man will be faint-hearted. And the ambassadors will be troubled, and pangs will seize them, as of a woman in labor; and

they will cry in sorrow to one another, and they will be astonished, and their face they will change as a flame.

As all hope has been taken away, as nothing is any longer left for the Babylonians, except only the need to lament, he says, ”wail. And he commands them, as it were, to despair of their salvation, and not to attempt unprofitable things, not preparing for resistance, as divine wrath has been armed against them, and destruction brought upon them by a decree from above. And the matter is completely irresistible; ”For who shall turn back the high hand? as it is written. And again; ”If he should shut a man up, who will open? For what strength, or of whom at all, will war against God? For this reason he says, that every hand will be paralyzed, and every soul of man will be faint-hearted; for when the all-powerful God shakes the souls of men into cowardice, who will instill courage, or, show him to be of good courage, and sufficiently disposed for resistance? And he says the ambassadors will be troubled, and will fall into pangs like a woman in labor, and that one will cry in sorrow to another, and indeed will be astonished, and that their face will change as a flame.

And ambassadors, I think, he says, are the priests of the idols, those most distinguished in the magical art among the Babylonians, the ministers of the demons, who, as was likely, when the attack of the Medes was being prepared and the arrival of Cyrus with the Persians was expected, were divining favorable things, and were calling for aid from the demons, offering up prayers and bringing the customary gifts, rites that is and the profane sacrifices, and promising to intercede on behalf of the whole country. These then, he says, the ministers and suppliants of the demons, who perform the sacrifices on behalf of all, when they see their affairs turned contrary to their expectations, will both be troubled and will be in bitter pangs, and they will cry in sorrow to one another, that is, they will cry out to each other things as from unmitigated disaster, ”woe,” clearly, and similar things. And they will change their face as if by a flame. For somehow the face of the disheartened a face to be blackened, so as to seem to be nothing other than soot and the remains of withered ashes. For behold, the day of the Lord, incurable, comes with fury and wrath, to make the whole world desolate, and to destroy the sinners from it. For the stars of heaven, and Orion and all the host of heaven will not give their light; and it will be darkened at the sun’s rising, and the moon will not give its light.

And I will command evils for the whole world, and their sins for the ungodly; and I will destroy the insolence of the lawless, and I will humble the insolence of the proud. In these words he openly tries to teach what the reason is for the rulers to meet each other in misfortune, and for their face to change as if from a flame. For since, as I said, they were divining things according to their own wishes, for themselves and for all the Babylonians, but they have missed their hope; for this reason, he says, they will also be full of dejection. For an incurable day is upon them, which the Lord of all brings upon them; and again he names as ”day” the time in which the divine and unadmonished wrath occurred, so that the land of the Chaldeans was made desolate, and the sinners were destroyed from it. And it is not at all as if there were some there who are placed outside the wrath because they are good,

that he says the sinners will be destroyed; rather, the name would reasonably fit all those who inhabit the land of the Chaldeans, because all are wicked and idolaters.

But since the greatness of calamities at times all but fills the human mind with darkness and mist, so that even when it is day the light of the sun seems to be absent, and to be somehow ineffective, I mean in its ability to shine, and all the host of heaven, and the orb of the moon itself; for this reason he says: For the stars of heaven, and Orion, and all the host of heaven will not give their light; and the Babylonians will be darkened, that is, the mind of the Babylonians; and while the sun is rising, and the moon is shining, although the elements have not withdrawn their light, but as if from great terror and being subjected to the divine wrath, they have night and darkness in their mind. And I will command, he says, evils for the whole world. The phrase, I will command, he says, is instead of, I will threaten, or rather I will command to be brought, so as both to take down the insolence of the lawless, and to humble the proud, that is, the arrogant. For the nation of the Assyrians has always been somehow arrogant and most insolent, and in addition to this, hateful to God. For among them nothing of what is best was honored, but rather everything that is by nature grievous to the God of all.

But it must be known that those who interpreted the divine Scripture have made mention of Orion, signifying by it one of the most prominent stars, and they do not say such things by completely following the trifles of the Greeks, but rather they used the name according to custom, just as, of course, it is also written in Job: ”Who makes Pleiades and Hesperus and Arcturus and the chambers of the South. And those who are left will be more precious than unrefined gold; and a man will be more precious than the stone from Souphir. In these words ”precious” is what is sought. He says, therefore, that the land of the Babylonians, and indeed the whole land of the Assyrians, will be so depopulated, that those living in it will become hard to find, and the scarcity of those who are left will be as great as that of Indian stones and of the most tested gold. For such things seem to some to be precious, because they are exceedingly hard to procure, and indeed because they are few, and scarce. Therefore, just as, he says, the things admired by men are hard to procure, both precious stones and unrefined gold, that is, the most tested, so will the survivors from the war be few and scarce, who have escaped the throng of those who fought.

For the heaven will be angered, and the earth will be shaken from its foundations, because of the fury of the wrath of the Lord Sabaoth in the day when his wrath comes upon them. The blessed prophets speak hyperbolically, and receiving in their mind the divine and ineffable power and glory, they raise their voices on high, and invent extraordinary magnitudes for their narratives. But always, when God is angry, the servant creation is also sharpened to anger, since the one who commands all things certainly arouses it to this. And so He was angry with the Egyptians, and creation did not tolerate being inactive. For the water was changed into blood, and the earth brought forth frogs, as it is written, and the heaven sent down hail; and indeed a deep and three-day darkness was scattered over all their land. Therefore, he says, the heaven itself will be angered, and the earth will be shaken as if

from its foundations, because of the fury of the Lord's wrath. For creation wars alongside against the foolish, and when the Master is grieved, it itself is, as it were, marshalled for this purpose. For all things concur with the supreme will, and there is nothing among beings that does not yield, even unwillingly, to the divine nods. And they that are left shall be as a fleeing gazelle, and as a wandering sheep, and there will be none to gather them, so that a man may turn to his people, and a man pursue his own country.

For whoever is caught will be overcome, and those who are gathered together shall fall by the sword, and their children they shall dash in pieces before their eyes, and they shall plunder their houses and take their wives. He says that those who are left will be very few in number, but even they will be unmanly and most unwarlike, and broken by cowardice to such an extent that they choose to do nothing else but only to flee, like a gazelle, and to be saved without honor, he says, and to renounce completely even just rising up against the calamities from the enemies. And that they will remain without a leader and without a ruler, although they are few in number, he implies by saying, that they will be as a wandering sheep, deprived of the shepherd's gentleness, and going somewhere outside the pasture, so as to be far from their accustomed folds. For there will be none, he says, to gather them, so that a man may turn to his own people, and a man pursue his own country. But "pursue," he says, is instead of "hasten," although their country is dear to all, and nothing is better than their ancestral dwellings. But even the deprivation of things so very dear to them is pleasant, he says, because everyone who is captured is immediately destroyed ... ... but the prophetic word affirms that something else will also happen, of the things most apt to cause pain.

For their children, he says, they will dash in pieces before their eyes, and they will plunder their houses, and they will take their wives. What could be more grievous for parents than the slaughter of their children? or how is it not more unbearable than any torment, to see one's houses plundered, and the modesty of one's wives violated, and subjected to the licentiousness of the conquerors? The blessed psalmist also mentions something of this kind somewhere. For when speaking about the Babylonians, "Blessed," he says, "is he who shall take and dash your infants against the rock. But these things indeed happened historically to the land of the Assyrians, and to the cities and regions in it, because they were all idolaters and unbearably arrogant, and terrible fighters against God, and skilled in the art of magic. They also sacked the holy city, and having ravaged the inheritance of God, that is, Israel, and placing them in the lot of the spear-won, they placed on them the unaccustomed yoke of slavery. And the discourse concerning these things will stand, not only in the things according to history alone and in what has clearly happened;

but it is rather possible for those who wish to understand it also spiritually, if they would skillfully transfer the force of what has happened to the very inventor of all wickedness, the God-hated and most cruel one, I mean, Satan, especially since the word of the prophecy, having brought forward the mystery of Christ and having made the address concerning him very well, has introduced as a neighbor the vision against Babylon, as it were, of the sharp-

ening the mind of the listeners to what is needful to understand, and spiritually the things that happened historically, concerning both Babylon itself, and indeed also concerning the whole land of the Assyrians. The apostate dragon, therefore, has never yet ceased plotting in many ways against those who serve God, but he presses on very vigorously, always overthrowing for what seems good to him, and he very often carries them off, as if taking them captive, and casts them into the pits of passions, and imposing on them as it were a terrible and inescapable yoke of slavery, he exults over those he has taken, and boasts, just as, of course, the successive kings of the Assyrians rejoiced over those from Israel, because having been outside their own land and the holy city, they were enslaved to foreigners. But the tyranny of the devil did not prevail forever over those who had been seized. For the sign of the Savior has been raised, that is, we have dedicated songs of victory to the one who conquered for us and on our behalf;

and we have made the confession of the right faith. For this, I think, is, *Lift up your voice*. And the Lord is commanded to come to a warring nation, clearly that of the saints, for whom the battle and the war is not against flesh and blood, but rather against principalities and powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Who both fought back and have conquered, and they prevail even now, and they besiege the host of the opposing powers, and they have sacked idolatry like a city, which was formerly terrible and invincible. And they have triumphed over their adversaries as if Christ were their general, and the holy angels were fighting alongside them, so that those who still revere their dominions are completely few in number, and they are pitiful and unmanly and terrified, and have completely given up resistance, I mean, against those who serve Christ. And running through the vision and what follows of the things set forth, let everyone who is intelligent, and able to understand a parable and a dark saying, and the sayings of the wise and their riddles, gather knowledge of some such spiritual contemplation. Behold, I am stirring up against you the Medes, who do not reckon silver, nor have they need of gold. They will shatter the bows of the young men, and they will not have mercy on your children, nor will their eyes spare your children.

And Babylon, which is called Glorious by the kings of the Chaldeans, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will not be inhabited for all time; nor will they enter it for many generations, nor will Arabs pass through it, nor will shepherds rest in it. In these things, then, he makes the prediction of the war most clear, and having removed the obscurity which had been cast like a shadow over the words, he sets the impending disaster naked and openly and as if in sight. For the Medes will come, he says, they will come, not overcome by money nor having thought of bribery from you, but rather being superior in due season, and to the things most earnestly set before them, so that they will shatter the bows of the young men. For if one were to consider the raids of the Barbarians, which might happen against regions or cities, he will find them done for no other reason than for the sake of plundering, and of making a collection of incidental wealth. But the Medes, he says, will be superior to gains, and they will be unsparing of profits, in order to bring down the pride

of the Babylonians. For they always had great pride in their archery, and they held their success in these things in high regard. But they will be inferior to their enemies.

And the conquerors will be so harsh and pitiless, as to show no mercy for a tender age, nor indeed, for infants perishing piteously, to shed a tear from gentleness. And Babylon, which is called Glorious by the king of the Chaldeans, will for this reason, he says, depart into desolation, so as in no way to be to endure the lot of the burned Sodom and Gomorrah; and it will also be uninhabited; and so to be fled from also by its neighbors, as a nation from afar roams around it, so that not even shepherds from Arabia pasture any of their own flocks in it; because of its being utterly desolated. But it must be known that he calls the nations of the Saracens, who extend as far as the Assyrians and inhabit the innermost desert, ”Arabs. For they have the land of the Arabs as a neighbor. And it is likely indeed that the Saracens from Arabia themselves also wander mixed through the deserts of the Assyrians. And wild beasts shall rest there, and the houses shall be filled with sound. And sirens shall rest there, and demons shall dance there. And onocentaurs shall dwell there, and hedgehogs shall make their nests in their houses. It comes quickly, and it will not delay.

It is somehow always the custom for the untamed of animals to make their dwelling in deserted places, and a ruined city provides them with very many, and indeed broad, lairs, both naturally roofed and hastily made, and, as it were, found automatically from what has happened; and in deserts and in the silent places, a certain faint echo, as if from the excessive silence, I know not how, arises and enters the ears of those who are at rest. Therefore, wild beasts will rest, he says, and the houses will be filled with sound; that is, having no inhabitant at all, they will possess the echo that is fitting for desolate places. And demons will dance there, he says. For they say that these also somehow have a particular love for quiet places, and make them a leisurely encampment, as it were. And by ”sirens,” I think, he means the birds that know how to sing well, or, according to the Hebrew version, the owl. And he has named the wild asses ”onocentaurs”; and indeed hedgehogs, which are the mice that bristle as it were with sharp spines. And all these things would be fittingly in cities or houses that are utterly desolate. And to these things he adds that ”it comes quickly, and will not delay. Either injecting a more bitter care into the Assyrians, that is, making the matter no small consolation for those of the blood of Israel.

For since they were in captivity, and indeed were expecting to be released when Cyrus campaigned against the Babylonians together with the Persians and Medes, he promises them a swift release from their sorrows, and that the things in their prayers would not be for a long postponement, but would, as it were, run at the heels of his word. And the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and they shall rest upon their land, and the proselyte shall be added to them. And he shall be added to the house of Jacob; and nations shall take them, and bring them into their place. And they shall inherit them, and be multiplied upon the land of God, for male slaves and for female slaves; and they that took them captive shall be captives, and they that had rule over them shall be ruled over; and it shall be in that day, that God will give you rest from your pain and your anger, and from the

harsh slavery in which you served them. He brings back to a good hope those of the blood of Israel who have suffered, and with good promises he restores them to good cheer, who were unbearably burdened by the greed of their captors. For that they will come up from captivity, and will cast off the yoke of unaccustomed slavery, once Babylon has been sacked, and indeed the entire land of the Assyrians, he has clearly foretold. For Israel shall not be utterly cast off, he says;

nor will he undergo endless punishments for his trespasses; but the chosen one will be shown mercy and will catch his breath in due season; and since, you see, he has been set as the firstborn among children, he will obtain visitation and good will from God. And that they will return to the land that bore them, he says, and that the proselyte will also go up with them. And by ”proselyte” he means the native and aboriginal, that is, the Babylonian; for very many of the Babylonians followed those from Israel, some having kinship with them, and others having inclined to the worship according to the law. For since for a long time they have completed their time in captivity, it is likely of course that no small multitude of the natives has been added to them. The proselyte, it says, will be added to them, that is, the native also will follow and accompany them. And nations shall take them, and bring them into their own place. For when Cyrus released Israel, he commanded the rulers of the regions to escort them unharmed and unmolested. And he who succeeded him to the scepter of the Assyrians also did this; this was Xerxes. It is possible for those who wish to investigate such things to come upon the books of Ezra, and to obtain the most unerring knowledge on all that has been said.

For they went up from the land of the Assyrians to Judea, while Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was of the tribe of Judah, was administering the kingdom, and Jesus the son of Jozadak the great priest was leading the sacred order. Nations, then, will escort them, he says, and bring them into their own land, and they will possess the inheritance allotted to them from above. And what is even more paradoxical, those who were once worshippers of idols, who invoke many and countless gods, will be multiplied on the land of God, as male and female slaves, and they shall be captives, who had taken them captive. For those who took Israel captive, being brought back together with him, and having arrived, he says, in Judea, will place their neck under the yokes of the law, and as if having endured a noble and saving captivity, they will acknowledge as Lord and God the Creator of all. For either this, he says, or it wishes perhaps to make that clear, that those who formerly conquered and carried Israel away from Judea, and placed them under their own yokes, will be ruled over and taken captive, by Cyrus, of course, since the Persians and Medes have taken them. For in that day, that is, at that time, you will be relieved from your pain and your anger; that is, from the wrath hanging over you, the divine wrath, of course; for you will escape the bitter slavery, and you will be relieved from your labors.

But come now again, transforming as far as possible the thickness of the history, let us observe such an event in spiritual contemplation. For they were captives, devoted to the worship of idols, and revering the powers of the one who had taken advantage of them.

But the Creator of all had mercy on them as ones who had been wronged, and sent to us from heaven a redeemer, his own Son, in the name of the Lord, that is, not as one of the holy prophets, but in the glory of lordship; who also sacked, as it were, a boastful and insolent city, with his armed champions fighting alongside him, that is, the holy apostles; who, having laid waste to the whole region of the devil, as it were, brought back with them, as to a holy city, the spiritual Jerusalem, I mean the Church, those who had been deceived and held in the yoke of slavery, who also were multiplied in the land of God, and became male and female slaves. But those who before held them under their hand and as captives, that is, the worshipers of demons, and those teaching their customs, and snaring them for destruction, have become captives, that is, they have been conquered by the preaching of the holy apostles, and have been made subject to Christ; for he gained dominion over them when they, of course, accepted the faith. For they also rested from the harsh slavery, in which they had previously served, before coming under the Lord, and his armed champions.

And you will take up this lament over the king of Babylon, and you will say in that day: How the exactor has ceased, and the oppressor has ceased! God has broken the yoke of the sinners, the yoke of the rulers; striking a nation in anger, with an incurable blow, striking a nation with a blow of wrath, and he did not spare, he rested, confident. To such a point of harshness, he says, did the misfortunes of the war drive the Babylonians, and Nebuchadnezzar himself, that he was pitied by his enemies, and those who, having suffered unbearable things, would have been likely almost to dance upon him as he lay prostrate, these out of of a reversal of fortune, and finally to feel pain, and to come to pity at the multitude of things that have happened to them, that is, also to lament in another way those who have fallen, and not at all pitying them, but rather rejoicing, and mocking those seized beyond expectation. And He weaves for them a lamentation and gives them a song befitting what has happened. For you will say, he says, How has the exacter ceased? He says ”he has ceased” euphemistically, instead of, ”he has perished and has an end. And he calls the Babylonian an exacter and an oppressor, who from excessive arrogance, did not impose the yoke of his own greed only on his neighbors, but indeed in the very distant cities and lands, sending out tax-collectors, he demanded tributes and taxes.

Therefore they marvel how such a one has ceased, and the hand that grasped everything has stopped. And that they have not been ignorant of the reasons for his fall, they show by saying: God has broken the yoke of the sinners, the yoke of the rulers. Do you hear how he calls them rulers, attributing to them an arrogant mindset? For they were attacking, as I said, all, so to speak, those throughout the whole earth, bringing them under their own yokes. And to rule was sometimes at the same time also their aim. But God, he says, struck the arrogant race, that is, having struck the nation with an incurable plague. But he who trusted in himself greatly and was proud, and did not cease willingly, that is, has gone to the end most fitting for him, having endured an incurable plague of wrath, with all mercy removed. But it would be fitting for us ourselves to say these things, and as it were to shout in triumph over Satan, who exacts and oppresses, and very bitterly. For he assails the mind of each, turning it away from the best and good pursuits, those in piety and righteousness

I mean, and as if with force carrying it off to what seems good to him; and like a bitter tribute collector, seeking from each a diligence for sin. But the Savior broke the yoke of sinners, having cast that one off, and rather bringing us under His own yokes, and having struck a nation with an incurable plague.

And what nation? Or surely that of the demons, whom he also commanded to go into the abyss? And indeed he also inflicted very grievous torments; and so they cried out, saying: "Ah, what have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come here before the time to destroy us. The whole earth cries out with gladness, and the trees of Lebanon rejoiced over you, and the cedar of Lebanon: Since you were laid to rest, no one has come up to cut us down. This is also part of the lament. And as far as the historical account is concerned, there was gladness in all the earth, since the land of the Assyrians was sacked, and the oppressor had ceased, who demanded from all that they must be subject to him, whom the prophetic word also calls trees of Lebanon: those who were surely in authority and in power among the nations, likening them to cedars. However, like a woodcutter, Nebuchadnezzar, shaking them down, subjected them to his own yokes. The cedars therefore, he says, rejoicing over you, say: Since you were laid to rest, no one has come up to cut us down. But if someone should wish to apply such a saying only to those of Israel, he will understand it thus. Lebanon is a very great mountain in the land of the Phoenicians, full of cedars and frankincense trees, both thick and well-wooded;

therefore the divinely inspired Scripture very often compares it to the land of the Jews, because of the many most distinguished men in it in both power and glory, and indeed there are others who are raised on high by the boasts of the priesthood and are, as it were, most fragrant. And so the prophet Zechariah, comparing Judaea to Lebanon; and those in it to cedars, oaks, and pines. and the Roman army to an all-consuming fire, which after the cross of the Savior burned up their whole country. Thus he says: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, And let fire devour your cedars. Wail, pine, because the cedar has fallen. Wail, oaks of Bashan, because the native forest was torn down. Therefore let the word be of the Jews as from the trees of Lebanon rejoicing and saying to the Babylonian and those around him: Since you have fallen asleep, the one who cuts us down has not come up. And he has very wittily remained in the trope of the speech. For since the voice came as if from the trees of Lebanon, for this reason they say, "The one who cuts us down has not come up. For after the return from Babylon of those of Israel, the war from the Assyrians was no longer waged against them. And we too shall rightly say to Satan, we who were once ravaged by him, but have now obtained a steadfast mind in Christ, and a mind secure and rooted in piety, and a most flourishing heart:

Since you have fallen asleep, the one who cuts us down has not come up. Hades below was embittered on meeting you; all the giants who ruled the earth were roused against you, those who raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All will answer and say to you: You too have been captured just as we were; you have been counted among us; your glory has descended into Hades, your great gladness. Beneath you they will spread decay,

and your covering will be the worm. It is a custom for the divinely inspired Scripture at times to personify, and, as it were, to apply voices to the things themselves, as is the case with, "Be ashamed, Sidon, the sea has said; and the strength of the sea has said: I have not travailed, nor given birth, nor nourished young men, nor raised up virgins. For he applies this speech to the city of the Tyrians, which was at times ravaged by the Babylonians; and we say that the speech is fitting to the nature of the things. Thus also the prophet Micah somewhere introduced Jerusalem saying to Babylon: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, for I have fallen and I shall rise again. Because if I sit in darkness, the Lord will give me light; I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause; and he will execute my judgment, and will bring me out to the light.

I shall see his righteousness, and my enemy shall see it, and shame will cover her who says to me: Where is the Lord your God? My eyes shall look upon her; now she shall be for trampling like mud in the streets on a day of plastering brick; your destruction is that day. On which, clearly, Cyrus and the Medes mixed with Persians captured the city of the Babylonians. Therefore, the blessed prophet no less personifies now; and he says that Hades was provoked, that is, embittered, meeting him as he descended. And observe for me the economy of the speech. For through this he shows that he was murderous and full of blood, so that almost all of Hades, that is, those who are in Hades, became the work of his inherent cruelty. For the boaster did not cease utterly mowing down nations and kings, and filling Hades with wretched souls. All the giants, therefore, he says, that is, those who became distinguished in strength, and ruled many nations, but were slain by you, will answer and say, "You too have been captured just as we were. For you were a man, they say, but you did not deign to know and consider this;

nor would you have thought that there would be someone stronger than your arrogance and your irresistible hand, and you have perhaps not placed it outside of hope that some are even stronger than death, but the Median sword has with difficulty and unwillingly persuaded you to learn by its experience that you too were like us. And so you have been captured, just as we were. Your glory has descended into Hades, instead of, it was extinguished by death; and the unsmiling power of corruption has been brought upon you. He will see your gladness, having with difficulty put it out of the way. Decay will be spread beneath you, and the worm will become your garment. And this is a common thing. For once human bodies have suffered death, decay and the worm will certainly follow. Yet it is well said of him, as in the order of bitter reproaches. For those who have fallen into forgetfulness of their own weakness, and from excessive arrogance, not even expecting that they will suffer human things, would be reproached Reasonably; as having barely learned by suffering them the things which, had they known, they should have chosen to think more moderately. Therefore, he says, the one who has reveled in fading and royal luxuries, will lie together with the others without a shroud, and deemed worthy of none of the customary rites for the dead. How has the Morning Star, that rises early, fallen from heaven? He that sends to all the nations has been crushed to the earth?

The Morning Star is one of the most illustrious of stars; it rises a little before dawn, and is, as it were, a forerunner of the sun's gleam. That it shines with a rich light, this very fact of its appearing shortly before dawn would show. For as long as the ethereal body is still dark, with the night all but shivering, and the darkness being at its height, the stars in the heaven have a more conspicuous radiance; but when day is near, and the solar disk is, as it were, on the first extremities of the horizon, the light of each somehow contracts, yielding to the superior one, and is overcome by the greater brightness. So abundant is the light of the Morning Star, that it appears even at dawn, and makes its appearance somehow neighboring the rays of the sun. He therefore compares the Babylonian to the Morning Star, because of his prominence over others, and because no one among those in power and in kingdoms was seen to be like him; and because he was so illustrious and conspicuous, as the Morning Star might be thought of among all the other stars. But he who was suffused with such glory, he says, and lifted on high, and made brilliant with unconquerable renown, how did he fall as from heaven? and was he crushed to the earth as one who sends to all the nations? But the phrase "sending," instead of "commanding," he says, or in another manner.

For it always seemed somehow to the tyrants of the Babylonians to bring every nation of men under their own hand, and for all lands to come under the yoke of slavery. Sending therefore to all the nations, they would demand a clod of earth, and water in a vessel, as though seeking the whole from a part, I mean both land and sea, as if they were lords of all. But you said in your mind: I will ascend into heaven, I will set my throne above the stars of heaven, I will sit on a high mountain, upon the high mountains toward the north, I will ascend above the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Now you shall go down to Hades, and to the foundations of the earth. Those who see you will marvel at you, and will say: Is this the man that provokes the whole earth, that shakes kings, that made the whole world a wilderness, and destroyed its cities? He did not release those who were in captivity. He says that he was caught in unexpected calamities, and had associated with things paradoxical beyond hope, and through these events themselves he barely learned that he was a man, and similar to those who died before him. For as far as it came to words of arrogance, and to a God-hated mindset, and full of extreme presumption;

It seemed to you, he says, to concede little to the heights of divine pre-eminence, you somehow expected, perhaps, that heaven itself would be accessible to you, and that your seat would rival the highest thrones; you thought ignorantly, that you were some equal to God and above creation; you seemed to be above the clouds, and to sit upon the very stars. But you were caught having thought such things in vain. The outcome of events exposed your foolish counsel; for you will go down into Hades, and into the foundations of the earth. And he says these things, so that he might perhaps indicate the lowest place, that is, the outer darkness. And you will be a marvel to those who see, he says, and quite reasonably. For sudden reversals, especially those beyond hope, astound those who behold them. And what is the marvel, and how would the speech about him come to be; For they will say, Is this the man? Having suffered, they barely call him a man; perhaps formerly having been afraid to say this; But is this the man, who provokes the whole earth, shakes kings, who made the

whole world a wilderness, and destroyed its cities? they have marveled reasonably, if one man stirred up the whole world under heaven, shook kings, rendered the inhabited world desolate of its inhabitants, and also overthrew the cities. And what else besides these, He did not release those under affliction? But since some of the copies have:

Those led away, if someone should wish to understand it thus, we shall say that the name of ”leading away” would signify the captivity and the removal of those from Israel. For they were carried away from Judea to the land of the Assyrians. But if indeed the holy scripture says those under affliction, you will understand no less, that it means those who are under the infliction of the Lord’s wrath. For wrath was brought upon them because of great sin. Nebuchadnezzar did not release, that is, he did not remit their misery. For it was necessary, it was necessary for the sinner to be seen not only as a braggart, but also as a fighter against God, and as one who has sacked the land, and as harsh, and unmerciful, and in no way knowing how to pity those who are in extreme calamities and have fared wretchedly. And one might also very fittingly apply to the head of the one who shattered all things, I mean of the arch-evil dragon, the things that were spoken historically. For he was an exactor and a zealous pursuer, in the ways we have already mentioned; but he has ceased, and has been removed from the midst, as God struck him down with a plague of incurable wrath, and he stopped cutting, like some strong woodcutter, the spiritual cedars, of which the blessed David also makes mention, saying to the God of all: ”The cedars of Lebanon which you have planted.

And since the wretch has gone down to Hades, surely condemned, there being consumed by the all-devouring flame, the evil powers under him have marveled, as is likely, that he suffered this, and perhaps have also lamented, saying: You too have been captured just as we, and you have been counted among us, and the things that follow this. For indeed, as far as glory is concerned, he was distinguished among angels, and conspicuous among the powers above, just as Lucifer is among the stars. But he fell and was shattered, having thought arrogant things, and having dared to seize the honor and glory that befit only the supreme nature, as far as the power of his undertakings and the mind within him were concerned. But as the prophet says: He has gone down to Hades, and to the foundations of the earth, he who once shook all the earth, who made the world like a desert; for he rendered the world under heaven desolate of the true knowledge of God, and having absolutely no worker of virtue. And he did not release those under affliction. But the Lord has granted this to those who trust in him, having said ”to those in bonds: Go forth, and to those in darkness: Be revealed. And indeed also to those who have come under divine wrath for having transgressed the divine laws, forgetting their offenses he has forgiven their charges, and has released from punishment those who through human weakness have been subject to many stumblings.

All the kings of the nations have slept in honor, each man in his own house, but you will be cast out on the mountains like a loathsome corpse with many dead who have been pierced with swords, going down to Hades. From what has happened, he says, he at times shows

his calamity to be more grievous; and what I said is true; unless indeed it happened that the others met with the same fate, one so conspicuous and proud and raised up by incomparable excellences as to seem to be placed on high. For they have fallen asleep, he says, not without honor, nor indeed somewhere outside of the dwellings most dear to them. But you, completely deprived of these things, will lie on the mountains, loathsome and cast out, that is, stinking and unpleasant to see. For what could be more loathsome than a dead body that has no shroud? Therefore you will lie together with the others who have become the work of the Median sword, with no one having lamented over you, nor shed the tear that follows the dead, nor honored you with burial rites; but so pitiful and cast out as to differ in no way from the others, who came under your hand and were utterly insignificant. And it is necessary to know that the lament will stop at this point. In the same way that a garment stained with blood is no longer clean, so you also will not be clean;

because my land you have destroyed, and you have killed my people, you shall not remain for all time. The most grievous of impieties are both hard to wash away, and one might behold them ingrained like some dye in those who have committed them. Indeed, it shows that they have done things worthy of the indignation that has reached its end, and worthy of a punishment commensurate with their offenses. Therefore you will not be freed, he says, from your trespasses, nor will you become clean, and worthy of pity. But you will be so defiled, and have the indelible crime of blood-guilt, just as, indeed, a garment stained with blood. For you have destroyed the holy land, and you have killed the people apportioned to me; "For when the Most High divided," he says, "the nations, when he scattered the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the nations, according to the number of the angels of God; and Jacob his people became the Lord's portion, Israel the measure of his inheritance. It is a terrible thing, then, to rise up against the land of the Lord, that is, the Church, and to carry out the audacities of blood-guilt, against the people apportioned to Christ. For he will in no way be clean, who is caught in such outrageous crimes. But one might say, I think, having considered the disasters upon Judea, and upon Jerusalem itself;

Did the tyrant of the Babylonians come of his own accord, and campaign against the land of the Jews, and capture the holy city, without God allowing him to do this, or rather, without God having given it to him? And yet, does not the prophet Isaiah himself say to us? that "The Lord will whistle for the flies, that rule a part of the river of Egypt, and for the bee, which is in the land of the Assyrians, and they will all come, and will rest in the valleys of the land, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in the caves, and in every ravine, and on every tree. How then did the Babylonian, having served the divine commands, have an indelible crime, and has been so terribly punished, that nothing is seen beyond the wrath brought upon him? Yes, and very reasonably so. For the God of all willed to convict Israel for having inclined to apostasy, and with measured tortures to persuade them to return to their accustomed worship, I mean that of the Law. But he, although brought for this purpose, was relentless like a wild beast, and gave his passions unbridled rein, and indeed is accused by God who says clearly: "I was jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and with great

anger I am angry against the nations that joined in the attack; because I was angry a little, but they joined in for evil.

And just as He raised up Pharaoh, being a vessel of wrath and anger and already subject to punishment for his own failings, as He Himself says, that He might show in him both His own power and the precision of His just judgment; so you will understand it also in the case of the Babylonians. For being vessels of wrath, and rightly deserving to be punished, they were brought against Jerusalem; so that, having chastised Israel, they themselves afterwards might be required to pay the penalty most fitting and suitable for them. Evil seed, prepare your children to be slaughtered for the sins of your father, that they may not rise up and fill the earth with wars. And I will rise up against them, says the Lord of Sabaoth, and I will destroy their name, and remnant, and seed. Nebuchadnezzar indeed committed terrible deeds against every nation, and those after him and descended from him, up to Belshazzar, following the perversities of their father, surpassed his deeds, and they became cruel and harsh against every nation, and they lorded it over Israel, even though they were held in captivity and under the yoke of slavery. And they had such great pride, even against the very glory of God, that the wicked Belshazzar, while making a feast for his nobles, brought forth the holy vessels, and drank from them with his concubines and his wives, at which time a knuckle of a hand came forth, as Daniel says, and made a writing on the wall: Mene, Tekel, Peres;

which indeed also was interpreted- the divine Daniel, indicating, said that his kingdom had been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. They say, therefore, that the race of Nebuchadnezzar, and indeed that of Belshazzar, was destroyed root and branch at that time, so that absolutely no one of their blood might ascend after them to the thrones of the kingdom among them. This, I think, the prophetic word shows through the things set before us. For see how the divine wrath has proceeded against all the evil seed. For ”Prepare,” he says, ”your children to be slaughtered for the sins of your father. For since the fathers have become impious, the whole race that was to be from them has ceased. For what reason? ”That they may not rise up,” he says, ”and inherit the earth, and fill the earth with wars; that is, so that they might not, following the arrogance of their fathers, and becoming zealous for ancestral impiety, fill the earth with war, just as they indeed did, and become its lords. ”And I will rise up against them,” says the Lord of Sabaoth, ”and I will destroy their name and remnant, and seed. For just as to those of the kings of Israel who pleased him; God promised that sons to the fourth generation would sit on their thrones, extending the blessing also to the race that would be from them; so also of those who have become excessively impious he cuts off the increase of their race.

For the impious, he says, will be destroyed root and branch from the earth. Let him hear, then, even the enemy of all, the inventor of sin, and the one who has become for us the cause of all evils; ”Just as a garment stained in blood will not be clean, so also you will not be clean, because you have destroyed my land, and you have slain my people. For he was not content with having moved the origin of our race to transgression, but indeed also

to lead astray from God all that is under heaven, and having removed man on earth from love for him, he declared him his own worshipper, and cast him into the pits of destruction. Therefore he will not be clean, nor has he remained for all time; for he has not held power over the wronged forever, with God restraining his greed, and checking the impulses of his wickedness against us. For he has perished together with his own children, that is, with the unclean demons; for they were an evil seed. They have perished, cast down to Tartarus in chains of darkness, as the disciple of the Savior says, so that they might not rise up and inherit the earth, and fill the earth with wars. For they have been cast out from their tyranny over us, and Christ has become our peace. For as the blessed Paul writes: "The peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our thoughts.

In what way it happened that they suffered this, the God of all himself will make clear to us, saying: "And I will rise up against them," says the Lord of Sabaoth, "and I will destroy their name, and remnant, and seed. Thus says the Lord: "And I will make Babylonia a desert, so that hedgehogs may dwell there, and it will be for nothing; and I will make it a pit of mire for destruction. This saying set before us seems to be a very brief summary of the things spoken at length. For it shows nothing else, except surely this, that the land of the Babylonians will be utterly desolate of men, but full of animals, for whom the wilderness is a beloved dwelling-place. And since it has, as is likely, a great rush of waters, and they say a river also cuts it in two, it has happened that with no one diverting the flow of the streams to the places where it was fitting for them to go, the water is scattered over the whole area, and forms a multitude of marshes, so that what was once brilliant and renowned, both queen of the others, and named most glorious, has become a pit of mire and, for those who fall in, for destruction. Thus says the Lord of Sabaoth: "In the way that I have spoken, so it shall be; and in the way that I have planned, so it shall remain, to destroy the Assyrians upon my land, and upon my mountains;

and they shall be for trampling, and there shall be taken away from them the their yoke; and their glory will be taken away from their shoulders. The blessed Isaiah indeed prophesies in the reign of Uzziah, and Jotham, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah; and he seems to make these speeches, which are against Babylon, I say, or even the whole land of the Assyrians; while Uzziah, who is also Azariah, was still alive and holding the royal honor in his hands. But since Sennacherib the Assyrian marched against Judea during the reign of Hezekiah, and although he took many cities of Samaria, he was convicted by the hand of God, even as he assailed Jerusalem itself; for in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the foreigners died, consumed by the hand of an angel; for this reason, so that none of the things spoken by God for the consolation of Israel might seem to fail, he proclaims this also beforehand and says, that In the way I have spoken, so shall it be; for, he says, that of the Babylonians will go down into a pit of mire; and it shall be desolate, and that will remain; and in every way and altogether, he says, it will come to a favorable end, what I have planned and have ratified by my own decrees, to destroy the Assyrians upon my land, and upon my mountains; and they shall be for a trampling; and their yoke shall be taken away, and their glory from their shoulders.

For the Rabshakeh was sent by Sennacherib from Lachish to Jerusalem. Then, having surrounded the whole city with the armies of the Babylonians, he talked nonsense not moderately against the glory of God; and he uttered a voice befitting a barbarian mindset: "For let not Hezekiah deceive you, he says, saying, The Lord will deliver you from the hand of the Assyrians; but seeking to cast a yoke of slavery upon those free from above, attributing great renown, that is, glory, to himself and to his own master, he was brought down to an unexpected calamity. "For rising up, he says, in the morning, they found all the bodies dead. And he knew by experience that the one who presides over the saints is all-powerful, and that nothing can withstand his divine commands. This is the counsel that the Lord has counseled upon the whole world; and this is the high hand upon all the nations of the whole world. For what the holy God has counseled, who will scatter? And the high hand, who will turn it back? It must be known again, that the power of the prophecy in these things does not come against the whole world, that is, the one under heaven, but rather the word of foretelling was against the whole land of the Assyrians, which he also calls the world, because it was great and broad, and richly filled with myriad nations and more than can be numbered.

Therefore, the things spoken, he says, will come against the whole land of the Assyrians, and that in every way and altogether the things foretold will come to an end, with no one annulling the infliction, that is, having the strength to defend those under divine wrath, he further declares, saying: For what the holy God has counseled, who will scatter? And the high hand, who will turn it back? For he utterly cuts off the hope of the Babylonians; and he usefully strengthens those of Israel, so that they may be firmly disposed and understand, that in every way and altogether the divine and supreme hand, being all-powerful and prevailing over all things, will accomplish the things promised. For since they thought the strength of the Assyrians was terrible and hard to encounter, yielding to no one, and refusing to be defeated, it was likely for this reason that they would disbelieve the words of the prophecy; for this reason and very fittingly he does not allow them to suffer this; and he not only entreats them, but also cuts off beforehand the disease of disbelief, saying: The high hand, who will turn it back? In the year that Ahaz died, this word came: Do not rejoice, all you foreigners; for the yoke of him who smote you is broken. For from the seed of serpents will come forth the offspring of asps, and their offspring will come forth as flying serpents.

Various revelations at different times came to the holy prophets, and corresponding to the nature of events for the benefit of those at that time. And yet The God of all things wished to remold the hardened Israel, who had been neglectful of the divine laws, into the necessity of thinking better things, showing kindness in many ways, and rousing his wrath against those who had resisted him, but bringing back those inhabiting the holy city, I mean Jerusalem, to good hopes, so that they might know that the Lord of all things is one and only, and there is no other besides him. But they, attributing reverence to the creature rather than the Creator, and offering devotion to falsely named gods, have offended not moderately. The force of the prophetic readings before us suggests such a certain dispensation now also. But it is

necessary, I think, to first narrate the historical events, and to explain each thing clearly; for thus what is being shown will be as clear as possible for the readers. Now Uzziah, who is also Azariah, reigned over Israel in Jerusalem. This man became a caretaker of piety. For he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as it is written about him. And he was most powerful and entirely irresistible to his opponents, that is, to the foreigners, bringing forth his strength in wars.

Indeed, having besieged them, he both took and sacked many cities of the Philistines, that is, of the foreigners, that is, of the Palestinians, and from those of what is called Coele-Syria. And it is written thus about him, in the second book of Chronicles; ”And he went forth and warred against the foreigners and broke down the walls of Gath, and the walls of Azotus, and he built cities in Azotus, and among the foreigners. And the Lord strengthened him, against the foreigners and the Arabs, who dwell upon the Rock, and against the Minaei. And the Minaei gave gifts to Uzziah, and his name was known as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he became exceedingly strong. And when he died, Jotham, who was born from him, succeeded to his kingdom. Then after him, Ahaz, a wicked and apostate man, and one who had stepped into the swamps of deceit. For he served wood and stones, and all the host of heaven; and he also made his son pass through fire, for he sacrificed him to demons. And it is written thus also about him in the fourth book of Kings; ”And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, faithfully as David his father did; but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel.

And he burned incense in the high places, and upon the hills, and under every shady tree. Then Rezin king of Syria went up; and Pekah son of Remaliah and king of Israel, against Jerusalem to war; and they besieged Ahaz, but were not able to make war; and after other things; ”And Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of the Assyrians, saying: I am your servant, and your son. Come up, save me from the hand of the king of Syria, and from the hand of the king of Israel who are rising up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the house of the king, and sent gifts to the king. And the king of the Assyrians hearkened to him, and came to Damascus, and took it and carried it away captive, and put Rezin to death. Therefore, first Uzziah, who is also Azariah, sacked the foreigners, and having laid waste all their land, collected tribute and taxes. And second after him, Ahaz hired the Assyrian, and set him upon them; who also, having made the whole country of the Palestinians rise up (for he says they are the foreigners), carried away as captives into his own land those who had been left from the war.

But when Ahaz had died, at this the cities of the foreigners leaped for joy, as if he who was striking them down and placing upon them, as it were, an unbearable yoke of oppression, was out of the way. For having been weakened once, and sacked by the hand of the Assyrians, they were indeed embittered against Ahaz, but they were not able to take revenge. sufficient. Therefore, O foreigners, he says, since just as you say and think, when Ahaz died, the yoke

of him that struck you was broken, that is, of him that crushed you, do not rejoice over this. And yet one might say that Ahaz was an idolater, profane and hateful to God; then how does God stop the laughter against him from the adversaries? Therefore the laughter was not entirely against him; but if something of those things that were accustomed to grieve Judea happened, the adversaries attempted to mock not so much the sufferers, but the hand of God, which protected Israel. For they thought that the all-powerful right hand had grown weak, and that the gods they had were better than the one guarding Israel. Therefore, even if Ahaz was profane, yet since the foreigners were mocking, as I just said, those of Israel, He restrains their joy, and as it were checks their praise, saying that they have not been delivered from the afflicting yoke, but rather they will suffer things over which it was likely they would, even unwillingly, be not moderately distressed. For what does he say?

Do not rejoice, saying that the yoke of him that struck you has been broken. But know rather, that from the seed of a serpent will come forth the offspring of asps. You will understand this in two ways; for Uzziah, also called Azariah, was, as I said, harsh and very warlike; and he so subdued them, that he also taxed their cities and villages in an unaccustomed manner. Then after him Ahaz, though perhaps not with his own hand and with local forces, yet through the Assyrians did the same things to them. For Tiglath-pileser took Damascus, and the cities of the foreigners; and he also killed Rezin himself. And when Ahaz died, the righteous and pious Hezekiah succeeded to the kingdom. And it is also written about him in the fourth book of Kings: ”And he rebelled against the king of the Assyrians, and did not serve him. He smote the foreigners as far as Gaza, and as far as its border, from the tower of the watchmen, to the fortified city. Therefore, as from the seed of a serpent, Uzziah, has come forth the offspring of an asp, Ahaz; then after him a flying serpent, that is, the swift Hezekiah. For in a way they devoured the foreigners, and have consumed their cities. And if Uzziah and Hezekiah were called serpents, although they were pious, yet it is necessary to consider this very wisely, that the scope of the discourse is turned and looks especially toward impressing the Philistines, that is, the foreigners.

Therefore, it was necessary to say not that they would be tame and gentle, but terrible and swift, as accustomed to leap upon their adversaries in the manner of serpents. Therefore you will either understand ”From the seed of a serpent will come forth the offspring of asps” in this way, or also in another way, if you wish. For Ahaz hired Tiglath-pileser the Assyrian, and sent him against the land of the foreigners, who, having laid it all waste, also killed, as I said, King Rezin himself. But in the time of King Hezekiah, Shalmaneser, who was also king of the Assyrians, marched against Samaria. And coming first to the land of the Palestinians, that is, of the foreigners, he committed acts of barbaric cruelty against all. Therefore, as from the seed of a serpent, Tiglath-pileser, came forth the offspring of an asp, Shalmaneser, like a serpent himself, not slow to attack, not sluggish in movement for the need to besiege, but rather swift, and standing over cities in the manner of a winged creature. And the poor shall be fed through him; and poor men shall rest in peace; and he will destroy your seed with famine, and he will destroy your remnant. I said before, that

when Ahaz died, the foreigners were filled with joy; yet they were not smiling so much at him, but at the all-powerful right hand of the one who saves Israel, I mean, of God.

But that those who fight will not cease even after Uzziah, he has declared very clearly, from the seed of the serpent, saying that the offspring of asps will come forth. But since they danced upon the divine glory, the prophet necessarily shows us in these things that He who defends Israel will both save him, and that He will bring destruction upon his adversaries in every way and altogether. For Shalmaneser besieged Jerusalem after taking all of Samaria. And he besieged it by sending Rabshakeh from Lachish, as it is written, but the God of all unexpectedly saved those of Israel. For the Assyrians fell, an angel of the Lord consuming them; but the seed of the foreigners, and every remnant from the first siege that happened in the time of Tiglath-pileser, was completely destroyed and utterly perished, perhaps being afflicted by famine. For other harms always somehow follow the besieging of cities. Therefore the poor, and men of modest mind, will be fed by God, that is, they will pasture their own lands, and will rest in peace. But your seed, and the remnant, he will destroy by famine. It is a fearful thing, therefore, to mock those under the hand of God, and to be lifted up against those who have become the object of his care.

For he will in no way overlook it, but will certainly defend his own acquaintances, so that their adversaries may not laugh broadly and reproach God, as not having sufficient power to be able to save those who have trusted in him. Wail, you gates of cities; let the troubled cities cry aloud, all you foreigners, because smoke comes from the north, and there is no one who will survive. The phrase, "From the seed of the serpent will come forth the offspring of asps," might be properly understood in this way, as we said when interpreting, that Tiglath-pileser sacked the cities of the foreigners, and also took Damascus, then after him, Shalmaneser brought still more grievous calamities upon them in the time of the reign of Hezekiah, having conquered the cities of the Samaritans. Therefore, as the attack was already organized, and the army of the Assyrians was present, as the siege engines were already brought to the gates in each city, and the walls were about to be thrown down by their unbearable assaults; he commands the gates to wail, and the cities to cry out, no longer exulting over those of the blood of Israel, not mocking the glory of the all-powerful God, not dancing upon the dead Ahaz, but rather practicing lamentation and dirges, and being not moderately downcast at the calamities that were just about to arrive. For why have I commanded the cities to lament, he says? Because smoke comes from the north, and there is no one who will survive.

In these words, he names as smoke from the north that which comes from the land of the Assyrians, either Shalmaneser himself, or the army with him. For the country of the Jews is most southern, but that of the Assyrians is somewhat more northern. And he compares the warlike army to smoke, as being productive of tears for the captured. For smoke always somehow draws forth the tear from the eyes. But it is not unlikely that wars are compared to smoke in another way as well. For just as smoke, falling upon the eyes of the body, certainly takes away from them the accuracy of their sight, so too the fear of death all but intoxicates

the mind, and troubles the heart, all but blackening it with terrible and unbearable terrors. Therefore, smoke will come from the north. Then what is the end of the attack? ”there is no one who will survive,” he says, that is, utter destruction will destroy both cities and houses, and those in them. And what shall the kings of the nations answer? That the Lord has founded Zion, and in him the humble of the people will be saved. When the attack of the Assyrians occurred, the cities of the foreigners were captured. And those of the Samaritans were no less sacked; but Jerusalem alone, contrary to expectation, was saved out of all of them, as He who has the power to accomplish all things easily brought His hand against the armies of the Assyrians.

For in one night one hundred and eighty of the foreigners died five thousand. When, therefore, those from the north burn the cities of the foreigners, and lay waste the neighbor of Judea, that of the Samaritans, then having surrounded even Jerusalem itself, with no one to oppose them, they fall in one night; then indeed, then even unwillingly, he says, the kings of the nations will confess that the Lord has founded Zion; and that through him the humble of the people will be saved. He calls the humble of the people those who have placed their hope of salvation in him alone, just as was king Hezekiah himself, and those around him who fell before God, saying: ”Hear, O Lord, look, O Lord, and see the words of Rabshakeh, which the king of the Assyrians sent to reproach the living God. But he also heard God saying clearly: ”Thus says the Lord: I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David’s sake. ”It is a good thing, therefore, to trust in God. And knowing this, the blessed prophets say, Jeremiah indeed, that, ”Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and the Lord will be his hope. And the most wise David: ”O Lord God of hosts, blessed is the man who hopes in you. For no one will destroy the one who is assisted by his divine commands, and very well fortified by the benevolences from above.

For he deems worthy of care those who love him, and to those who have been most zealous to think and do what is pleasing to him, he readily grants that their blessings rest in security.

Discourse 9

Having thoroughly finished the discourse concerning the Babylonians and the foreigners, he again shifts the prophecy to Moabitis; that is, against the metropolis of the Moabites, and all their country and their kingdom itself. They are also a barbarian nation, hateful to God, because they were wholly devoted to the worship of idols, and especially confident in the art of magic, and exalted themselves against the glory of God, and were among the most hostile to those of Israel. And indeed, when, freed from the oppression of the Egyptians, they were going to the land of promise, they almost all perished, as far as the attempt of Balak was concerned, who was then king of the Moabites. For it is written thus in Numbers: ”And all the children of Israel encamped on the west of Moab, by the Jordan, opposite Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorite; and Moab was very afraid of the people, because they were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. Then what was his evil deed? He hired Balaam from Mesopotamia; and this man was a false prophet and an augur; then he exhorts him, saying: Curse Israel for me. For I know, he says, that whom you bless is blessed, and whom you curse is cursed. And the methods of sorcery were practiced by him, with altars having been raised, and sacrifices having been offered.

But Balak was disappointed of his hope, and missed his mark, as the one who was hired to curse unexpectedly blessed Israel. But since his attempt turned out contrary to his expectations, he again pursues his malice against them in another way. For he ensnared those of Israel, who were captivated by the beauty of the women, to turn away from their love for God, and to choose to worship Baal-peor; and this was an idol of the Moabites. For it is written thus again in Numbers: ”And Israel stayed in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and they called them to the sacrifices of their idols, and the people ate of their sacrifices, and bowed down to their idols; and Israel was initiated to Baal-phegor, and the Lord was angry in wrath with Israel. For since Israel was terrible and hard to meet when God was defending, for this reason indeed, very bitterly and maliciously, by turning His assistance away from him, they persuaded him to offend the God over all. And they have continued always holding such an opinion, and even if it happened that Israel, having offended God, shared in calamities, they would boast and mock, accusing God of being able to do nothing at all, He who promised to save those who

worship Him. And a witness to this is the blessed Jeremiah, saying in his vision against them: “The horn of Moab is broken, and his arm is shattered.

Make him drunk because he has magnified himself against the Lord. And again: “For thus said the Lord, Arioth is taken; and the strongholds are captured. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he has magnified himself against the Lord. For at times the tyrant of the Assyrians and Babylonians came to ravage Judaea. He captured the cities of Samaria. But the Moabites, in turn, smiling at the lost, mocked immoderately, and continually reproached the glory of God. For this reason they too were given over to desolation, and were utterly destroyed together with their cities and people and every house, so as now to seem not even to have existed. Therefore, the present vision recounts what happened to them, clearly from the wrath from above, and says: By night the Moabite shall perish; for by night the wall of the Moabite land shall perish. Some of those who have studied these things have handed down that when the Babylonians were about to make war on them, an earthquake occurred and the metropolis of the Moabites was so shaken that its entire wall collapsed automatically in the night and darkness; and when this indeed happened, before the attack of the enemies, the hope of their salvation was all but lost. For this reason he says the Moabite land perishes by night. But be grieved, he says, for yourselves. It is as if he were to say, Many times raising a high brow you have reveled in the calamities of others;

but now the war runs against you yourselves, and the harms from it hang over your unholy heads. Be grieved, therefore, not for certain others, but for yourselves. For Lebedon shall perish, where your altar is. I said that the Moabites have become terrible and arrogant, and emboldened by the deceits of demons, and thinking through the art of a magus to prevail over the hand of all, and even of Israel itself though God should defend it; therefore in the place called Lebedon, they had an altar and a sanctuary that was not unimpressive, as far as its construction went. There they performed their divinations, and were high-minded, and they made the place especially revered above others. But it shall perish, he says, even the workshop of your divination. There you will go up to weep over Nebo of the Moabite land. This is a city of the strongest. Wail, he says; for on every head is baldness. That is, one dishonor will run upon all. For baldness is a symbol of dishonor. And all arms will be cut. From beating oneself and lamenting. Or because it is a custom for idolaters to inflict the so-called incisions on both their cheeks and their arms. In vain therefore will you do this, he says, for the matter is completely unprofitable.

Therefore in her streets gird yourselves with sackcloth, and beat yourselves upon her roofs, and in her squares, and in her alleys, all of you wail with weeping, because Heshbon has cried out, and has spoken until her voice was heard. The power of the prophecy describes for us the image of cities entangled in no moderate terrors. For with war surrounding, and the ultimate calamity inflicted on cities and houses, some run through the squares and narrow streets wailing. But whatever is weak and unable to fight, such as the female sex, and that of infants, has leaped up onto the roofs themselves, makes a lamentation and a

wail, to the seeing the phalanxes of the enemy, and perceiving the slaughter that was just about to happen. Wail therefore; for Heshbon has cried out, and has spoken until her voice was heard. And he says these are the most warlike cities of Moab. But even if they were so, he says, they will make such a wailing, as not to weep secretly, nor in a corner, but rather for their voice to be heard, and to lament openly, those among them having neglected their customary courage, being so crushed as to be utterly bereft of strength and boldness, and of thoughts and attempts at valor. The loin of Moab cries out; her soul shall know it, and the heart of Moab cries out within her, unto Zoar; for she is a three-year-old heifer. And on the ascent toward you, they shall go up weeping on the way of Aroniim;

destruction and earthquake cries out. Sharp griefs of incurable calamities always assail, and very grievous despondencies, and an assault of terrors, not incapable of crushing even a very courageous heart. Hence, I think, for some, faces become sullen, and groans, as it were, spring up from the depths, interpreting the burning of the inner flame. Therefore, the loin of Moab cries out; that is, she is in birth pangs, and has hidden pains, clearly being terrified beforehand by the rumors, and considering the war not yet at hand. For her soul knew this. And for this reason, she laments and cries out within herself unto Zoar, that is, the entire land of Moab, even to its very borders. For they say Zoar is situated on the very borders of the Moabites. For what reason, then, will these things happen to her? She is a three-year-old heifer. The third year is sufficient for irrational animals to reach their prime, and for vigorous power to become active in them. Therefore, that is also the time for them to be tamed. As long, therefore, as the heifer is unyoked, vigorous and young, and bearing a newly grown horn, she often frisks about and dances around the courts and stalls; such has the land of Moab become, leaping upon her neighbors, and frisking about over the weaker. They say it is high, and a certain highway called Aroniim leads up to it those coming from other cities or countries. Upon this ascent of Aroniim, therefore, he says, they shall go up weeping.

And the voice for those weeping is destruction and shaking. For they have cried out beforehand the sufferings that will come from the war, as it were shaking all things, both cities and houses, and crushing those in them. The water of Nimrim will be desolate, and its grass will fail; for there will be no green grass, will she still be saved even so? They say Nimrim is a city situated in the extremities of the country, bordering on the Red Sea, so well-watered and with such good pasture, that those in it can possess many horses; for this reason they are also most warlike, and have cavalry experienced in war. Therefore, he says, from divine wrath, from the attack of the enemies, it will be desolate of both waters and green grass. When this has happened, the expertise of the tacticians will surely be weakened, their horses having been destroyed beforehand, and having perished from famine. But if this should happen, he says, will she not then think great things of herself even so? when this has happened, is she going to be saved, and to escape the hands of the enemies? For with their strength destroyed beforehand, what hope of salvation will remain? For I will bring Arabs upon the valley, and they will take it. The cry has joined the border of Moab of

Agalleim, and her wailing unto the well of Elim. And the water of Remmon shall be filled with blood; for I will bring Arabs upon Remmon.

And I will take away the seed of Moab, and Ariel, and the remnant of Adama I will send forth like creeping things upon the earth. They say the southernmost parts of the Damascenes are inhabited by the innumerable tribes of those called Saracens, extending even to Per- of you. They armed themselves with the Babylonians, and were devastating the land of the Moabites; for they also followed, although perhaps they were of the same race, and neighbors to the land of the Moabites. For they also were called Arabs. Therefore he says that Nebreim will be taken; "For I will bring upon the ravine. "Arabs, and they will take it. He likely calls Nebreim a ravine, because of its being situated in a hollow place. Although the other cities were raised up high, and were in the mountains. But since it was not a part of the land of the Moabites that was crushed by the war, but the whole of it through and through was both shaken and tossed about like a drunkard; for this reason he says that the cry will join from one end to the other, of those wailing, that is, and of those accustomed to practice the dirge for those about to perish. For the cry, he says, has joined the border of the land of the Moabites, of Agalleim, and its wailing to the well of Eleim. He names the outer cities, and those situated at the very borders, I mean both Agalleim, and the well of Eleim.

Confirming that the dirge has been set throughout all their land, as I said, he then says, that "The water of Remmon will be filled with blood. For Remmon is said to be very watery. But it will be filled with blood, he says, saying this somewhere, that the blood of the fallen during the time of war will compete with the abundance of the waters; and the rivers will be seen reddened, and the water of the land will be poured out, no longer pure, nor indeed having the appearance of water, but of another color and like blood. He says that it too will be taken by the Arabs, so that all the seed of Moab, and Ariel, will be taken away, that is, to be destroyed and consumed. "But the remnant," he says, "I will send away like reptiles upon the earth. For being bitter they will always go into captivity, like some snakes charmed by certain incantations, and as if nodding off, to an unaccustomed tameness. For to say "I will send away" means to send forth. For it is the custom for those who have taken a country or a city, not always to destroy everyone completely, but when the most warlike multitude has been consumed, to place the survivors in the rank of captives.

But if one must also apply a necessary word to the histories, it must be known, that a soul fortified by the fear of God is both strong and hard to capture, and overcoming the hand of those who fight against it. For it conquers principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. But if it should turn aside to what is not fitting, and be carried outside the straight path, and running past what is pleasing to God, should be carried down to the passions in this world, and should shake off the yoke of obedience, He strips it of all assistance, and makes it as it were unwalled, and makes it unsafe for those who war against it, and He smooths the assaults of passions against it, so that it is in no way able to escape. Thus they are given

over to a debased mind, and have become easy prey to monstrous desires, and nothing saves them, but they are under the feet of enemies, scattered in a cowardly way. For if the God of all, he says, shuts men up, who will open, and who will overcome the all-powerful right hand of Him who has delivered them up? Let us therefore remain in the fear of God. For thus we will gain the grace of favor from above;

and we will grow strong spiritually, and caring very little for sins, and passions, and the greed of the devil, we will arrive at the prize of the upward call, achieving a glorious and most approved life. Is mount Sion a desolate rock? For you shall be as a bird flying away, a fledgling taken away, O daughter of Moab. Shalmaneser the Assyrian campaigned against Samaria from time to time, and took the cities in it; and in addition he wronged many of those of Judea, and carried away a captive multitude to his own land. And for this reason, the nations of the Moabites mocked Sion, that is, Jerusalem, and called it a desolate rock, not perhaps mocking her, the wretches, but rather God who is over all; and indeed they were saying that the hand that saves them has grown weak, and for this reason they have come under the feet of their enemies. O therefore daughter of Moab, it says, and the word was in every way simple, is Mount Zion a desolate rock? Has Zion alone grown weary, it says? Has she alone fallen under the feet of her enemies? and suffered the desolation of her inhabitants? or have you fallen into things even worse than hers? For you will be taken by enemies, and like a chick taken from the nest, you will go to another land, and you will serve enemies, and you will be among them a pitiful captive, and cast down, and under the yoke of slavery.

Useful, therefore, and necessary is the command: ”If your enemy falls, do not rejoice over him, because the Lord will see, and it will not please him; and he will turn his anger away from him. For it is not fitting to rejoice over the misfortunes of others, nor to make what has happened to one’s neighbor a pretext for gladness, even if he happens to be one of those accustomed to causing grief, but rather to be sad for him, and casting an eye on our own stumblings, to fear greatly, lest somehow the wrath of the one who strikes should also come upon us. Then, Arnon, take more counsel, and make a shelter of mourning for her always; in the midday darkness they flee, they were driven out. Let not the fugitives of Moab sojourn from the beginning; they shall be a shelter for you from the face of the pursuer, because your alliance is taken away, and the ruler who tramples upon the earth has perished. The meaning of the preceding is very difficult to interpret, because of the transitions from person to person, and the roughness of the composition, which is not stable for any mind. However, as I am able, I will try to explain. So then, when all of the land of the Moabites had been sacked, and cities were being demolished, and houses burned, and the Babylonians were raging savagely in every way, those who were able to escape migrated to Arnon.

This is one of the strongest cities, perhaps bordering on the land of the Moabites. The word, therefore, is to her. But you, it says, after this, O Arnon, take more counsel. Consider, it says, in what way you will be able to save those who have been left behind and were able to escape the savagery of the plunderers. And make a shelter of mourning for her always. Yes,

it says, you have considered something philanthropic; become a shelter for those overcome by unbearable mourning. For they flee in midday darkness, that is, when it is day, and the sun is at its noon, they have darkness in their mind. For the fear of death is exceedingly able to trouble the soul, and to pour down a kind of night on the mind through the assault of extreme despair. For this reason, it says that And they were driven out. For they have almost become beside themselves, being terrified by the dreads of the war. But even if you should receive, it says, those from the land of the Moabites, yet know very clearly, that you have not saved all, but a small and easily-counted remnant of the lost. This, I think, it wishes to make clear, saying: 'Let not the fugitives of Moab sojourn from the beginning.' Was it not at the beginning of the war, it says, that you received the fugitives? Are not those who were able to escape very few in number and altogether small?

Therefore what was spoken by God against the Moabites has been brought to fulfillment. For it has perished, although a small remnant was saved with difficulty. But, O, it says, Arnon, you received those from the land of the Moabites, expecting perhaps that they themselves in time would be a shelter for you from the face of the pursuer. But this will not be. Why? For your alliance is taken away; and the ruler who tramples upon the earth has perished. For the one who always shielded you, it says, the leader of the Moabites, the terrible and arrogant one, who was accustomed to trample on his opponents as if they were dust, is gone and has perished. For he has been taken away, and is gone from the midst. And through these things it teaches that the hope of being able to prevail again has also been destroyed for the Moabites. For the impious, it says, will be utterly destroyed from the earth; and when divine wrath altogether leaps upon them, what will be a remnant of those who have suffered? Or who is able to raise up, when God is casting down? And a throne shall be set up with mercy, and one shall sit upon it with truth in the tent of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness. In these words he clearly promises that Israel will in due time be delivered from unbearable hardship and the evils of captivity.

For when Cyrus took Babylon, Israel was released, and was brought back by God's mercy to the holy city, under the leadership of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, who was from the tribe of Judah and David, and also of Joshua son of Jozadak the high priest. The throne, then, he says, that is, the kingdom among the Jews, will be set up with mercy, that is, it will return to its proper order, through God's mercy. And one will sit upon it again with truth in the tent of David, judging and seeking judgment. And "tent," it seems, he calls the royal palace, in which they passed their time and judged, lawfully administering the very thrones of the kingdom. And insofar as it was pleasing to God, they became overseers of righteousness, even if some have failed in virtue, turning aside to what is worse. But it should be known that after the return from Babylon, those of Israel no longer dwelt separately, such that the ten tribes and the half-tribe of Ephraim were in Samaria, with someone ruling over them, and in Jerusalem the tribe of Judah and the half-tribe of Manasseh, with another ruling specifically over them, but having been brought together into one mind, they dwelt together in Jerusalem, anointing one king from then on. And this, then, was what was said about

them through the voice of the prophet: And they shall come up from the land, and they shall cease for a little while from anointing a king and a ruler.

Nevertheless, God promises the restoration of the throne among the Jews, all but reproaching Moab. She has babbled, indeed, saying that Mount Zion is a desolate rock. But to you, he says, this and that will happen, as you laugh scornfully at those of Israel. But God will have mercy on them in every way and altogether, and will release them from what has happened; and he will restore their kingdom to its original state, setting it right. We have heard of the insolence of Moab, he is exceedingly insolent. Having proclaimed very well the return of those of Israel from captivity, and that there will be a return to the former state of their rule, that is, their kingdom, he returns again to Moab, and directs his word to them. And the words, "We have heard the insolence of Moab, he is exceedingly insolent," are spoken as if from the person of the holy prophets. For through these words they consent to God as punishing in justice, having brought upon them the punishment that was due and fitting for them. And they say they have heard the insolence of Moab, first of all not being ignorant of that most ancient history which the divine Moses relates. For as we said before, Balak hired Balaam, saying, "Come, curse Israel for me. And very many things have been done for this purpose at various times by the arrogance of the Moabites, fighting against the glory of God. I have removed the pride.

Since the holy prophets have most clearly acknowledged that they have heard the insolence of Moab, and know that he is exceedingly insolent, God answers and says: "I have removed the pride"; that is, I have caused Moab, not as being simply arrogant, but as having become arrogance itself, to be removed from the midst. For I war against the proud, and I fight against those who have chosen not to think soberly, but rather are puffed up for no reason, and raise their brow high, and are ignorant of the weakness of their own nature. For it is written that "The Lord opposes the proud. And teaching that he punishes justly, and does not simply bring on penalties in vain, he accuses Moab of being unbearably sick with arrogance. Not so is your divination, not so. It was not I who removed your pride, he says—that is, I cut off Moab—but your sins* did not foretell these things to you. For the soothsayers, speaking falsely, promised that you would be stronger than the attack of war, and that you would easily conquer your opponents, and that you would be indestructible to your enemies, and that you would mock the vanquished. But it is not so, far from it. For rather the outcome of events turned out to the contrary, and not according to your hope. Therefore it is truly very difficult and harmful to heed the words of those who mock, and to be carried away by the voices of sorcerers into hopes that will not come to pass.

Moab shall wail. For in the land of Moab all shall wail; for the inhabitants of Deseth you will practice mourning. That the divination did not turn out as they expected, but in a different way, and to the complete contrary, he shows clearly, saying: Moab will wail, although the divination, that is, of those who had practiced using the art of the Magi, had foretold not that she would wail, but that she would shout in triumph over her ruined enemies and dance over the fallen. Therefore all, he says, who are in the land of Moab will wail aloud;

and there will be a practice of mourning for the inhabitants of Deseth. And this is also a city of Moab, whose inhabitants are perhaps indicated by this, having practiced a rhythmic and melodious beating of the breast and lament against themselves. And they will not have respect for the fields of Heshbon; the vine of Sibmah will mourn. Devouring the nations, trample her vines as far as Jazer. The word is perhaps addressed to those who had captured Moab, I mean both the Assyrians and the Babylonians, whom he commands no longer to spare the fields of Heshbon and to burn Heshbon itself; and to treat Sibmah in such a way that even the vines in it would mourn. And indeed he says to them: Devouring the nations. For I command you, he says, O destroyers of nations, and my innumerable and most savage beasts, devouring nations, trample her vines as far as Jazer.

And this too is a city of the Moabites. And again in these words, by vines he names the inhabitants of the Moabites. For it is the custom of the divinely-inspired Scripture to compare the people in each city and country to forests and trees and indeed also to vines. And so concerning Israel he says: For the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth is the man of Judah, a beloved new plant. And in saying, Trample her vines, he shows again that it was not the work of the hand of the Assyrians to conquer Moab, but it was the all-powerful God subjecting his opponents under his feet, and granting to their hand the ability to prevail. You shall not join, wander the desert, O you who were sent; they were abandoned, they crossed the desert. They say that when the Assyrians had invaded, most of the Moabites, fleeing to the bordering and neighboring desert, were eager to escape notice, and they were eager with difficulty, being very few in number. And it was perhaps not difficult for the Babylonians to find them too, with God letting loose and extending his wrath even to them. But since, being benevolent, he punishes with measure, he all but commands those who have sacked Moab not to join the fugitives to the lost, but to allow them to wander, as it were, in the desert, that is, to consign to oblivion and to dismiss the search for those who have run together in it.

For this reason, he says, and to wander the desert. You who were sent, he says, who were sent by my wrath to take Moab by force, wander through the desert, give it to oblivion, and pass by the desert, for they have crossed it. Then the phrase, They were abandoned, is thrown in between, teaching this again, that the Moabites would not have come into this state, if they had not offended in no small measure the all-powerful God. Therefore I will weep as with the weeping of Jazer, O vine of Sibmah. Your trees Heshbon has cast down, and it spoke, upon your harvest and upon your vintage I will trample, and all things will fall, and gladness and exultation will be taken away from your vineyards; and in your vineyards they will not rejoice; and they will not tread wine into the wine-presses, for it has ceased. The prophetic word creates for us a persona, weeping over the misfortunes of the Moabites, and perhaps with Jazer having been plundered more than the others; thus it says that the others are to be lamented, just as it would be fitting for Jazer too. And it names the inhabitants of the cities ”vines” and ”trees”. And it also enumerates the plundered cities of Sibmah and Heshbon. But the host of the enemies spoke. Upon your harvest and upon

your vintage, it says; but what did it speak? "I will tread down," clearly, and all things will fall. And in addition to this, further:

Gladness and joy will be taken away from your vineyards; for the festival-loving Moabite, who dedicates very many rites to demons, who spends the night at altars, and always has sacrificing as a pretext for gladness. He will wail and weep, and will be far from all cheer. For they will certainly not be glad; nor will they tread wine into the wine-presses, for it has ceased. There will be, it says, no fruit in the vineyards; for that which is born from them will perish with them. And regarding the vines, if they were cut down completely, this word is true. But if it should be taken by us, as the word again teaches concerning human affairs in the power of examples, that together with the parents their offspring will perish, so that not even to the pregnant women themselves is any mercy given by the enemies. And we say that Jerusalem suffered this in the war against the Romans. And indeed the Savior said, announcing beforehand the things that would happen to her, that she would be surrounded by armies; and that woe would come especially to those giving birth and those with child in the womb in those days. Therefore my belly will sound like a harp for Moab, and my inward parts like a wall that you renewed.

Joy and gladness having been taken away, it says, from your vineyards, and with no one in them being gladdened, and with this and that having happened, my inward parts will become a harp and a song and a melody for you. For I proclaim your sufferings, and I make known the misfortune brought upon you. And like some melodious lyre I will cry out, and I will make such a sound, and I will make the song heard aloud, like the wall that you renewed. For at the beginning of the vision the blessed prophet said: At night Moab will perish; for at night the wall of Moab will perish. And we, interpreting the meaning of what was said, say that when an earthquake occurred, the wall of Moab was broken down, and before the attack of the enemies, as if uprooted from its very foundations, it crashed down upon the Moabites, the very one they had renewed, having spent the labor on it completely in vain. For both the Assyrians and the Babylonians captured the entire land without a struggle. Therefore my inward parts will sound, it says, like a harp over your misfortunes, and thus I will make your suffering renowned; just as indeed your wall was brought down, which you renewed, but for no useful purpose. For with the wall having fallen of itself, what had happened escaped the notice of none of those throughout all Moab, that is, those who were in other cities and lands.

And it shall be that you will be put to shame, because Moab has wearied himself at the altars, and he will enter into his man-made temples to pray, and will not be able to deliver him. And what, it says, will happen again in addition to this, which will bring you shame and disgrace; for you will endure vain labors, filling your altars with blood, and making unceasing sacrifices, and offering prayers to man-made things. And you will obtain none of those things for benefit and salvation. For they will not be able to deliver you from the impending evils. For what strength is in lifeless idols, which are also inventions of human art, and have as their creators those who worship them? Therefore, as the blessed David

says: May those who make them become like them, and all who trust in them. But it must be known that the Moabites have become exceedingly superstitious, both observers of omens and false prophets, and wonder-mongers, and those who have grown far too bold in the evils of sorcery. For they perhaps thought they could get the better of the enemy's hand, not so much, as I think at least, by their experience in tactics, as by the aid of the gods among them. But they have missed their hope, calling upon lifeless matter for aid through both sacrifices and prayer. This is the word that the Lord spoke against Moab when He spoke. This, he says, is the vision spoken by God against the Moabites;

when He also spoke, that is, even before the words came to be through me, He had spoken very many things concerning it, and accused it of countless evils. For as I have already said, the divine Moses also makes mention of the nation's perversity, and commanded that it be considered among the most hated. For he said: An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation. It once carried Israel also away from the love for God, and persuaded them to worship Baal-peor, sharpened for shameful pleasures, and ensnared by the beauty of women unto destruction. Therefore, indeed, the God of all has spoken concerning it. And now also through me this word has come to be against it, he says. And now I say, in three years, as the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be dishonored, with all its great wealth, and what is left will be few in number and not honored. The prophetic word now brings us to the remembrance of a history. For having departed from Jerusalem, ten tribes of Israel, and the half-tribe of Ephraim, have settled in Samaria; and they have worshipped the golden ones; with Jeroboam the son of Nabat leading them to this, and impiously thrusting them down. Then they also devised other false worships there, each one setting up what seemed good to them as God.

Therefore, being indignant at these things, the Lord of all, since His glory was indeed insulted and the ancestral laws were trampled upon, as it were, hired the Assyrian Shalmaneser and sent him against them, who also subjugated all the land of the Samaritans, having besieged it for three whole years; at this same time the land of the Moabites was captured by force. Therefore, even if God has spoken long ago, he says, yet now I also say, that in the three years of the years of the hireling, that is, of the king of the Assyrians, the glory of Moab will be dishonored. And by these things, he means either the kingdom among them, or also according to the sizes of the cities, and the multitude of the inhabitants, or perhaps, the age experienced in war. And it will be left, he says, few in number and not honored, that is, everything that is honored among them will be consumed by the war; but those who are left behind will be very few indeed, and most dishonored and unmanly, and worthy of no account. A fearful thing it is, then, to fall into the hands of the living God; and to dare to offend the one who is all-powerful, how will it not be the cause of every disaster? But it is salutary also to love to be subject to Him, and to know Him alone, and to depart from the snares of error, and to say to Him with a good disposition:

Lord, besides you we know no other, we name your name.

Discourse 10

The city of the Damascenes has become a most mighty and most notable city; but impious and fighting against God, and among those most hated by the all-holy God at least; and it was idolatrous, and in both the abominations and arrogances of the Assyrians it yielded in no way. And it has also offended the all-powerful God in another way. For those of the blood of Israel, that is, the ten tribes, and the half-tribe of Ephraim, having departed from Jerusalem and having settled in Samaria, have indeed worshipped the golden calves, with Jeroboam the son of Nabat having brought them down to this, and having unholily thrust them down; but having completely leaped away, and having wholly leaped away from the love for God; and having been brought to a forgetting of the law given to them through the all-wise Moses. Sometimes, when the occasion called, and war was about to come upon them, they did not rather place their hope in the saving God, but rather called upon those who at the time were kings of Damascus and of all the land of the Syrians to come to their aid and deliver them from the hand of their enemies. Therefore, and especially for this reason, the God of all was indignant and grew bitter against them.

For, having completely forgotten that they were redeemed from Egypt and had shaken off the unbearable yoke of slavery, and were brought through the midst of the sea, then having eaten the manna, and been given water from the rock to drink, and having prevailed over every enemy, they became heirs of the good things promised to their fathers, the wretched ones called for help from men, all but condemning God as being unable to save them. For this reason, indeed, they were delivered over to the king of the Assyrians, who, having taken all Samaria, also sacked Damascus itself, and laid waste the entire land of the Syrians. That our words concerning these things are true, the prophet Isaiah himself will confirm, saying: And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but they could not besiege it. And it was told to the house of David, saying: Aram has conspired with Ephraim, that is, the Syrian with those in Samaria. For Aram is interpreted as Syrian; and Ephraim, as from the tribe of Ephraim, signifies all of Israel dwelling in Samaria. For since Jeroboam, their first king, was from the tribe of Ephraim, and after him those who followed in succession, as from the ruling tribe, I mean that of Ephraim, the whole of Israel in Samaria is signified.

And we shall find in the fourth book of Kings that when Pekah was reigning in Samaria, the Syrians and Rezin, who was king of Damascus, rose up against those of Israel. Then Ahaz persuades the tyrant of the Assyrians with money, and called on him to come quickly and to aid him, but to lay waste Damascus; which indeed came to pass. In what manner, then, the most warlike and all-powerful and insolent city perished, the prophet proclaims again to us in these words, and says: Behold, Damascus shall be taken away from among the cities, and it shall be a ruin, left for ever, for a bed of flocks and a resting-place, and there shall be none to chase them away. He does not say that it will simply come to an experience of wars and the evils from them; but rather to be taken away, that is, to be utterly destroyed, and to fall completely from being a city. For it shall be, he says, left as a ruin forever; but left by whom, if not entirely by those who inhabit it, not as having been relocated, but as having been destroyed by the swords of the enemy. And by saying that it will be a bed for flocks, he shows its complete desolation; for shepherds would not have rested, and flocks of cattle would not have lodged in it, if there were any people in its houses. To this, and very fittingly, he adds, saying: And there will be none to chase them away.

For no one will rebuke the shepherds, he says, for having made a lodging of so brilliant and famous a city. And Ephraim shall cease to be a fortress of refuge, and there shall no longer be a kingdom in Damascus and the remnant of the Syrians. For you are no better than the sons of Israel and their glory. For the precise clarity of the foregoing, I think it necessary to recall again a history found in the books of Kings. For when Ahaz was reigning over Judah in Jerusalem, Pekah son of Remaliah, reigning in Samaria over the ten tribes, marched against Jerusalem. But since he feared lest he might somehow grow weak to capture it, he made an ally of Rezin the king of the Syrians and of Damascus. For thus said the blessed pro-phet Isaiah himself: And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Aram went up, (which is interpreted as of the Sy-rians, or of Syria; and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel against Jerusalem to war against it. And it was reported to the house of David, saying: Aram has conspired with Ephraim, that is, the Syrian with the one from the tribe of Ephraim who rules those in Sama- ria. And his soul, and the soul of his people, was moved, as when a tree in a wood is shaken by the wind.

Therefore Ephraim, having forsaken the God and Savior of all, and deeming his hand and assistance of little account, made the ruler of Damascus and of the Syrians his protector. And for this reason he very justly offended God. Damascus, therefore, he says, being ravaged and laid desolate, and having endured the calam- ities of war, will no longer be a stronghold for Ephraim to flee to. Nor will there be a kingdom in it; and yet one might say, And after the destruction were found some ruling Damascus. For Paul also mentions it, saying, that ”In Damascus the ethnarch of Aretas the king sought to arrest him. Therefore, the prophetic word has much emphasis. For he says that there will no longer be a strong and notable kingdom in Damascus, even if after this there came to be certain toparchs and phylarchs rather, and not those clothed with the splendor of true kingship. There will not, therefore, be a kingdom in Damascus, he says; and with it the remnant of the Sy- rians will be weakened,

that is, the entire nation under it. For Damascus is the metro- polis of Syria. Then he says to her: For you are not better than the sons of Israel, and their glory. For if I did not spare my allotted portion, he says, that is, those of Israel who sinned against me, how will you not in every way and altogether endure the damages of war, being in no way better than Israel? Thus says the Lord of Sabaoth:

In that day there will be an eclipse of the glory of Jacob, and the fat parts of his glory will be shaken. By Jacob in these words he names those who came from Jacob, that is, the ten tribes in Samaria, and the half-tribe of Ephraim, who so leaped away from the love of God, and from placing their hope of being saved rather in him, that they trusted in themselves, and raised a high brow on account of their multitude and glory alone. This was their way. And a prophet again says this most clearly to us. For he said concerning them: Their glories are from births and pangs and conceptions. Then he adds to these things: Give them, O Lord. What will you give them? Give them a childless womb, and dry breasts. There will be, therefore, he says, at that time, an eclipse of the glory of Jacob, that is, the great and innumerable multitude of the sons of Jacob, in which he was glorified and attempted to think great things, will be consumed by the swords of the enemy. But also the fat parts of his glory will be shaken; that is, the kingdom among them will also be brought down. For it is written in the fourth book of Kings, that when Hoshea the son of Elah was reigning in Samaria, Shalmaneser came and besieged Samaria for three whole years, and he captured it and carried Hoshea away to Baby- lon.

Therefore, the fat parts of the glory of Jacob might be understood as the one who reigned in Samaria at that time, or perhaps the illustrious and more notable men throughout the whole country, exceeding the measure of others in wealth and power, and indulging in luxuries and in honors from all. And it shall be as when one gathers the standing harvest, and reaps the seed of the ears of corn; and it shall be as when one gathers an ear of corn in a strong valley. And there shall be left in it stub- ble, or as two or three berries of an olive tree, on the highest bough, or four or five, left on its branches. That they will easily and without sweat overcome those in Samaria the Assyrians making war, and in addition to this again, that it will not utterly and completely go to destruction, but that there will be a small remnant, the prophetic word has clearly revealed to us in these things. For those who have experience in harvesting the ears of corn, skillfully shearing them, gather the grain; but always leaving the stalk behind as useless they run over the whole breadth of the cornfields. But those accustomed to gathering the fruit of the olive trees, on the one hand strike them with a rod, and on the other, touching with their hands and snatching the young shoots, they gather them;

but it is likely that three or four, or perhaps five, remain on them at the very tip of the branches, and escape the eyes of the gatherers. He says that such a thing will happen to those in Samaria; for he insists that they will suffer just as the ear of corn when it falls into the hands of the reapers; but there will be left, as it were, a stalk on it, that is, a few of the more insignificant, or even like two or three olive berries that have escaped the eye of

the gatherers, because they are hidden in the topmost branches. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: In that day a man will trust in him who made him, and his eyes will look upon the Holy One of Israel; and they will not trust in the altars, nor in the works of their hands, which their fingers have made, but they will trust in the Holy One of Israel. And they will not see their groves, nor their abominations. The most wise Paul, knowing that the matter of being disciplined among those called by him to the knowledge of the truth is not unprofitable, nor in vain, writes and says: ”If you endure discipline, God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? And he also quotes from the divinely inspired Scripture; for he adds immediately:

”My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens every son he accepts. For since the creator of all is good, ”he desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. For this reason he has very often admonished through the holy prophets those of the blood of Israel, and especially those who had migrated from Jerusalem to Samaria. But they were unrestrainedly inclined to what seemed good to them, and having abandoned the God who is by nature and in truth, they became worshippers of demons, and offered their services to lifeless idols. And since they were very ignorant, they did not even consider that it was proper for them to repent, so God punished them. For those whom reason does not profit, pain changes, turning them as if by necessity and force to what is pleasing to God. The blessed David is found saying something of this kind: ”With bit and bridle you must curb their jaws, of those who will not come near to you. For in the same way that those who are accustomed to breaking colts, and these being wise, turn the wilder horses with bridles to a skilled course; so also the God of all, by the necessities arising from pain, often brings the disobedient and unruly to choose to live rightly.

Having suffered such a thing, the inhabitants of Samaria, after suffering the calamities of war, barely recognized the one who was punishing and was grieved; and they cast off the worship of idols, and turned the eye of their mind to the Holy One of Israel, clearly expecting from him help and deliverance from the evils that had been brought upon them. For they shall not trust, he says, in the altars, nor in the works of their hands, which their fingers have made; and they will not look upon their groves, nor their abominations. For it was their custom to occupy the tops of the mountains, and under oak and poplar, as it is written, to worship the works of their own hands. But they will no longer look upon these things, he says, having learned by experience that the matter is vain and completely unprofitable to them, but rather the cause of every disaster. For of this on account of the cause, and they have perished, and have been given to their enemies. It is best, therefore, to be on guard and with all one’s strength to avoid the divine wrath, and not wait to learn evils by experience. But rather, one should very swiftly strip off the causes at which God might be angered, and before the blow and the scourge to make amends to the one who has been grieved, by avoiding the more shameful things, honoring the most excellent, and in every way practicing virtue.

In that day your cities will be forsaken, in the way the Amorites and the Hivites forsook them from before the sons of Israel; and they shall be desolate, because you forsook God your Savior, and you were not mindful of the Lord your helper. From these very events he persuades them to understand that their affairs have been reversed. For formerly they were victorious with God as their ally, and they were fearsome to the cities and lands of the nations. For they took them without a sweat, with God making easy for them all that was steep and difficult to achieve. But since they became imitators of their unholiness, they have become cowardly and easily captured like them. For their cities have been desolated, and have been abandoned by those dwelling in them, in the same way that the Hivites and Amorites once fell, consumed by their swords; and he immediately makes clear the cause of their having slipped into this weakness, and of their enduring so harsh and unbearable a calamity: For you forsook God your Savior, he says, and you were not mindful of the Lord your God. For it was necessary to give thanks for the good things they had received, on the one hand being delivered from the slavery in Egypt, and on the other hand overpowering enemies, and plundering the cities of those who resisted, and also that they were brought into the very land of promise;

they brought wicked returns to the Master, offending him without fear, and grieving him not in one way, but having taken very little thought for the law appointed through the all-wise Moses, and completely spurning piety towards God, and attributing reverence to lifeless matter, and saying to the golden calves: "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. When, therefore, we are with God, being eager to think his thoughts, that is, and having chosen to achieve what is pleasing to him; then indeed we shall by all means be stronger than our enemies, and we will tread upon principalities, and powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness, then we shall overcome, and very swiftly, monstrous pleasures and the movements of the flesh; then we shall conquer wicked thoughts, and the spirits of the ruler will find no place in us. But having neglected to cleave to God, we shall be weak and unmanly, and under the feet of our enemies, and no means will check Satan as he takes advantage. Therefore you shall plant a faithless plant, and a faithless seed. And on the day that you plant, you will be led astray. And in the morning if you sow, it will blossom for harvest, on whatever day you might receive your lot, and as a father of a man you might give a lot to your sons.

I will try as best I can to make clear the meaning of the present text, which is veiled in much obscurity. What he says, then, is something like this: I have already said that those of Israel (that is, Ephraim, so that you may understand the ten tribes resettled in Samaria), deceiving and being deceived, and thinking what is not lawful, had a high brow, and thought that absolutely none of their enemies could overwhelm their hand, on account of their being innumerable and very many. But they were cheated of their hope. For they have fallen, and some have been consumed by war, while others are carried off to the lands of the victors, as captives and terrified and having been in every evil. But when, after a time had elapsed, they were brought back from the land of the Persians to the holy city, then they ceased having kings in succession, and they all inhabited Jerusalem, and honored the law of God;

then also their children were in safety, and into The successions have run on as children of children. The word now teaches something of this kind, giving a riddle about grain and ears of corn. For since, it says, you did not remember the Lord your God, for this reason whatever plant you plant will be unfaithful, and not secure for preservation, that is, the seed and race from among you. And when you plant, and see it become great, then you will be deceived.

For you will think, it says, taking courage in the multitude, but you will not reason truly. For they will fall like ears of corn, and you will find the hope in these things completely useless. But if you sow in the morning, that is, having come to be in the light, and finally having recognized the Master who is by nature and truly, who saves easily and has the strength to help; then what has been planted, or sown, will blossom for harvest, that is, it will be brought to fruition; for the ear of corn being consumed prematurely causes loss of both labors and hope for those accustomed to farm; but to come to harvest gives the fullest hope for good things. Therefore, your plant will blossom for harvest, that is, it will be brought to fruition, when it becomes morning for you, that is, when you are found to be in light and day and in the knowledge of God. Then you will also assign to your sons as a father of a man. For you will send on to your sons, as a kind of inheritance, cheerfulness and the participation in help from above. Woe to the multitude of many nations! As a surging sea, so you will be troubled; and the back of many nations will roar like water; like much water many nations, as much water carried down by force.

And he will cast him away with scorn, and will pursue him far away, as the dust of chaff winnowed before the wind, and as the dust of a wheel that a storm carries. The God of all, being benevolent, does not leave those of Israel unconsoled, but very often brings in hope for good things along with fear, and this providentially, so that through both he may benefit the hearers. Therefore, that their cities will be laid waste has been said clearly; and what the cause of their suffering was, he taught, saying, that You abandoned the Lord your God, and you did not remember the Lord your helper. But he who struck immediately promises also to apply a dressing. And he explains something that happened, which it is necessary to relate as possible in words for the need at hand. When Hezekiah was at that time administering the thrones of the kingdom in Jerusalem, Sennacherib king of the Assyrians came up against the fortified cities of Judea, and took them. For it is written thus: Then he sends Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to besiege it, who, having arrived, indeed spouted nonsense against the glory of the God and Savior of us all; for the madman insisted that he was not able to save them, even if he wished to do this. But using a barbarian tongue and mind, he came to know by learning from experience that it is a hard thing for any man to rise up against the highest glory.

For an angel of the Lord went out, and in one night killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand from the camp of the foreigners; and rising in the morning, they found all the bodies dead. And since he who had sent them was thwarted in his expectations, I mean Sennacherib, he returned as a fugitive, and barely saved himself by reaching his home, al-

though he also perished not long after at the hands of his own children. For it happened, it says, while he was worshiping in his house Asarach his patriarch, Adrammelech and Sarasas, his sons, struck him with swords. The prophetic word here reminds us of this history, and it narrates beforehand the attack of the Assyrians, and says: Woe to the multitude of nations! and what follows this. For he pronounces them wretched, as those who are about to die in Jerusalem, with an angel destroying them. And that it was not one nation, but rather many, he shows clearly, calling them a multitude of nations. And they were attacking the lands, or the cities of Judea, like much water and as if carried down by force, and causing disturbances, and all but surging like a sea over those who resisted. And the back of many nations among them he calls them this, on account of many nations being pursued by them. And the pursuers run at the back of those fleeing in every way and by all means. Then what after this?

He will scorn him, he says, that is, he will send him back, and will pursue him far away, like the chaff of winnowers before the wind, and like the dust of a wheel a storm carries. For what is so easily scattered as dust from a wheel and a threshing floor, when a fierce wind blows it down? That Sennacherib went away as a fugitive, the God of all will confirm, saying to him through the voice of Isaiah: "And I will put a muzzle in your nose, and a bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way in which you came. Toward evening there will be sorrow before morning, and it will not be. This is the portion of those who plundered you, and the inheritance of those who inherited you. I have already said that the Rabshakeh, having surrounded Jerusalem with his army, and threatening to take it before long, perished with his whole army before dawn and day. There will be sorrow, therefore, he says, toward evening, when those in Jerusalem fully expected the attack of the war to be in the morning, but it ceased before dawn. For this reason he says: There will be sorrow toward evening; but it will not be before morning, that is, the tear will cease and end; and together with the fears from suffering it will be gone, as God helps, and has wondrously destroyed the phalanxes of the enemies, and moreover has driven the leader from the land of the Jews.

This the blessed David also explains, saying: "At evening weeping will lodge, and at morning, rejoicing. But this, he says, is the lot; and this is the portion of those who plundered you and seized you as their own inheritance. Through these things he reproaches those of Israel, because they themselves have done things by which it was likely the nation would be utterly destroyed, but He Himself has pity again, and punishes with death those who plunder the people assigned to Him. "For when, he says, the Most High divided the nations, when he scattered the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God; and Jacob His people became the Lord's portion, Israel the line of His inheritance. But besides these things, consider that also carefully for me, and how from the things that happened historically you may come to the innermost thoughts. When the wicked and opposing powers, pouring down like violent water on the soul, or casting us into external temptations, that is, the innate movements of the flesh, hasten to besiege the pious mind; let no one who knows how to fight excellently with God fall into inactive cowardice,

but rather, placing his hope in Him, let him be superior to all fear. For that he will obtain help from Him, how is it possible to doubt? For the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and the blessed Paul also writes:

"God is faithful, who will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. And as the Psalmist says: "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. And when heretics who are knowledgeable in the sacred dogmas, using their own perversities, rise up against the worshippers of the truth, and come on terrible and bold, either raising up wars and persecutions, or heaping up afflictions for them, and the fear of death; these too will be no less weak; for with a hidden hand the Lord wars against Amalek from generation to generation, as it is written. Woe to the land of the wings of ships, beyond the rivers of Ethiopia! who sends hostages by sea, and papyrus letters upon the water. For swift messengers shall go to a nation on high, and to a strange and harsh people. Who is beyond it? A nation without hope and trodden down. One might wonder, and indeed perhaps reason that out for himself, and say: For what reason has the prophetic word to us in these things been against Damascus, but it also brings in a mention of the land that is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia? We say then that At times the people of Israel, having heedlessly practiced abandoning God the savior of all, fell into polytheistic error;

and having utterly neglected the commandment through Moses, they were disciplined by God, who raised up wars against them from time to time, and wasted them with the resulting calamities. But they, although it was necessary to heal the one who was grieved by repentance, and to depart from their own wickedness, and to return to what seemed good to the lawgiver, and to thirst for his aid, hired the conspiracies of the neighboring nations; and sometimes they approached the kings of Damascus, and sometimes those of the Egyptians; and not only that, but indeed also learning the worships of the nations who aided them, they hastened to imitate them. And so Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, when he was in Damascus, then having seen there an altar dedicated to an idol, fashionably worked, constructed a similar one, and dedicated it in the house of God. Therefore the vision came against Damascus. For behold, he says, Damascus shall be taken away from being a city, and it will no longer be a stronghold for Ephraim to flee to. Do you see the cause immediately brought forward, for saying that Damascus will be taken away from being a city? For it will no longer, he says, be so strong, that Ephraim, who reigned in Samaria, would even flee to it. He transfers, therefore, the word to the land of the Egyptians. For the people of Israel also approached them, especially those dwelling in Jerusalem, and they eagerly sought their support and aid, especially when the Babylonians were attacking.

And so through the voice of a prophet he says: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, who trust in horses and chariots! And something of this sort happened. For Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against the land of the Jews from time to time. And in passing by, he plundered, so to speak, all the cities of the east. And when he wished to capture the city of the Tyrians, which was an island at that time, and then was at a loss for ships to trans-

port them, using a Persian mindset, and taking courage in the multitude of his army, he ordered the sea to be made passable, by a mound being raised, and making it a broad highway from the mainland all the way to Tyre itself. Therefore the Tyrians themselves, fearing lest the city might somehow be captured, as the undertakings of the Babylonians were being brought to a conclusion, having gathered ships from everywhere, were transported from the island, leaving the city deserted for him. And when Nebuchadnezzar learned this, he moved his army to the task of taking the land of the Egyptians, and he took it without a struggle, God setting him up against the Egyptians; because they also, always raising a great brow, boasted against the people of Israel, as if they had no God powerful enough to save them. For when called for aid, and to defend them, they claimed that their own gods were mightier than the God of Judaea.

And that the Babylonian took the land of the Egyptians after the toil at Tyre, would be clear from God saying to the prophet Ezekiel: "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet he had no wages, nor his army, for the hard service that they had served against Tyre. In return for this I have given him the land of Egypt. The prophet therefore adds the Woe to it as well, and says: Woe to the land of the wings of ships, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia! He calls, therefore, the seven mouths, through which the wide and great river of Egypt mixes with the sea, the rivers of Ethiopia. And he names the land beyond the rivers what is now Alexandria, but was called at that time On. It was indeed very populous, and had very mighty inhabitants, and it was a short distance from the rivers of Egypt. For from the last mouth (and its name is the Herakleion), is distant to the west by about eighty stades in number. Since it was the custom for those who inhabit the aforementioned city to sail up and down the river, which was always navigable, to carry and bring their own goods to others, and from others to themselves, and to delight in the gains from commerce;

for this reason the prophetic word in these passages declares the ships wretched, and does not bring the "Woe" against the ships, but rather against those who were always using them, rejoicing and delighting, as I said, in the gains that came from them. For when the entire land was seized by Nebuchadnezzar, all commerce ceased, and the breadth of freedom for this was cut off, with those who owned them having likely perished as well. Woe therefore, it says, to the wings of the ships of that land which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia! And he calls the sails the wings of ships, on which the striking blasts of the winds, like a bird, carry them through the midst of the waves. He who sends hostages by sea, and papyrus letters upon the water. The meaning of what has been said is entirely hard to grasp; it travails, however, with the narrative of a Greek story, which we will necessarily recount, not going outside of what is probable, that is, what is fitting for Christian discourses, but for the sake of making the rendering of the concepts clear to the listeners. The account of the story is as follows: Some of the Greek poets tell the myth that Myrrha was the daughter of a certain Cinyras, who, being overcome by unbridled impulses toward pleasure, had licentious

intercourse with his own daughter, and made her the mother of a child, whom he named Adonis.

Blushing at what had happened and being convicted by the laws of nature that he had acted impiously, he exposed the child, as they say, on a mountain. Some of the nymphs there, whom they also call Oreads, daemons, took him and both nourished and saved him; and he, having reached puberty and being now among the youths, appeared to have a most comely beauty. He took up hunting, and made his pursuits in this matter of great importance throughout the woods. Then, it says, their Aphrodite (and this was a courtesan woman), seeing him, fell in love with him and had relations with him, and continued to attend to him. And at this, Ares, being grieved, being a rival lover of Aphrodite, is likened to a boar, and he leaps upon him while he is hunting , and destroys him instantly; and the event became an occasion for lamentation for Aphrodite, it says. And she came to such despondency and grief that she even went down to Hades itself, wishing to bring back her lover. But since Pluto's wife laid strong claim to the young man, and would not let him go, having a beauty worthy of admiration, they made an agreement with each other to divide the cycle of the year, and for each to have him for half of it. And when Aphrodite ascended and announced this to her own people, that is, her friends or worshippers, the event became a festival and a public celebration. Therefore the Greeks devised such a festival for this.

For they pretended to lament and mourn with the grieving Aphrodite because Adonis had died; but when she had ascended from Hades, and indeed said that the one she sought had been found, they would rejoice together and leap for joy; and until our own times this game was performed in the temples in Alexandria. Those of the blood of Israel also learned this, and indeed they performed it, having forsaken the God who is by nature and truly so, and having turned aside to what is not lawful, and having been senselessly snatched away into ruin and destruction by the deceits of demons. The blessed prophet Ezekiel also makes mention of this. For he spoke thus: "And I saw, and behold, there were women sitting, mourning for Tammuz. And Tammuz is interpreted as Adonis. And something of this sort was practiced by those who were in the land beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, about which we have spoken briefly and clearly in the preceding. Taking a piece of pottery, then writing a letter to the women in Byblos, that Adonis had been found, and having placed it in the earthenware vessel, and having sealed it, they would lower it into the sea, having performed certain rites over it; and as they said, it was carried automatically to Byblos on certain days of the year. And when certain women, friends of Aphrodite, received it, then taking the letter they would cease their lamentation, as though Adonis had been found by Aphrodite.

Therefore, the prophetic word mocks us, considering the inhabitants of the land beyond the rivers of Ethiopia as once idolaters and unholy, and deceivers, and God-hated, and says: He who sends hostages by sea, and papyrus letters upon the water. And to this also certainly follows the "Woe," just as it does to the wings of the ships. For "Woe to the land of the winged ships," it says! Therefore the "Woe" is commonly applied to him who sends hostages by sea; that is, pledges of unanimity. For as if performing a mystery of Aphrodite for those

who worship her in Byblos, and suffering the same madness as them, they would send out the letters, not by placing the messengers in ships, but as it were upon the water, because, as I said, they were placed in an earthenware vessel. We have been compelled to make mention of foul-smelling and ancient myths, and of Hellenic abomination, only for the sake of clarifying the meaning of the preceding text. For swift messengers will go to a lofty nation, and to a strange and harsh people. What is beyond it? A nation without hope and trampled down. I said before that the inhabitants of the land beyond the rivers of Ethiopia had offended the kings of the Assyrians; since they not only promised aid to those of Israel who asked for it, but indeed they also sent it, even if it benefited them not at all.

But they, being grieved at this, after having ravaged, so to speak, all of Judaea, have marched against the Egyptians, and have taken all of it without toil, God giving them the power to overcome the hand of those who resisted, because of their being grieved against the Egyptians. Therefore, when the Babylonian was about to campaign against their country, some runners went from Judaea, announcing to them the invasion that would not be long in coming. And concerning them the prophet says that, ”Swift messengers will go,” that is, fast, and as it were winged and light, reporting the disaster from the war as neighboring and already at the gates. And he names the Egyptians a lofty nation, and a strange and harsh people; ”lofty” instead of ”arrogant,” or else ”fickle and light,” and unstable; and ”strange and harsh,” as being strange in its harshness, and having no one beyond it in this respect. For ”Who is beyond it? he says, instead of, ”Who is so fickle, and ignorant and witless, and practicing wickedness unusual to others, as the people in Egypt? For they were extreme idolaters. Therefore he also names them a nation without hope and trampled down. Without hope, because of their not knowing the God who exists by nature and truly; and trampled down, because having subjected their minds far too much to the deceits of demons, they were all but laid under their feet; or else you may understand what is said in another way.

For having fallen into the hands of the Assyrians, they have cast away all hope of good cheer, and have been so trampled down as to be unable, so to speak, ever to recover, having fallen under and been laid beneath the feet of their conquerors. Now all the rivers of the land, as an inhabited country, their country will be inhabited. He also usefully foretells the manner of the capture. For those who held the land of the Egyptians thought that they had become impregnable to the Babylonians, because their whole country was girded by very many and indeed great rivers, and had wide and long lakes. For such countries are somehow difficult to enter, and not at all easy to invade for those who wish to ravage them. But since God was wroth with them, He made this too easy for the Babylonians. For all having dried up the collection of waters, He showed the wet ground to be traversable by horse for them. This, I think, is what the prophet means in saying these things: Now all the rivers of the earth, as an inhabited land, their country will be inhabited. For the navigable, he says, and always somewhat wet parts of the regions will be such, at the time of war, as to seem already in some way to be an inhabited land always, and simply dry land devoid of waters. For what could the divine and all-powerful and supreme nature not accomplish?

As if a sign were raised from a mountain, as the sound of a trumpet, it will be heard. The leaders of the tactical units, at the time of war, stationing some men on hills, very often have a sign raised; and this becomes a clear signal of the matter to the army. And he uses the sounds of trumpets, either rousing them to fight in a customary rhythm, or even recalling them from war as seems good to them. Therefore, the sign raised on high is also most conspicuous. For those accustomed to doing this stand on a mountain, and indeed the sound of the trumpets is audible and clear to all in the battle. Therefore, he says, the suffering of the Egyptians will be so very well-known to everyone everywhere, that it will be compared to a sign raised upon one of the mountains; and thus renowned, just as, of course, the sound through the trumpets. From such things, indeed, we shall know this, and it will be of much benefit to us, that we should in no way provoke to anger the undefiled nature; or, by doing in every way and altogether what is not right, and refusing the worship under Him, that is, running with apostates, and conforming their own ways to those under divine wrath, to share with them in the disaster, and to receive the same justice from God. One might see that the inhabitants of Egypt have suffered this.

For since those of Israel had offended, and then they promised to save them, even if God did not wish it, they are given to their enemies for ruin and destruction. For thus said the Lord to me: There will be security in my city, as the light of noonday heat, and as a cloud of dew on the day of harvest it will be before the reaping. The account of the history is clear; nevertheless we will speak cursorily. For God saved Jerusalem when Rabshakeh was besieging it, and had surrounded it with the innumerable multitude of the Assyrians; how did he save it? ”For an angel of the Lord went out,” he says, ”and killed from the camp of the Assyrians in one night one hundred eighty-five thousand. Therefore, he says, there will be security in my city. And that I have become a helper to those in danger will become so manifest to all everywhere, as the light at noonday is bright and most intense. For when the sun is at midday, and sends its most intense ray from above upon those on the earth, all things are illuminated with the richest light. Therefore, he says, the grace and security to be given by me at that time to those in danger will be as if a cloud of dew in the days of harvest before the reaping. And what he means to signify, I will say again:

It is a custom for reapers not to apply the iron to the ears of grain before, unless perhaps dew has first fallen, to make the stalk easier for them to handle. Therefore, the matter is a prayer for them, I mean the sending down of dew from God. Therefore, the security from God has become thrice-desired by those in Jerusalem, just as, of course, the dew falling in the days of harvest before the reaping. When the ear of grain is perfected, and the unripe grape blossoms with a souring flower. And he will take away the small clusters with sickles, and will take away the vine-shoots, and will cut them down and leave them together for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth. And the birds of the sky will be gathered upon them, and all the beasts of the earth will come upon it. The meaning of the preceding is very difficult and not moderately hard to see. And the very construction of the language contributes to this. Nevertheless I will try to explain as is possible. He therefore makes his argument as from the knowledge of farmers. Custom For when they see the clusters

blossoming forth from the vine, and already having the appearance of unripe grapes, they shear away the superfluous tendrils, and cut off with pruning hooks the small bunches that are superfluously attached to the larger ones, so that the larger clusters, receiving the most nourishing sap, might be able to come to fruition.

The God of all says that He has done something of this sort, either concerning the Assyrians, or even concerning the Egyptians; for the saying is not very clear, against whom it would more appropriately go and be directed. We say, then, that if someone should choose to understand the multitude of the Assyrians, who besieged the holy city, as one vine, we will find that the great cluster understood in it, that is, the one resplendent on the thrones of the kingdom, did not perish along with the others, but he himself was saved, while the other multitude was consumed in the manner of small clusters, and like superfluous branches, the sharpest sword of the Lord pruned them as with a kind of sickle. For they fell, as I said, consumed by the hand of an angel, and their corpses became a feast for the beasts of the field and for the birds of the sky. But if someone should wish to say that these things were said also concerning the Egyptians, you will understand that the Assyrians, in ravaging it, did not destroy it completely, nor did they utterly annihilate it. but by letting loose the sword, as it were, upon the small clusters of local settlements or villages, they measured out the wrath of the compassionate God, who disciplines those who offend, but very often shortens the punishments, and does not allow those being disciplined to be utterly destroyed.

In that time gifts will be brought to the Lord Sabaoth from a people plundered and afflicted, and from a great people from now and for eternal time. A nation hoping and trampled down, which is in a part of the river of its land, to the place where the name of the Lord Sabaoth was called upon, Mount Zion. Having very well described what would happen in the war from time to time to the peoples of the Egyptians, he also mentions their subsequent turning to God, and that having dismissed the ancient mist of deceit from the eyes of their mind, and having bid farewell to the worship of idols, they will proceed to better things; and they will recognize the God who is by nature and truly is, and the Creator and Lord of all, and being transformed as it were to a new and select life, they bear fruit for God in those things for which they would be well-pleasing and full of all praise, and as gifts they will bring what is a fragrant aroma to God: faith, hope, love. He calls them an afflicted people, because they endured very great hardship, having suffered the things from the divine wrath. And in addition to this, also plundered; perhaps by this he is indicating their change to better things. For a plant is transplanted, and being pulled up from the pit in which it was, it moves to another; and this is the method of the best husbandry for those accustomed to farm.

Thus also the mind of those in error is, in a way, re-pitted, being as it were pulled up from its former deceit, and planted in other concepts, and in addition to this, in pursuits and knowledge that is pre-eminent, or rather, incomparably better than the former. And that they will bear fruit for eternal time, that is, continuously, with no interruption occurring in between, but rather always and forever. Therefore he also calls them a great people; either

signifying by this their great numbers, or because they have become well-pleasing, having been called through faith in Christ. For those who once surpassed all others in the crimes of idolatry are now better and wiser than many, having a most vigorous love for Christ, and boldness for every good thing whatsoever. For where sin abounded, he says, grace superabounded. Where, then, will they bear fruit? To the place, he says, where the name of the Lord Sabaoth was called upon, Mount Zion, that is, to Mount Zion, where the name of the Lord Sabaoth should be invoked. And by this he signifies the Church, the great and spiritual mountain; for there is nothing lowly in it, nor any of the trodden-down doctrines, but whatever is great and lofty, namely, the knowledge of God who is according to truth, and the very clear declaration of the mysteries of our Savior. And the God-inspired Scripture most often names the Church of Christ Mount Zion, naming the truer Zion spiritually from the first one, which is lofty and a watchtower.

And it has been thrown in between: The nation hoping and trodden down, which is in a part of the river of its country. For the conversion of the Egyptians to God began from a certain part of the country lying beyond the river; so that you may understand one of the cities of the Rhinocolurites, that is, of the cities there. For he says in the following, in the vision of Egypt: In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of the Egyptians, and a pillar at its border to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign to the Lord; and forever in the land of Egypt. And trodden down as crushed by the calamities of war; but hoping, because it too has henceforth placed its hope in Christ, and has brought its neck under His yokes, and has served Him, and has borne the fruit of the ways of piety.

Discourse 11

Behold, the Lord sits upon a light cloud, and shall come into Egypt, and the man-made things of Egypt shall be shaken at His presence, and their heart shall be defeated within them. In what way, then, the land of the Egyptians was saved and caught in the net for piety, clearly through faith in Christ, although it was polytheistic and grievously sick with error, the prophet attempts to teach in these words. For they were as if in deep darkness, being completely ignorant of the one who is by nature God and truly the creator and Lord of all, but attributing reverence to creation; and what is even more irrational than this, showing themselves to be craftsmen of their own gods, and having a multiform swarm of idols in their temples, so as to fashion types of irrational animals, and setting up altars to sacrifice to them. Therefore, where sin abounded in them, it was necessary for grace to abound all the more, and for the physician to shine upon those who were so grievously sick, and for the divine and heavenly light to flash upon those whose hearts were darkened. Behold therefore, he says, the Lord sits upon a light cloud, and shall come into Egypt. But what would he want to indicate by the Lord being seen upon a light cloud? Let us speak as we are able; Some of the interpreters have said that the light cloud is the holy flesh of the Lord, that is, the temple taken from the Virgin;

and they compare it to a cloud, perhaps because of its being freed from the more earthly movements and desires, above and as it were on high. For truly all-holy and freed from all earthly impurity is the holy body of the Savior of us all, Christ. Others, again, have supposed that the holy Virgin was named the light cloud. But I think that perhaps his saying that He sits upon a light cloud may also suggest to us a breadth of other thoughts. For in many ways the blessed prophets, contemplating the glory of God, have written down their visions. For Isaiah says he has seen the Lord Sabaoth on a high and exalted throne, with the highest rational powers standing around in a circle, singing hymns to Him, and saying that heaven and earth are full of His glory. But the all-wise Daniel seats an Ancient of Days upon a throne; and he maintains that a thousand thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood around Him; and he says he also saw one like a Son of man with the coming on clouds, and has placed these things in succession. And Ezekiel likewise saw, he says, a firmament, with the Seraphim beneath; and on a throne he beheld a man, or rather the form of a man, whose upper parts, he says, resembled electrum, but from the loins to the feet was like the appearance of fire.

And in each of such visions, some indication of the glory befitting God, and of the mystery concerning Christ, is cleverly hinted at for us. Therefore nothing prevents understanding in this case also, that the Lord was seen upon a light cloud, both most usefully and necessarily. For the cloud fulfills for us the type of both rain and spiritual dew, and of saving baptism itself. And indeed the blessed Paul says that those of the blood of Israel were baptized in the cloud and in the sea; it hung over them as they were crossing that deep desert, the cloud by day; and a pillar of fire led the way by night. And Christ was prefigured by both, that is, the mystery concerning him, namely, as in faith and holy baptism, justification and sanctification. It was necessary, therefore, for the Lord, coming for the cleansing and transformation of the Egyptians, clearly in a manner befitting God and spiritually, to be seen upon a light cloud. For it was not possible otherwise to wipe away from the soul of those who are astray the stain ingrained in it, except through holy baptism. Of which we also define the cloud to be a type. And the cloud is called light and has been very appropriately named so.

For we are baptized for the putting away of sin, and turning away from impiety as from a truly hard-to-bear burden, through this we become in a manner winged, and learn to set our minds on things above, and to have our hearts on high. But that the Lord sits upon the cloud, I think it means this: The sitting signifies for us either rest, or authority. Therefore Christ rests, not at all in the worship according to the law, but rather in the perfection through holy baptism. And thus he has become king of those on the earth. And he says that the man-made things of Egypt will be shaken from his presence. For with holy baptism already revealed, and Christ henceforth shining forth, it is in every way necessary for the playthings of the ancient deceit to disappear, and the snares of the devil to be seen shattered. And it has ensnared to destruction and ruin every nation and race, so to speak, but especially the Egyptians more than others. For they became more superstitious than others, and perhaps even surpassing in error both Persians and Assyrians; although the divinely-inspired Scripture says about their land, that it is a land of graven images. And he says that the heart of the Egyptians will be conquered, yielding, as I think, the need to be overcome by the evangelical proclamations, although it was long ago warring against God, and opposing the words of truth. Therefore we will find Pharaoh to be clearly such. For the hierophant Moses said clearly:

"The God of the Hebrews has sent us to you, saying: Send forth my people, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But he to them: "Who is he, that I should listen to his voice? I do not know the Lord, and I will not send forth Israel. For their heart within them will be conquered, that is, it will not remain unbreakable, nor hard, nor unadmonished; but rather it will accept the saving proclamation. And Egyptians shall rise up against Egyptians, and a man shall fight his brother, and a man his neighbor. And city shall rise up against city, and nome against nome. And the spirit of the Egyptians within them shall be troubled, and I will scatter their counsel. This, I think, is clearly nothing other than that which Christ said: "Do not think that I came to bring peace to the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and all a man's enemies are the men of his own household. For with the already having been proclaimed of the divine and evangelical proclamation, and of the respect for their parents, these men, having been neglectful, have thought hostile and hateful things toward them, and having all but prepared the law of war, have risen up against their brothers.

For some, advocating for the ancient error, and having unrestrainedly devoted themselves to the deceits of idols, make the word of faith unacceptable. But others, considering it a ridiculous and entirely unholy thing to choose to worship gods crafted by them, have run to the words of truth, and once being far off, have come near, and having been shown to be of the household of Christ through faith, have come within the hope of the saints, and have been made heirs of life eternal. Therefore, when the handmade things of Egypt are shaken, he says, because the Lord has come into it on a light cloud, there will be a great uprising both of family and of kin, and wars both one by one and in multitude, so that even city and nome will make attacks upon nome. And among those who inhabit the land of the Egyptians, a 'nome' is what each city and its surrounding areas and the villages under it are called; and such a term is common among them. Then he says, that The spirit of the Egyptians will be troubled within them, and I will scatter their counsel. And we say that having a different mind against one another, they have been troubled not moderately; but those who are in error, planning uprisings and battles against those who have believed, will find the God of all warring against them and resisting them.

For I will scatter their counsels, he says, that is, I will show all their deliberation to be in vain, and their undertakings against those who have run to me to be entirely unprofitable. And they will consult their gods, and their images, and those who speak from the earth, and the ventriloquists, and the diviners. And I will deliver Egypt into the hands of harsh lords; and harsh kings shall rule over them. In what manner, or at what time at all, the Egyptians were enriched by the saving proclamation, the prophet is eager to make clear. And the account of the history is not unprofitable for those who have once chosen to learn what is useful. Therefore, Vespasian, having laid waste the land of the Jews and having burned Jerusalem, came down with his whole army into the land of the Egyptians, to subdue it also. And he did this according to the will of God, who was subjecting all lands and cities alike to the scepters of the Romans. But the Egyptians thought they could easily escape the yoke of slavery, and be completely invincible, because their country was girded about with very many waters. But they missed their hope. For when God wills to accomplish something, all things yield easily, and things that are unattainable and hard to achieve are paradoxically made easy. For who will turn back the high hand? as it is written.

It happened, therefore, that all their bodies of water, both in lakes and indeed in rivers, completely vanished, so that they could be crossed on foot. And thus, finding the land of the Egyptians stripped of every difficulty, Vespasian conquered it. At that very time, therefore, it happened that those who ministered the divine and saving proclamation entered into the land of the Egyptians, and who were catching the nations through faith in Christ for the

knowledge of the truth. Therefore the Egyptians, he says, having learned of the all-powerful and irresistible assault of the Roman army, and being greatly disturbed, and wishing to find out what ever would be the outcome of the matter for them, will consult their gods, and their images, and those who speak from the earth, and the ventriloquists, and indeed the diviners. For among them there were different kinds of false prophecy, and fabricated prophets. Some pretending to consult the dead; others also belching out words from their own hearts. And others also diviners, that is, those who curiously examine the smoke from sacrifices, and the twitching in the livers of the slaughtered animals wickedly. But there will be no benefit for them, he says, from divination; nor indeed will they find those who were considered to be gods able to help them. For I will deliver Egypt into the hands of harsh masters, and harsh kings will rule over them.

And when you hear ”harsh,” do not think of the most cruel, but rather of the unbreakable, and those who know not how to concede victory to anyone. For such have been the most glorious kings of the Romans, with divine and secret counsel, as I said, subjecting all things to them. And so they have prevailed over all under heaven. Thus says the Lord Sabaoth: And the Egyptians will drink the water that is by the sea; but the river will fail, and will be dried up. The rivers and canals of the river will fail, and every gathering of water will be dried up, in every marsh of reed, and papyrus, and the green marsh-grass, everything around the river, everything sown by the river will be dried up by the wind-blight. And the fishermen will groan, all who cast a hook into the river will groan, and those who cast drag-nets, and those who cast cast-nets will mourn. And shame will seize those who work the combed flax, and those who work the fine linen; and those who work them will be in pain, and all who make beer will be grieved, and their souls will be in anguish. You will connect these things also to what we have just said. For the all-powerful God made the land of the Egyptians, which is so very moist, so dry, that it was passable without sweat for those wishing to go through the lakes and rivers. But the country of the Egyptians is divided in a way;

and some have the arable and most fertile land, and are especially caretakers of vineyards. But others live by the lakes themselves, reaping the things from them. For they are fish-hunters, and cutting papyrus, they are also makers of paper, and they work the combed flax. And the marsh-men, that is, the herdsmen, are so-called; for among them the herds of cattle are beyond number; and the scarcity of bread and wine and other things is very great. Therefore, when the waters fail, he says, they will drink water. For sometimes, digging on the shores, some draw up potable water. But the rivers will fail and will be dried up, and all the canals. And there will be a scarcity of water in every marsh of reed and papyrus. And everything that grows in the waters will be dried up, he says, so that even the hunters of fish will groan, and those who work the combed flax, and those who work them will be in great pain; and in addition to these, those who prepare their beer. For with the waters having failed, they will be in want of everything that knows how to give cheer, and that provides richly the necessities for their life. And these things, as far as pertains to what is signified from the history, have been clearly stated.

But if someone should choose to take the scarcity of waters in another way, and to delve into the depth of more subtle thoughts, he will not go astray from the mark, by comparing to waters the word among the wise men of the Greeks, which is old-womanish and foolish; and comparing to fish the multitude of men, and indeed also to papyrus, reed, and the rest, of which the nature of the waters is the nurse. And indeed to fishermen, and to those whose work would be with the things in the waters, those who know how to net the crowd of the common people, and prepare them to be entangled as if in some nets by the words that carry them away into deceit. These will groan and be grieved, and their souls will be in anguish, since the word that is among them is now in some way ineffectual; which we clearly affirmed, comparing it to waters, because it has completely failed, and all things nourished by it will be dried up. These make the beer; for they do not bring forth the wine that gladdens the heart of man, but a certain counterfeit and useless teaching, and they think they are dignifying it, as it were, with subtle words. For it hints at this, I think, that they say they work the fine linen, which is exceedingly fine. And the combed flax. For their teachings are like splinters of meager speech; but entirely unprofitable, and filling one with cold theorems. For beer is cold ....

And the princes of Tanis will be fools, the wise counselors of the king, their counsel will be made foolish. For when the inescapable disaster was hanging over the Egyptians, and the country was about to be captured, and on the point of submitting its neck to the yokes of others, even if perhaps they did not wish it, he who was chosen to lead, being not moderately disturbed and terrified by unbearable fears, gathered together the so-called wise men, that is, the magicians; and he asked very earnestly in what direction the end of their affairs would go, and in what way they might repel the attack of the war. But they, he says, were so far from being able to say anything of the necessary, that is, true things, that they were even condemned for utter folly. For when God wishes to do harm, the counsel and power of any man would be ineffective. For if he shuts a man up, who will open? according to what is written. Therefore, he calls the false prophets and the caretakers of the temples in it the wise men of Tanis. Who, though thinking highly of their magical art, were proven by the events themselves to be absolutely nothing. How will you say to the king: We are sons of the wise, sons of kings from the beginning? Where are your wise men now? And let them tell you, and let them say: What has the Lord Sabaoth planned against Egypt? On what achievements, he says, will you raise your eyebrow?

Having profited the land of the Egyptians in what way will you be admired by them, or what words do you use, captivating the king; saying that 'We are sons of the wise,' that is, of prophets? Magicians and from magicians; who have all but ruled the whole country, having a famous reputation among the worshipers of idols, and always being with and living with the rulers; since indeed they were accustomed to introduce counsels on all matters to be done, with the falsely named gods whispering to them the hunt for what is advantageous. When therefore you are convicted of speaking falsely, he says, and knowing nothing of the truth, how will you say to the king: 'We are sons of the wise? sons of kings from the beginning?' And in these things the prophetic word has been for us, as it were, against those

who seem to be wise; then he turns to the person of him chosen to lead, and says: 'Where are your wise men now? and let them tell you, and let them say what the Lord Sabaoth has planned against Egypt.' For if they are not impostors, he says, or deceivers and buffoons, and accustomed to speaking falsely, and speaking things only from their own heart, and not from the mouth of the Lord; learn from them the things hanging over the Egyptians, and which will very soon come to pass through the counsel of the Lord Sabaoth.

But the word, as it were, mocks those who do not know God, but are lying as it were in deep darkness, because they are fond of adhering to the worship of idols. Therefore, it is a dreadful thing, or rather also entirely vain, to trust in the deceits of the false prophets; for knowing absolutely nothing at all, either of the things that will be, or of what God may bring, they make false prophecy a pretext for collecting money, and pretending to hear from God, they disgorge things from their own counsel alone, and bewitch the minds of those who adhere to them. For they speak whatever one might wish, and they say only that which they would judge to be pleasing to their hearers. But the divine law commands us to depart from such things. For it is thus: "When you enter into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you one who purifies his son or his daughter in fire, one who practices divination, one who uses omens, and one who interprets signs, a sorcerer, a charmer, a ventriloquist, and a diviner of wonders, and one who questions the dead. For everyone who does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God. And to these things he adds and says: "You shall be perfect before the Lord your God. The For these nations, whom you are dispossessing, will listen to omens and divinations.

But not so has the Lord your God given to you; "A prophet from your brothers will the Lord your God raise up for you, him you shall hear according to all that he will speak to you. For he who pays attention to divinations and omens, to bird-omens and the deceptions of sorcerers, will be entirely ungodly and bare of the boasts of piety. But truly full of good hope is he who pays attention with his mind to the evangelical decrees, and to what Christ might say, casting the vote for truth. For he is the Lord of prophets, and the provider of all knowledge, even if he has been named a prophet, on account of the measure of his humanity. The princes of Tanis have failed, and the princes of Memphis are exalted, and they will lead Egypt astray by tribes. For the Lord has mingled for them a spirit of error, and they led Egypt astray in all their works, as a drunkard goes astray, and he who vomits at the same time. And there will be for the Egyptians no work which shall make head and tail, beginning and end. In a way, the prophetic word smiles for us in these things at the trifles and empty talk of the liars. The ruler of the Egyptians asked his constant companions, the sorcerers and false prophets, who were also called wise men, to what end the things he expected would come for him.

But since they were failing in counsel, and were convicted of speaking falsely, and there was no one for them to bring in a way of helpful counsel and beneficial thoughts; they were indeed reckoned as nothing, and so other wise men were sought; and indeed some have

admired the rulers of Memphis, that is, the priests and magi, those, I say, in Memphis. For they seemed to be as it were select at that time, and having reached the pinnacle of magical experience, they appeared to the idolaters worthy of all account. Therefore, he says, the rulers of Memphis have failed, that is, they were reckoned as nothing, though the leaders of Memphis seemed to be lofty and admired by both the king and all those around him. Nevertheless, they too have led Egypt astray by tribes, that is, by cities and villages; and not just one by one, but indeed also in multitudes. For they have trusted them, although they have nothing of what is necessary to say; for in what way have they trusted? For the Lord, he says, has mingled for them a spirit of error, that is, he has shaken every word of truth from their tongue, so that they were unable to understand or speak anything of the truth. For it was not fitting for the truth to dwell on the tongues of idolaters. Therefore they have led Egypt astray, as a drunkard goes astray, and he who vomits at the same time.

For it is the custom of drunkards to fall into the filth from their vomit. For this reason he says: There will be for the Egyptians no work which shall make head and tail, beginning and end. For they will not undertake bold enterprises. For this is a beginning and a head. Nor indeed will the things done come to a most desired end for them; for this is the tail and the end; for every thought of men is useless, and every aid is unsound, and able to help in no way; For when God brings evil, as I said, and brings his all-powerful hand upon those who leap away, and changes the natures of things to what seems good to him. And in that day the Egyptians will be as women in fear and in trembling, from before the hand of the Lord of Sabaoth, which he himself will bring upon them. And the land of the Judeans will be a terror to the Egyptians. Everyone who names it to them will be afraid, because of the counsel which the Lord has counseled against it. For those who were formerly bold and savage, and despisers of all danger, will be terrified, he says, and will find their heart broken within them, so as to be in no way different from the weakest of women, but as it were to slip into womanly unmanliness.

And the cause of their dread, and of the terror at this, will be the hand of the Lord of Sabaoth, which he himself will bring upon He will cast upon them. And in these things, the hand of the Lord of Sabaoth is defined as the all-powerful will of God, bringing the nation of the Egyptians under the dominion of the Romans. And the divine counsel is altogether invincible, and by all means it is necessary that what seems good to the counsels of the highest nature be accomplished. And in addition to this, the land of the Jews will be a cause of terror to the Egyptians; and what indeed he means by this, let us see precisely; for what is being shown is very obscure. Therefore, the land of the Jews was formerly saved by God defending it, and He rendered it unconquerable, so to speak, to all the surrounding kingdoms of the nations. But although it had so great a helper, it was captured and came under the Romans, and every city has been burned, and the houses and villages have remained empty of men. And what was the reason for them to be captured? Clearly the counsel of the Lord, which he had also counseled concerning it. For it too, along with the others, was handed over to the most powerful hand of the Romans. Therefore, the land of the Jews will be a cause of terror to the Egyptians.

For the words of the false prophets wished to encourage them, that they would be superior to the hand of their attackers, and that they would prevail by resisting. But the very fact that the land of the Jews was handed over to them, even though it once had God as its champion, instilled a terrible fear in them. For from this they expected to be completely and entirely subject to those who wished to lay waste, since the land of the Jews also suffered this, as I said, not because the one who saves had grown weak, but because he was subjecting it to his own commands and bringing it under the scepters of the Romans. But it seems to some to understand the preceding text in another way. For since the God of all visited the Egyptians, and transferred them from darkness to light, and made them cease from the customs of idolatry, and granted them to know at last, who is by nature and in truth God, and the creator of all. For they have believed in Christ; and they have known the Father through him and in him. For this reason, he says, out of very great gentleness and reverence, the land of the Jews will be to them a cause of terror. And when he says "a cause of terror," you will understand the fear that comes from reverence.

For all honor Jerusalem, because Christ was born there, and endured the cross for the salvation of the world, and was laid in a tomb, and rose again, and ascended to the Father. In the past, therefore, the land of the Jews was hated by the Egyptians; for their manner of worship was at war with them. For the former worshiped creation, and the works of their own hands; but the latter have served the all-holy God, and being governed by his laws, have become caretakers of a pious commonwealth. Therefore the land once hated will be to them a cause of terror, as it were, and a basis for reverence, because Christ was born in it, as I said, who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. In that day there shall be five cities in Egypt speaking the Canaanite language, and swearing by the name of the Lord. One city shall be called Asedek. One might very reasonably marvel at the blessed prophet for his brevity in these matters, for he was ignorant of nothing that would happen in the land of the Egyptians at the time of the visitation, but he proclaimed each detail, clearly declaring in what manner the evangelical proclamation was revealed. There shall be, therefore, he says, five cities in Egypt speaking the Canaanite language, that is, Syriac, or that of Palestine. For the Phoenicians and Palestinians speak one language.

And again, the Palestinians and Egyptians are neighbors to one another, and there is nothing in between, but at the borders of Egypt, those which I mean are towards the east, and the sea of the land of the Palestinians, the first entrances, then, appear. Therefore, the land of the Egyptians is adjacent to that of the Canaanites. For this reason also the cities at the borders of Egypt, first receive the saving proclamation; and these are five, of which we say the first is now that of the Rhinocolurites. They also speak in the Canaanite tongue. For it has been the custom for those in these cities, not to adopt the Egyptian language so much as that of the Syrians. Some say that Josephus clearly recorded in his own writings that after departing the land of the Jews, a certain man named Ionias, who was of the blood of Levi and honored with the priesthood according to the law, took possession of these five cities as being neighbors of the Canaanites, having contended with some of his kinsmen, or perhaps even having endured persecution. This man, he says, having gathered an innumerable

multitude of Jews, settled in one of these five cities, which has also been named the city of Asedek, that is, of righteousness. From this, they say, those at the borders of the Egyptians have become accustomed and fond of speaking in the language of the Canaanites. And they will learn, he says, also to swear by the name of the Lord. And this too is remarkable.

For it is the custom for the worshippers of vanities to make an oath by whatever seems best to each of the elements of the world. For some name the heaven, others the sun, and others the man-made things in shrines; but they in no way remember the true God; for they have not known him. But for those who have now known and believed, it is their custom also to swear by his name. Thus also the all-wise Moses brought Israel, who had departed from the worship in Egypt, to the knowledge of the true God, saying: ”You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. And he added to this, that You shall also swear by his name. Therefore, a clear proof of these five cities having accepted the faith is that they swear by none of the vanities, but rather accept the name of the Lord for the purpose of an oath. In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt, and a pillar at its border to the Lord; and it shall be for a sign forever to the Lord in the land of Egypt. For the whole land of the Egyptians was filled with sacred precincts and full of altars; and there were libations and sacrifices everywhere, offered by them on the one hand to the elements of the world; and on the other hand, as I said, also to the images set up in shrines, that is, and to the pillars of demons.

And why do I say this, when, having set up images of irrational animals, they bestowed on them the glory due to God? See, therefore, from what to what the affairs of the Egyptians have changed. For those who were of old more superstitious than all others, and had unbridledly inclined to what is excessive, in that day, he says, that is, at that time, when the saving proclamation shall shine upon them, will accept the worship of the God who is by nature and truly is. For there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of the Egyptians. The saying has great emphasis. For it is spoken with wonder. For how is it not remarkable that even in the land of the Egyptians itself, an altar of the Lord should be seen? And in addition to this, also a pillar at its border to the Lord. And by pillar in these words, he means, as it seems to me, either a holy temple of God, that is, the Church, or perhaps also the first of others raised at its border, that is, the sign of the holy cross, with which it is the custom for believers to be protected. For we always use this thing, overturning every diabolical influence, and repelling the attacks of demons. For the cross is an unbreakable wall for us, and the boast in it is truly saving; ”But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of Christ.

Remarkable, therefore, are the things foretold from the prophecy at that time, but which have now indeed come to fulfillment. For an altar to the Lord; and very many things, and more than can be numbered, throughout the land of the Egyptians; and the sign of the cross is an object of worship for the inhabitants. For they have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. But it seemed to some of the exegetes, instead of the pillar, an inscription to name, and they say that this is the holy Gospel. But let the prudent man again glorify what seems to

be best and well. Because they will cry out to the Lord because of those who afflict them, and the Lord will send them a man who will save them. And the Lord will be known to the Egyptians. And the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day. And they will make sacrifices, and will vow vows to the Lord, and will pay them. Behold for me again the soberness of the prophetic skill. For as if someone were inquiring and saying: What is this matter? And what was the reason for the Lord to come into Egypt on a swift cloud, and to grant them this and that? the prophet, taking up the discourse, answers and says: Because they will cry out to the Lord because of those who afflict them, and the Lord will send them a man who will save them.

For the father of sin, that is Satan, had leapt upon those throughout the whole earth, and placing the yoke of his own wickedness upon all, he beguiled them from the love for God. Having them all but bound under himself, he oppressed them bitterly and unholily; but the nature of the matter, having a terrible and unbearable greed, cried out against his tyranny. Thus you will understand the Egyptians as crying out. And yet how is it not true to say that, not having known the Master of all by nature, they would not have cried out to him at all? But just as the blood of Abel is said to cry out to God, and surely not it itself, having its own voice; but as it were God detesting the very absurdity of the matter; in the same way, I think, one might understand it also in the case of those accustomed to worship the unclean demons. For even if they do not know the God of all, yet because they have been oppressed by Satan, they have cried out in a certain way through the matter itself, surely asking for help for themselves. Thus we say that the Egyptians also cried out to God, because of those who afflict them, that is, those who have made them their own possession, and have oppressed them as with a most bitter slavery, clearly the unclean demons. But the Lord will send them a man who will save them. And who is the man, if not clearly Christ?

that is, the only-begotten Word of God appearing in human form; he has saved not only the Egyptians, but indeed the whole earth. And he has saved by judging; and what is this, 'judging'? Instead of, passing a just judgment upon them. For having subjected Satan who had oppressed them, and with him the unclean demons, to holy decrees, having cast them into Tartarus with chains of darkness, he delivered them to be kept for judgment on the great day to be punished. But those who endured such an unbearable oppression, he both saved and rescued, and made his own worshipers, having flashed the light of truth upon them; and having clothed them with the boasts of freedom. Thus the Savior Himself also says somewhere: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to myself. You see that he has judged the world, and has cast out Satan who long tyrannized over it, and has drawn all to himself. For the Egyptians also have known him. And indeed, having come to know him, they make sacrifices, and they also vow vows, and bring to fulfillment what they have promised. For this is what is sung through the voice of David: "Vow, and pay to the Lord our God. See, therefore, the newness of things. For those formerly accustomed to sacrificing to demons, those who offered worship to Satan and dedicated thank-offerings, and indeed also vows, that is, diligently fulfilling promises;

having been enlightened in mind through Christ, and made radiant by the doctrines of truth, they will flee from the ancient error, and having once known the Creator and Lord of all, to him they offer worship in spirit, fulfilling all-holy vows, and offering sacrifices, no longer those of blood and the slaughter of irrational animals; spiritual rather, as I said, and well-pleasing on account of being blameless. And the Lord will strike the Egyptians with a great plague, and he will heal them with a healing; and they will turn to the Lord, and he will listen to them, and he will heal them. When God visits, he sometimes strikes those who have acted unholily, and executes the judgments for the ways they have provoked him, but he helps them greatly in this way. For he does not inflict the scourge because he is defeated, but rather to change them for the better. For either he transfers them from error to truth, or he teaches those who are uncontrollably inclined to sin the more shameful things to unlearn, and to hasten to turn to what is pleasing to him. Therefore, knowing that this thing is beneficial, I mean being disciplined, the blessed prophets have cried out to him: ”Discipline us, O Lord, but in judgment, and not in wrath. And again: ”O Lord, in affliction we remembered you, in little affliction was your discipline to us. And he said somewhere also to the synagogue of the Jews: You will be disciplined with pain and scourge, Jerusalem.

Therefore, he disciplines those whom he would choose and loves. The prophet says that he will grant this also to the Egyptians: For the Lord will strike them with a great plague, and he will heal them with a healing. For even if they have been given perchance to the Roman generals, and their spearmen, armed with the law of war, have conquered the land, nevertheless having found a place among them for the divine proclamation, they have cast off the loss from having been led astray, and have passed over to the divine and heavenly light, and having rejected that ancient opinion, they have henceforth a sound heart. For they will turn to the Lord, and he will listen to them, that is, those who formerly on account of much impiety were in aversion from God, will learn henceforth no longer to bring their supplications to abominations, making them perhaps for what they would choose, but will rather cry out to him who heals the brokenhearted. And he will not be slow for them, but God will be rather ready to assent, both gracious and well-disposed. Therefore, the cause of every good for every person would be to know the one who is God by nature and in truth, and the Creator and Lord of all things. In that day there will be a highway for the Egyptians to the Assyrians. And the Assyrians will enter into Egypt, and the Egyptians will go to the Assyrians, and the Egyptians will serve the Assyrians.

The blessed Paul writes concerning Christ, the Savior of us all, that he himself is our peace. For not only did he join those on earth with the ministering and holy spirits above, but he also prepared for nations to come together with nations. For before his coming, of intermingling with one another, country and city were estranged, and there were frequent uprisings and assaults of wars everywhere, and the prizes of the strong were the things of the vanquished, and greed was unadmonished, and to wrong whomever one could was considered something glorious, and one of the most admirable things. But peace has come to us, and in this respect, Christ. For since, flashing forth under heaven with the evangelical decrees,

he taught everyone the way of piety, and to hold fast to the love for God and for one another, those former things have long since ceased, and the old things have passed away, and have become new, as it is written. For peace has prevailed everywhere. And this, I think, is what the prophet Isaiah also says somewhere else concerning all the nations: ”And they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into sickles, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

For having all come under one yoke, spiritually the one under God, and bodily the one under the Romans, they live a quiet and undisturbed life, without war, so that with all fear removed, even those formerly most hostile to one another agree in unity of mind. For the Egyptians, he says, will have a road to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians to the Egyptians. And the Egyptians will go to the Assyrians, and the Egyptians will serve the Assyrians, not with the latter imposing a yoke of slavery, but being bound by the bonds of love, and making their interactions most pleasant. Indeed, he names as Assyrians those inhabiting the eastern country. In that day Israel will be a third with the Assyrians and with the Egyptians, blessed in the land, which the Lord of Sabaoth has blessed, saying: Blessed is my people in Egypt, and in Assyria, and my inheritance Israel. Israel was indeed named firstborn among the children. But since he has provoked Christ, he has been placed behind the gentiles, and has, as it were, inherited a second rank. For the time of his conversion has also been kept for him. For it is written that, ”When the fullness of the gentiles has come in, then all Israel will be saved. See then, see him named third among these, among the Assyrians and Egyptians.

And by Assyrians among these he means, as I said, those throughout all the eastern land, but especially Mesopotamia, in which they also say there are genuine worshippers, practicing an asceticism that is a sister and neighbor to that of the Egyptians, so as to have an equal desire and zeal for anything good whatsoever, and indeed also virtue. Therefore the God of all says: Blessed is my people, who are in Egypt and in Assyria; and Israel is numbered third. For he adds that, And my inheritance Israel. And the argument has previously shown us the reason for this; for he has killed the Lord and has been set behind, as David says. And the firstborn has become among the last. In the year that Tanathan came to Azotus, when he was sent by Arna king of the Assyrians, and warred against Azotus, and took it, at that time the Lord spoke to Isaiah, saying: Go and take off the sackcloth from your loins, and loose your sandals from your feet; and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said: Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot, for three years there shall be signs and wonders to the Egyptians and Ethiopians; for so shall the king of the Assyrians lead away the captivity of Egypt and of the Ethiopians, young men and old, naked and barefoot, with their shame uncovered, the shame of Egypt.

Having quite finished the discourse concerning the Egyptians, and having foretold in what manner they will be called through faith to the knowledge of the truth, he again arranges something of what was useful and necessary for the benefit of those from Israel; and what these things are, I shall say in brief. For having spared not even the reverence for the

law through Moses, and indeed having disregarded love for God, they were most unwisely carried away to the point of arriving at polytheistic error, and of worshipping the works of their own hands. And for those who had once slipped into this opinion, no evil was unpracticed. For this reason, the God of all very often sent upon them wars and battles, on the one hand, those from the neighboring nations, on the other hand, those from the Persians and Medes; and those who rose up against Judea, sometimes first ravaging the other nations, caused those of Israel to consort with terrible and unbearable fears.

But they, although it was necessary to propitiate the God of all, and to withdraw from unholy pursuits, and rather to turn to what was pleasing to Him, and to make amends to Him whom they had grieved, by turning from worse things to what is better, and thus to seek salvation from Him alone, and His ever-saving and defending hand—the wretched ones did not do this, but collecting for themselves aid from men, at one time they would call upon some of the neighboring peoples for this, at another time their neighbors the Egyptians, adding iniquity upon their iniquity, as it is written, and whetting as it were to wrath on this very account the all-powerful God. And indeed He said through one of the holy prophets: ”And Ephraim was a senseless dove, and not having a heart; she called upon Egypt, and they went to the Assyrians. And indeed also through the prophet Isaiah himself: ”Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who trust in horses and in chariots. For there are many, and a very great multitude on horses; and they did not trust in the Holy One of Israel, and they did not seek God; and he is wise, he brought evils upon them, and his word shall not be set aside. Therefore, when Tanathan, who was a general of the king of the Assyrians, warred against Ashdod, and took it by force; and this was a neighbor to the land of the Jews;

those from Israel expected immediately and very easily to suffer the same things themselves. And for this reason, hiring the hand of the Egyptians to defend them, they wished to lead them out against the phalanxes of the Assyrians. God, therefore, shows their hope to be in vain; and he foretells clearly, that they themselves will be the work [prey] of the Assyrian power, and they will be captured in due time, and they will be in the rank of the spear-won. For they say that in due time the land of the Egyptians came under the hand of the king of the Assyrians; and in a few years, three, having established himself in it, and having taken it all by force, having a very great number of captives, he returned to his own land. God therefore commands the prophet to take on the appearance that is fitting and customary for captives; that is, nakedness and being barefoot. For those who have conquered have little regard for the captured; but those who have fallen into this misery, whether they are some of the nobly born according to the flesh, or whether of the common multitude, are bound by one bond of wretchedness, having no garment, or rather, anything else contributing to their adornment or rest, but are thus carelessly at the whim of their captors for anything whatever, as coming by necessity.

Therefore, as I said, the divine prophet is commanded to take off the sackcloth from his loins, and to take off his sandals, and to go through the middle of Jerusalem naked and barefoot. And he did this, not being very concerned about seeming respectable, and adding nothing

to the things that please God, even if something might seem grievous and full of blame. But perhaps someone will say to this: Why did he not rather only foretell to those of Israel the things that would happen to the Egyptians in due time? But the one renowned among the prophets has gone thus naked and barefoot, having spared not the seemliness befitting him. To this, then, we say that they were not persuaded by the words of the prophets, but rather even rebuked those willing to foretell the things that would be, saying: "Speak to us other things, and report to us another deceit. For this reason, indeed, and very clearly, the temperate one, the decent one, and full of all virtue, the one crowned with prophetic grace, and renowned in discipline, even takes off his sackcloth, not a delicate garment, but rather thick and cheap; and he removes the sandals from his feet, and walks in such an appearance; so that those who see him, marveling at this very thing, may inquire about the reasons, and being eager to know for what purpose he has done this, they might be fully informed; that they have a vain hope in men;

and that it was necessary for them rather to desire prosperity from above, and to love to make their helper the God who has always saved. Therefore, while the blessed prophet was wandering through Judea naked and barefoot, and no small terror arose among those who saw him, the Lord said, it says: In the manner that Isaiah my servant has walked, naked and barefoot, for three years there shall be signs and wonders for the Egyptians and the Ethiopians. For as I have already said, in a few years, three, the king of the Assyrians, having laid waste the land of the Egyptians, and indeed also the Ethiopians dwelling near it, and neighbors to the Thebans, having a very great number of captives, and having reveled in the misfortunes of the Egyptians; then indeed, then, he returned home again brilliantly. And the Egyptians will be defeated, being ashamed on account of the Ethiopians, in whom the Egyptians had trusted; for they were to them be glory. And the inhabitants of this island will say: Behold, we were trusting to flee to them for help, and they were not able to be saved from the king of the Assyrians, and how shall we be saved? The barbarian nations neighboring the Thebans, these are the Blemmyes, who are also Ethiopians, have practiced most skillfully the removal of arrows. But anointing them with a most deadly poison, they shoot them at their combatants;

and if they should but touch, the one who is struck will surely die, and as if bitten by a snake, he will fall immediately. It was therefore customary and practiced for the Egyptians, when war and battle were imminent, both to hire the phalanxes of the Ethiopians and to be very proud of them; but they were captured with them, being defeated by the valor of the Assyrians. Therefore the Egyptians will be ashamed, he says, of the Ethiopians in whom they trusted. For when they too have been seized and conquered, the inhabitants of this island will say: Behold, we were once trusting to flee to them for help, who were not able to be saved from the king of the Assyrians; and how shall we be saved? Therefore he calls Egypt an island, because it is surrounded by rivers and encircled everywhere with lakes of water; but he introduces its inhabitants as condemning their hope in the Ethiopians. For if they themselves were captured, he says, how could they save those who trusted in them? It is good, therefore, to hope in the Lord, rather than to trust in man; and as the prophet

Jeremiah says: ”Cursed is the man who has hope in man, and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, and the Lord will be his hope. And in some way the prophetic word always benefits us;

even if the history should not happen to have the form of a spiritual narrative, yet the benefit from it is not small. For Paul says that these things happened to the ancients as types, but were written for our instruction.

Discourse 12

Having very well finished the discourse concerning the Egyptians, I say, when and how they will be called through faith to the knowledge of the true God, the prophet, having declared, passes on to another vision concerning the desert. And in this he does not simply make mention to us of an uninhabited and desolate land; but he calls the land of the Babylonians a desert, which once had inhabitants greater in number, both terrible and most warlike; but it was so desolated, when the wrath from above was brought upon it, that it remained completely devoid of men when Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, campaigned against the Babylonians. Of whom the prophet also makes mention elsewhere, saying: ”Thus says the Lord to my anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him. Cities shall not be shut. He took by force the one that was once arrogant and lifted up against every nation, and invincible in battle, I mean Babylon. The prophet now also makes mention of it, and calls it a desert. And in what manner of misery it slipped into this state, he relates clearly for two reasons, as I suppose. Either to make the Jews desist from their hope; ”For Ephraim was a silly dove,” as one of the holy prophets says; ”He called upon Egypt, and went to the Assyrians;

or to comfort those who were grieved, because their country had been ravaged, and the temple itself had been burned, and they had been carried off as captives to Babylon along with their wives and children. This was clearly teaching, that God would also rise up against those who had ravaged them, if they should choose to live according to the law, and become genuine keepers of His divine commandments. Therefore the prophet narrates. However, the loftiness of the vision has changes of persons. For at one time, as an eyewitness of things to come, and having already become a spectator, he explains the things shown to him by God; And at times with a prophetic spirit he proclaims beforehand what will happen in due season; and sometimes he also introduces the person of the Babylonians lamenting themselves over such terrible and unexpected calamities. Thus, as one who has seen the expedition of the Persians and Medes, and indeed also of the Elamites against Babylon, he says thus: They will ride through and pass through the desert. ”As if a whirlwind of winds should pass through a desert. The dust rising up, and almost confounding everything. And he adds: ”Because a dreadful and harsh vision was announced to me. For the sight alone of the enemies is exceedingly sufficient, and the most valiant multitude of fighters prepared

for war, to create a harsh dread in those who behold them. But he says he has not only seen, but also, 'It was announced to me,' he says;

for along with the sight, he was also taught the outcome of the events, clearly by God. "He who deals treacherously, deals treacherously, and he who acts lawlessly, acts lawlessly. Unrebuked, he says, is the audacity of the attackers. For they are not kindled to gentleness by human reasonings; nor does any of them consider any of the things that have come to pass; but he acts lawlessly without restraint, and deals treacherously according to what seems good to him, with no mercy whatsoever; For they do not look to mercy, but their zealous work will be, he says, to act lawlessly and to deal treacherously. He said something like this also through the voice of the same, to the inhabitants of Assyria: Behold, I am bringing upon you the Medes, who do not reckon silver, nor do they have need of gold. They will shatter the arrows of young men. For when God brings wrath upon the transgressors, there will be nothing that can help. Rather, a beast-like mind dwells in those who wish to ravage those against whom they might run. Upon me are the Elamites, and the ambassadors of the Persians are coming against me. Now I will groan, and comfort myself. Therefore my loins were filled with feebleness, and pangs seized me, as a woman in labor; I have done wrong in not hearing, I have hastened in not seeing. My heart wanders, and iniquity overwhelms me, my soul is set in fear. The speech in these things has the power of personification.

For the Assyrian is introduced, both fearing the attack, and not ignorant of the phalanxes of the enemies, and against whom is the purpose of the war for them. For not against any others, but 'against me,' he says, 'have the Elamites rushed, and the noblest of the Persians.' I will groan then and comfort myself. For to those who are in extreme calamity, there seems to be a certain kind of comfort, to lament and to wail. For a tear is squeezed out from pain. But it is a strange thing if the Assyrians lament, having always been hard and arrogant, exceedingly disdainful toward all the nations, and thinking that resistance would not be easily met. But those so bold and puffed up with superhuman thoughts, they receive womanly tears, and compose a lament for themselves, being broken into weakness before the experience of war. For my loins were filled with feebleness, and pangs seized me as a woman in labor. But for what reason will such things happen to you, he says, O Assyrian? You might say to the one asking: 'Yes,' he says; 'for I know that I have offended the God who rules all things through much sin.' I have done wrong in not hearing, I have hastened in not seeing. In this, he says, I have wronged myself, because I have greatly practiced being hard of hearing, and I made it a work of haste not to see, that is, who is by nature and truly God.

For I heard of the worship of the Jews, I took the holy city by force, I have sacked the temple. I had from hearsay moderate knowledge of the things commanded to those of Israel. Rather, also the prophet Jonah was sent from God, preaching and saying: "Yet three days, and Nineveh will be overthrown; and having been terrified at once by the threat, I repented, but I did wrong again by not hearing, and I have made it a matter of haste not to see what it was necessary to see. For my heart has wandered. And sin has made me submerged,

burying me in a way. For this very reason my soul has stood in fear; for I have come to be in dread of the last things. These, then, would be the voices of the Assyrians. For it is the custom of the holy prophets to personify the voices, for the benefit of those who hear. Prepare a table, drink, eat. Arise, O rulers, prepare shields. I said that the word of prophecy is at times very artfully varied into many different persons; and it is absolutely necessary for those who would choose to understand and to report correctly to observe such things accurately. For thus the knowledge would become clear, and have nothing steep or difficult regarding what is said. It has therefore introduced the person of the Assyrians weeping for themselves, and crushed into cowardice, and travailing in unbearable dread of the evils that are about to be.

Then it mentions the time when it will happen that they are captured and fall into incurable calamities; and indeed it also makes clear the cause of the [wrath] that came upon them. For the blessed Daniel has written that "Belshazzar the king made a feast for his nobles, for a thousand of them; before the thousand was the wine. Then he says that he also impiously brought forth the holy vessels taken from Jerusalem at that time, and he himself drank from them, and his concubines, and his wives. This was nothing other than boasting against the glory of God; and exalting himself over the one who presides over those from Israel, as one who had been unable in any way to help his own people. So while Belshazzar was drinking, and, so to speak, mocking the holy vessels; There appeared, he says, the knuckle of a hand, and it wrote on the wall, Mene, Tekel, Peres; interpreting the writing, the divine Daniel said to the Assyrian; God has torn apart your kingdom, and has divided it, and it has been given to the Medes and Persians. Of this very history, I think, he now makes mention, and the prophet says as if to the rulers themselves, that is, the nobles, and indeed to Belshazzar; Prepare a table, drink, eat; arise, O rulers, prepare shields; live lavishly, he says, at riotous tables; the saying is in a way customary; be sated, drinking insatiably. And what after this?

Wars will succeed the festival, and the suffering will not be long in coming; but from the drinking itself you will run to arms, and you will seek for shields. For it is truly very hard to exalt oneself against God, and to be insolent against the glory beyond which there is nothing of all that exists. For Israel was given to the Assyrians; since God had inflicted upon them the necessity of suffering captivity because of their great sin. But it was not right for those who had conquered to fall into such ignorance and senseless thoughts, as to suppose and think they had overcome the hand of him who willed to save them, and had become better than the ineffable power of the one who is above all and who has raised up creation as God. For thus said the Lord to me: Go, set a watchman for yourself; and whatever you see, report it. And I saw two horsemen riders; a rider on a donkey, and a rider on a camel. It is the custom for the holy prophets at the time of the vision of God, or of the visions, to collect their mind as if within themselves, and with undistracted thought to contemplate the things shown by God, and as if having come to be on high and in a certain secret watchtower, to hearken to the divine words. And so one of the holy prophets said:

"I will stand on my watch, and I will mount upon a rock, and I will look out to see what he will say in me, and what I shall answer to my reproof. The prophet now teaches something of this sort, and says that he heard from God: Go, set a watchman for yourself, and whatever you see, report it; and he was not commanded to set up some other watchman, but surely to prepare himself for a vision of God, and as some watchman having come on high with his mind, to look down upon the things that will be, and to receive with sight the spectacle of the events. I saw therefore, he says, two horsemen riders; a rider on a donkey, and a rider of a camel. And what this is, the lament of the Assyrians will teach clearly. For it said: Against me are the Elamites, and the ambassadors of the Persians come to me; and the Elamites are a barbarian nation, practiced in riding on camels. But who else could the rider of the donkey be but the chosen men of the Persians? whom they say indeed go to battle mounted on mules and with canopies, so that no toil might unnerve them. But when they see the place of battle, then, having leaped down from the canopies, they use chosen horses. Therefore, he calls the one who rides on mules the rider of a donkey.

Although it is also likely that the prophet saw, in another way, the band of enemies mounted on horses, and a following multitude of camels and mules, prepared perhaps for the transport of the spoils. For elsewhere he says this somewhere: "In the affliction and the distress, a lion and a lion's whelp; from there also vipers and the offspring of flying vipers, who carried their wealth upon donkeys and camels; For he called Cyrus a lion and a lion's whelp, and the Persians and Medes under him. But vipers and the offspring of flying vipers: this is, those from other nations practiced in darting swiftly and moving as if flying, for whom riding camels is a custom and practice. Listen to a great hearing, and call Uriah to the Lord's watchtower. The prophet has confessed that he saw some two horsemen, of a camel and of a donkey; and who these might be, we have already said before. But since he has seen, he is then commanded to hasten to learn the things resulting from the attack, and the terrible accounts of the Chaldeans' calamity. For such a hearing is great indeed. Therefore the things that happened to Babylon were dreadful, and beyond all description, and reaching the extreme of evils. For Cyrus took it in such a way as to make it completely desolate, and to destroy those in it, and netting even from the caves those who had expected to be able to hide at all.

And indeed the God of all said to him, that I will give you dark, hidden, unseen treasures; I will open them to you. And somewhere the person of Jerusalem is introduced, speaking to Babylon: Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, because I have fallen and I will rise again; for if I sit in darkness, the Lord will give me light. I will bear the Lord's wrath, because I have sinned against him, until he vindicates my righteousness, and executes my judgment, and brings me out into the light; and I will see his righteousness. And my enemy will see, and shame will cover her, who says to me, Where is the Lord your God? my eyes will look upon her. Now she will be for trampling like mud in the streets. Days of smearing brick, that day is your erasure; on which, clearly, it was sacked by the Persians and Medes and Elamites, and was made desolate, as I said. Listen therefore, he says, to a great hearing, that is, the long and terrible accounts of the capture, and call Uriah to the Lord's watchtower. They say

that a certain Uriah was one of the most distinguished among the priests according to the Law. Take, therefore, he says, Uriah as a witness of the watch, that is, the vision, shown to you, and let him be taught by you the things that are to come. For since, disbelieving the prophets' accounts, they were saying:

"Speak other things to us, and announce to us another delusion," for this very reason and very providentially, the God of all made the most honored among the Jews witnesses of the things shown at times, as in a prophetic vision, to those who have the spirit of prophecy, so that if they were not willing to be persuaded by their words, they might at least trust those who were honored among them with the priesthood according to the Law. And he said: I stood all day, and in the camp I stood all night; and he himself comes, a rider of a pair of horses. The prophet, having been commanded to set up a watch for himself, and to announce clearly what was shown to him by God; I have stood, he says, continually by day, and through the whole night; and behold, he himself comes, a rider of a pair of horses. Who then is he? The Persian and the Elamite, that is, the leader of the army, that is, Cyrus. And he answered and said: "Babylon is fallen, and all her images, and her handmade things have been shattered to the ground. The prophet saying, "Behold, he himself comes, a rider of a pair of horses," in what way the things of the assault will be done, and having seen it very well not long after, then God answers and says: "Babylon is fallen," that is, the arrogant one, the insolent one, the hammer of the whole earth, as Jeremiah says;

the one treading upon all nations like a wild beast, the one raising a proud neck, devastating countries and cities. "Is fallen," he says, that is, she has perished utterly; she is gone and has been trampled, and is seen utterly cast down, lying henceforth under the feet of her captors. And all her images and handmade things have also been shattered. For it is a land of graven images, as another of the holy prophets says; but she trusted greatly in falsely-named gods; and expecting to be saved by their aid, she has been trampled with them, and together with her own objects of worship has been shattered. "Hear, you who are left behind, and are in pain, hear what I heard from the Lord Sabaoth, the God of Israel has announced to us. Israel was carried away captive, and served the Babylonians, God permitting him to be entangled in such long calamities on account of his great sin. However, many had remained both in Jerusalem and in Judea; but they continued groaning and suffering, their land having been ravaged; and the temple itself having been burned, and Jerusalem utterly laid waste. The prophet, therefore, usefully weaves the vision as a remedy of aid for their consolation, and says to them: "Hear, you who are left behind and are in pain, hear what I heard from the Lord Sabaoth. The God of Israel has announced it to us.

For he knew, he knew that the calamity of the Babylonians would be a cause of joy for them, and that the accounts of what happened to those who had grieved them would be a manner of consolation to those who had been so ravaged.

Discourse 13

And I think it is necessary to first set forth the subject of the vision before us. For thus and not otherwise will those who encounter it understand. Therefore, two sons were born to Isaac, Esau and Jacob; and Esau was called Edom, that is, earthly; for such was his life, and for one meal he sold his birthright, as it is written. But Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in a house; for so the holy Scripture said concerning him; And from Jacob, who was also renamed Israel, came the Jews; and from Esau, that is, Edom, the Idumeans, that is, the Hagarenes, and these are Saracens. Therefore, the Idumeans were brothers and kinsmen to those of Israel; and the land of the Jews and the land of the Idumeans were bordering and adjacent to each other. But neither their kinship, nor their being neighbors to one another, awarded harmony to the peoples. For the Idumeans, living according to the customs and laws of the Greeks, were at variance, and they frequently plundered the land of the Jews, and dared to do the most shameful things to them. And indeed, when those of Israel, having cast off the yoke of the Egyptians' oppression, were returning to the land promised to their fathers, "Moses," it says, "sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: 'Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that has found us; and our fathers went down into Egypt, and we sojourned in Egypt for many days;

and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers; and we cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard our voice, and sending an angel, he brought us out of Egypt; and now we are in the city of Kadesh, from part of your borders: We will pass through your land; we will not pass through fields, nor through vineyards; nor will we drink water from your cistern; we will go by the king's highway; we will not turn aside to the right, nor to the left, until we have passed your borders. And Edom said to him: You shall not pass through me; but if not, I will come out against you with war. Do you see how hard and unmerciful the Idumaeans have become, and this toward their brothers? But their crimes are not limited to these things; for they have also done something else unholy and cruel. For the Babylonian captured the land of the Jews, and after burning the temple and ravaging Israel, he wrought things beyond all description against the inhabitants. Then some of those who had escaped from the Persian sword, as to a neighboring country of the Jews, and as with brothers and kinsmen were eager to take refuge; but they, although it was necessary to help them as brothers, and to pity them for having suffered miserably, and indeed also to receive them kindly, they leaped upon them like wild beasts. And they made the fugitives the work of their own cruelty.

And for this very reason, the God of all strongly accused them through the voice of the prophet Obadiah, for it is written thus: "In that day, says the Lord, I will destroy the wise men out of Idumaea, and understanding from the mount of Esau; and your mighty men from Teman shall be dismayed, to the end that every one from the mount of Esau may be cut off, by slaughter and for the impiety against your brother Jacob. And shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever, from the day that you stood on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces; and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem; even you were as one of them. See then how they became imitators of the Persian cruelty, and those who expected to be saved, going for this reason as to brothers and neighbors, they killed pitilessly. So then, after the Babylonians had captured the land of the Jews, and were returning at last to their own land, they made the ravaging of Idumaea a byproduct of their journey. For they took them all, and very easily, God letting loose his wrath upon them. And so he said again through the voice of Obadiah: "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, so shall it be to you; your recompense shall be returned upon your own head. This then, in brief, is the subject of the vision before us.

And indeed we must proceed to each point, to speak of what is written, as far as is possible. Call to me from Seir. This is the voice of the all-ruling God saying to the prophet, that as soon as war descends upon the land of the Idumaeans, all who inhabit it will turn to flight. And Seir is a very large mountain of Idumaea, under which is said to be a splendid city among them. Therefore, as those from Mount Seir, that is, the Idumaeans, are about to be put to flight as never before, he says, Call to me, that is, let those fleeing from there come to Judea. For just as they mocked those from Israel taking refuge among them, so they will be mocked, he says, for doing the same things, and being overcome by the hand of the Babylonians. Guard the battlements, I will keep watch in the morning and at night. The word is to the Idumaeans, with God all but reproaching them for the futility of their labors, namely, those for repelling their enemies, while in no way striving for salvation and help from him. For when the attack of the Assyrians was about to happen, and they were blocking the entrances to the cities, they were guarding the battlements. But the matter was useless to them. For their cities were captured, and there was absolutely no one who was saved. Therefore the word from God to them was made in character:

"Yes," he says, "you are planning right and proper things, guard the battlements. Then, as if from them, "I keep watch in the morning, and at night. "But unless the Lord guards the city, in in vain the watchman kept awake. For it was necessary rather to seek help from above and from God, and not indeed rather to trust in stones. For thus they say the walls of their cities have been shaken down, so that a stone was not seen lying upon a stone. If you seek, seek, and dwell with me, in the evening you will sleep in the thicket. For if indeed you wish, he says, to seek help, seek it from me who am able to save, and dwell with me, that is, you will be mine and think my thoughts, removing yourself from the worship of falsely-named gods. The Savior says something of this sort: "He who loves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also let my servant be. Therefore, when the phalanx of the enemies is

overrunning, he says, all the land of the Jews, outside of houses or cities, you will also sleep in the evening in the thicket, that is, you will lodge together with the wild beasts; and you will encamp also in the marshes, and thus finally you will pay the penalty for your cruelty towards your brothers.

In the way of Dedan, bring water to meet the thirsty, you who dwell in the land of Teman, meet with bread those who flee because of the multitude of the 70,500 fleeing, and because of the multitude of the wandering, and because of the multitude of the sword, and because of the multitude of the drawn bows, and because of the multitude of the fallen in the war. He accuses the Idumeans of having committed unholy acts, just as I have already said before, also through the voice of Obadiah the prophet. For although it was necessary to help the people of Israel who had fallen into incurable misfortunes, having compassion on them, this they did not do; but they appeared unloving and harsh, and wilder than the cruelty of the Assyrians, cruelly slaughtering those who had managed to escape their hands at all. Therefore, what they should have done to be well-pleasing, having not done this ..... saying: In the way of Dedan bring water to meet the thirsty, you who dwell in the land of Teman, meet with bread those who flee.

For it was necessary, it was necessary, he says, for you, who hold the southern country—for Teman is interpreted as South—to bring bread and water to those fleeing and wandering in the way of Dedan, and to be eager rather to accomplish the things befitting the love owed to brothers, and not to oppose like beasts those who have already suffered, leaping upon them in a way, and burdening the yoke of those already oppressed by such bitter and untamable misfortunes. Therefore it was necessary to meet the fugitives kindly. For they were turned to flight, disregarding houses and cities, because of the multitude of the sword and of the terrible bows; and because they have fallen in great numbers, and the dead among them have become more than can be numbered. For thus the Lord said to me: Yet a year, as the year of a hireling, the glory of Kedar will fail, and the remnant of the bows of the mighty sons; Kedar will be small, because the Lord the God of Israel has spoken. That the destruction of Idumea has drawn near, and has, as it were, come within the doors, and that they will altogether and in every way dwell for destruction, as the Babylonians burn down their cities and ravage the whole country, he clearly foretells; For there will be, he says, one year in between, and the archers of Kedar, although, he says, having a reputation not unadmired for this very thing, will fail and perish; and the prophecy is true.

For the Lord the God of Israel has spoken; and the truth will in no way lie. Moreover, by the year of a hireling he means that which is precisely measured out. For one who has entered into the toils of service, and has hired himself out to another, always somehow examines minutely and precisely the measure of the time of his hire. And let these things be said now, as far as pertains to the letter and indeed the history. But applying the power of the word to the holy Church and her nurslings, and indeed also to the flocks of the heretics, we say this: that very often the hordes of the Greeks attack those who are accustomed to think rightly, and the creator and Lord of all things by nature and in truth of those who chose to

worship. Then, subjecting them to bitter persecutions, they sometimes inflict unbearable labors upon them. And likewise also those who have the poison of unholy heresies in their mind and heart, and although they steal the name of Christians, and feign brotherhood toward us, sometimes surpass the cruelties of the enemies, being both unloving and harsh. For are they not, being of such a kind, convicted of these things by the facts themselves? But God will not endure them forever, nor will He at all tolerate the exceedingly unloving, but will rather bring upon them the things that come from wrath and justice.

Discourse 14

Having foretold the capture of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Idumeans, the prophet, comes to the holy city itself, that is, to Jerusalem; and he usefully relates beforehand the things that will happen to it at times from divine wrath; so that they might know that the God of all is the ruler of justice, or rather, justice itself; He does not simply honor and accept and deem worthy of care one who has become His own, through being instructed by the law; but rather He tests the life that each has lived, and to those who are good in disposition He distributes good things; but He considers a lover of wickedness a stranger and in no way related to Him, even if he happens to be beloved on account of the fathers. The people of the Jews, therefore, out of very great ignorance, thought both that they would be utterly indestructible to their enemies, and that with no one at all attacking them, they would live a quiet life in very great prosperity, even though they were offending God and had turned to very great impiety. For they had worshiped idols, and having set up images and altars under oak and poplar trees, they offered sacrifices and performed libations to vain things, having utterly disregarded the glory due to the all-holy God. And so, through the voice of Jeremiah, He says to them concerning Jerusalem:

"And do not say, 'This is the temple of the Lord,' because unless you thoroughly correct your ways and your practices, I will make this house like Shiloh. And again He accused them through Micah the prophet, saying: "Her leaders judged for a bribe, and her priests gave answers for a price, and her prophets divined for silver, and they leaned upon the Lord, saying: Is not the Lord in our midst? No evil will come upon us. Therefore, on your account, Zion will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become like a fruit-keeper's hut, and the mountain of the house like a grove of the forest. And the divine John also made it clear to them that the judgment of God comes swiftly against everyone who is accustomed to sin, saying: "Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Produce then fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think of saying to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you that God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. And now the axe is laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, since Israel had an unbridled impulse to sin, and was devoted, as I just said, to the false worship of idols, God reveals beforehand through the prophet the future capture of Jerusalem at times, and says:

What has happened to you now, that you have all gone up to vain housetops? The city was filled with those shouting; your wounded are not wounded by the sword, nor are your dead the dead of war. It seems, then, to indicate here the devastation in the times of Jeconiah; and to accuse those of Israel strongly, as not even in the evils themselves, and so exceedingly knowing how to achieve in the most severe calamities what leads to benefit, and what was to be for them the cause of favor from above. For it was necessary for them, weeping and lamenting, to go up to the house of God, to profess repentance, and to ask for forgiveness for the things in which they had provoked Him, and to seek the helping hand from Him alone. And He Himself taught this, saying through one of the holy prophets: "Gird yourselves and beat your breasts, O priests; lament, you who minister at the altar. Enter in, sleep in sackcloth, you who minister to God, for the sacrifice and the libation are withheld from your house. Sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, gather the elders, all the inhabitants of the land, into the house of your God, and cry out earnestly to the Lord, 'Alas, alas for the day!'. Therefore it was necessary for them, by doing these things, to appease the one who had been provoked, who has power to save.

But they, perhaps not even admitting into their minds that it was fitting to do these things, went up to the rooftops of their houses, and there were beatings of the breast everywhere, and lamentations of children, being consumed perhaps by hunger and thirst. For it is necessary that these things happen to besieged cities. For this reason he says: What has happened to you now, that you have all gone up to vain rooftops? For why, he says, even in such unbearable terrors, and when your concern is for the ultimate things, and the entire struggle, have you not cried out to God, but have instead jumped up to the rooftops, although this action benefits you in no way? For this reason he also calls them vain rooftops. Why was the city also filled with those shouting? Not indeed to God, but crying out in vain, and, as it were, being immoderately distressed at the evils that had happened within the gates. The lamentation should have been for repentance; the tears should have been shed before God. Behold, he says, before engaging in battle, before taking up the sword, before practicing resistance, the city has become full of the dead. It is therefore useful and necessary for salvation to know how to achieve the things through which one might have God as a savior, even if one should be in bitter calamities. For indeed the blessed David sings and says: "O Lord God of hosts, blessed is the man who hopes in You.

But it should be known that he calls Jerusalem the valley of Zion. For Zion is a mountain, or on a mountain; but Jerusalem lies at its foothills, whence he also calls it the valley of Zion. All your rulers have fled, and those who were captured are harshly bound, and the strong ones in you have fled far away. Having abandoned, as I said, God the Savior of all, the peoples of the Jews, and having taken courage in human aid, expected to be saved. But when the enemies came, and the fear of suffering was at its height, and they saw the phalanxes of the Assyrians already surrounding the country, or rather the holy city, those in authority and in the highest honors fled; just as from a sinking ship they swam away to save themselves, having as it were bid farewell to those who had hoped in them. Therefore all have fled, he says, who formerly promised to save you, and were thought to have an

unconquerable hand; and indeed those who were captured are harshly bound. For Zedekiah was captured along with his children; and the Babylonians slaughtered them, but him, with his eyes gouged out, they carried away to their own land. ”Vain therefore is the salvation of men,” according to what is written. But one must cleave to God alone, crying out that wise saying: ”For I will not hope in my bow, and my sword will not save me.

For the Lord of hosts alone saves those who love Him, and delivers from every evil, so that they say rejoicing: ”For you have saved us from those who afflict us, and have put to shame those who hate us. For this reason I said, Leave me alone, I will weep bitterly; do not strive to comfort me for the ruin of the daughter of my people, because it is a day of trouble and destruction and trampling from the Lord Sabaoth, in the valley of Zion. This the voice of the prophet all but weeping and lamenting over the misfortunes of the race. And by the fact that he begs off those who have the strength to comfort, he reveals the magnitude of the wound, as if it has no cure; but rather has been brought upon them unbearably, having a bitter and incorrigible assault. For a day of confusion and destruction and trampling from the Lord Sabaoth has been brought upon them. ”For who shall turn back the high hand? For if the assault by the Assyrians were done without the wrath from above, there would be very great hope for those in distress, of being able at times to overcome those attacking them, as God who rules all things extends to them his ever-saving hand. But since it is he himself who strikes, and the trampling is from the Lord, who will overturn it? ”For if he shuts a man in, who will open? he says.

They wander from the small to the great, they wander upon the mountains. Marvel at the sobriety of the Spirit-bearer. For since he said that the confusion and the destruction and the day of trampling would be brought from the Lord Sabaoth, lest anyone think that the divine wrath has leaped upon them in vain, he immediately cuts off the suspicion of those who are sometimes expected out of levity to arrive at this foolishness; and he adds the defense, so that the creator of all things might appear a just judge. ”They wander,” he says, ”from the small to the great, they wander upon the mountains. And what this is, you will learn from the very words of God. For he said somewhere to the blessed prophet Jeremiah: Have you seen what the house of Israel has done to me? She has gone up on every high mountain, and under every leafy tree, and has committed fornication there. For occupying the high places of the mountains, they built both hills and sacred precincts. Then, having fashioned an idol as they saw fit, they brought sacrifices to it, and having utterly disdained piety towards God, they said to the wood, 'You are my Father,' and to the stone, 'You gave me birth.' So, have few suffered this? By no means, he says; for the whole race and every household has gone astray, small and great. And so he said again to the blessed prophet Jeremiah:

”And you, do not pray for this people, and do not make supplication for them in petition and prayer, because I will not listen. Or do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? Their sons gather wood, and their fathers kindle a fire; and their women knead dough to make cakes for the host of heaven; and they have

made libations to other gods, in order to provoke me to anger. Therefore, they have been punished by a holy decree. For having dedicated their worship to creation and having served the works of their own hands, they themselves have drawn down upon their own heads the things from divine wrath. For not in vain are nets spread for the winged, as it is written; and God brings punishments upon the one who dishonors his glory, having inclined with an erring mind toward anything that is out of place. But the Elamites took up quivers, men riders on horses, and a gathering for battle. And your choice valleys will be, they will be filled with chariots, and the horsemen will block your gates, and they will uncover the gates of Judah; and on that day they will look to the choice houses of the city, and they will uncover the hidden things of the houses of the citadel of David.

He raises the narratives to a height, and all but paints the assault of the war, and terrifies the listeners with fears, skillfully driving them to the necessity of choosing to repent; therefore, as if beholding the companies already present, and having come inside the gates, he says such things. And the Elamites, as from a Persian city, are named from it. But some say that they are Saracen horsemen, and these are horse-archers and among the most accurate, harsh and unbending, and not knowing how to show mercy. And that they are also superior in number he teaches by saying: Your choice valleys will be filled with chariots, and that the horsemen will block your gates, so that those wishing to drive through are severely constricted; and having rushed in, they will search every splendid house, and they will uncover the hidden things of the houses of the citadel of David, that is, the wealth of the kings. For those from the tribe of Judah ruled, from which the blessed David also came. And let these things, again, be said with a view to history. But if indeed they should invade the human mind like enemies, either swarms of foolish thoughts, or even carnal pleasures; they seize it as a captured city; and they destroy all its spiritual wealth, banishing all piety, and stripping it of the splendid accomplishments of virtue. For this reason the divinely-inspired Scripture says: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for healing will pacify great sins.

For when such passions are checked, they are diminished, and sobriety benefits those who use it. But by impulses that are, as it were, unrestrained and unreproved, always creeping toward what is worse, they shake from their foundations those who are spiritually drowsy. And they saw that they are many, and that they diverted the water of the old pool into the city, and that they tore down the houses of Jerusalem to fortify the wall for the city. And you made for yourselves water between the two walls, inside the old pool, and you did not look to the one who made it from the beginning, and you did not see the one who created it. Again he accuses the people of the Jews, that is, the leaders and those adorned with the highest honors, as having erred from sound reasoning, and having acted foolishly, not doing what was likely to be able to save Jerusalem in its peril, but such things as made the wrath that had come upon them fiercer, in a way whetting and making even greater the indignation against them of God, who rules over all, since he was overlooked, and no one still trusted in him; but rather by their own efforts and human undertakings, those from Israel supposed they would be able to overpower the hand of their enemies.

For they say that having numbered the houses of the city, then having measured out the stored water as if by estimations, they realized that they are many, and they diverted the water of the old pool into the city, so that they might have, as they themselves thought, what would be able to suffice, even if the time of the siege should somehow become longer. And in addition to this, they made fortifications for the walls, he says, by tearing down the houses of the city. And you did not look to the one who made it from the beginning, and you did not see the one who created it. For it was necessary, it was necessary, he says, not to be bold in your own powers, that is, your good fortunes, rather, but to raise the eye of the mind to the one who always walled the holy city. For, he says, 'Mountains are round about her, and the Lord is round about his people,' which he also promises to her through the voice of the prophet, saying: And I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in the midst of her; but you considered the matter of no account, he says, and you overlooked the things from God, as if in no way needing help from above, you have most foolishly taken courage in bulwarks of stones.

But it were far better for you to have called upon the invincible hand, and to have sought to receive the things from the gentleness and love for mankind of God, to name him Savior and Redeemer, and being so disposed, to shed a tear in repentance. And the Lord of Sabaoth called in that day for weeping and for mourning, and for baldness, and for girding with sackcloth, but they themselves made gladness and joy, slaying calves, and killing sheep, so as to eat meat, and to drink wine, saying: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. And these things are revealed in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, that this sin shall not be forgiven you, until you die. It is true that according to what is written: "When the wicked one comes into a depth of evils, he scorns; this one might see that the people of Israel had suffered. For having been in fear of every evil, and seeing the danger from the cruelty of the Assyrians hanging over them, then, when it was necessary to appease God by lamenting their own indolence, and to make lamentation and shaving, and girding with sackcloth, as the time called for this, they turned to the very opposite.

For, as if giving up, and as it were, having become callous to everything, they pursued luxuries, and were eager to perform the works of gladness, slaughtering calves and sheep, getting drunk and indulging in excessive luxuries, and indeed also uttering to one another things born of despair and of a wild and careless mind: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. For they likely thought that God would also be deaf to such things; But these things are revealed, he says, in his ears; and this sin shall not be forgiven you until you die, that is, you shall certainly go down to death and destruction, and because of this sin of yours. Therefore, in days of wrath, that is, for those shattered by the fears from temptations, we must not be supine towards indolence, but rather mourn and approach the good-loving God in tears, and by afflicting ourselves with the toils of fasting, seek to be pitied, crying out that verse through the voice of the Psalmist: "Behold my humiliation and my toil, and forgive all my sins. But since the prophet says in these things that the Lord Sabaoth called in that day for weeping and lamentation, and shaving, and girding with sackcloth, I thought

it necessary to weave the words of Micah, or rather those given by God through the prophet, into my discourse. And it is written thus: ”And now says the Lord our God:

Turn to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in lamentation, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and full of mercy, and repents of evils. Who knows if he will turn and repent, and will leave behind him a blessing, a sacrifice and a libation to the Lord our God? Sound the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, proclaim a service, gather the people, sanctify the Church, select the elders, gather the infants that suck the breasts, let the bridegroom come forth from his chamber, and the bride from her bridal-canopy. Between the foundation and the altar the priests who minister to the Lord will weep, and they will say: Spare, O Lord, your people, and do not give your inheritance to reproach, for the nations to rule over them, so that they may not say among the nations, Where is their God? Therefore, when God at that time was calling for weeping and lamentation, and shaving and girding with sackcloth, they made merry, sharpening against themselves even more greatly into an unrestrainable wrath the one who is able to destroy and to save. Thus says the Lord Sabaoth: Go to the treasury, to Somnas the treasurer, and say to him: What are you doing here, and what have you here? that you have hewn a monument for yourself here, and have made a monument for yourself on high, and have inscribed a tent for yourself in the rock?

Behold now, the Lord Sabaoth will cast out and destroy a man, and he will take away your robe, and your glorious crown, and will throw you into a great and immeasurable land, and there you will die; and he will turn your beautiful chariot into dishonor, and the house of your ruler into a thing to be trampled, and you will be removed from your stewardship and from your position. Somnas became a treasurer of money, and of what kind is not yet clear, whether of the sacred funds, and those distributed to the temple, or of the royal funds, but he seems rather to have been in charge of the collection of the sacred funds, and of those things necessarily and needfully spent at times for the repair of sacred vessels. They say that he, being also of the blood of Levi, was seen to be distinguished by the boasts of the high priesthood. A certain proud and he was exceedingly arrogant, and harsh towards those who offended him, and leaping upon acts of greed, and overcome by shameful gains, and a lover of ostentation, and always hunting for honors from men. For this very reason and quite rightly hated by God, therefore when Judea was about to be utterly laid waste, and Jerusalem itself to be captured, when the victorious Babylonians also transported Israel as a captive to their own land, Shebna was making a conspicuous monument for himself, and he was putting into it a most costly construction.

Thus, the word from God came to him in this manner. For what does He say to the prophet? Go to the chamber, this is a place in the temple, to Shebna the treasurer, and say to him: What are you doing here? and what have you here? That is, what inheritance do you have here? or how do you remain here? For why have you hewn a monument for yourself and inscribed a dwelling in the rock? What then will be? and what is the threat? or with what

evils, he says, will you consort? Behold, the Lord of Sabaoth will cast out and destroy a man. For, as I said, the most powerful were led away captive with the common herd, even those who had a distinguished superiority over others. But since he himself was also carried away into captivity, his crown of the high priesthood was taken away, and he was cast like a useless vessel into a boundless land, there to die without any mercy, no longer riding in splendid chariots as before, but rather shaken and cast out completely from the stewardship entrusted to him and from his position, that is, from standing and ministering to God. And it shall be in that day, I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and I will give him your crown, and I will give the power and the stewardship into his hands;

and he shall be as a father to the inhabitants in Jerusalem, and to the inhabitants of Judah, and I will give the glory of David to him, and he shall rule, and there shall be no one who speaks against him; and I will set him as a ruler in a faithful place, and he shall be for a throne of glory of his father's house, and every glorious one in his father's house shall trust in him, from the small to the great, and they shall be depending on him in that day. The narrative has not yet departed from the history, for it is still directed against Shebna the treasurer, who had indeed received the glory of the priesthood, but who abused it in this way and went against every ordinance, so as to be unbearably greedy and in short to leave no impropriety unpracticed. Therefore, when he was cast off, that is, having been carried away to a far and boundless land, I will call, He says, at that time my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah. And by calling him His own servant, He has testified to his obedience; and that He will bestow the glory of the priesthood on him He makes clear; promising to crown him and saying, that He will also give him a robe, and the stewardship and the power, that is, the ability to rule the peoples under his hand.

And in addition to these things, He has testified, that he will also be good, not arrogant like Shebna, but as a father, or faithful and good. And for this reason he will also be established in a faithful place, that is, with it being securely preserved for him and remaining, so that every glorious and distinguished person would all but place their hope in him, not as in God, far from it, but as in a good father. For he will preside over and defend small and great, He says. And he will be so loved, that the peoples under his hand will seem to hang on him. And these things, as I said, the historical account brings to us. But again, through the innermost contemplation, it seems to hint to us the mystery of Christ. For crowned with the priesthood according to the laws, the Scribes and Pharisees were not obedient, but hard and arrogant, and lovers of money, and lovers of full purses, and practicing everything that is hated by God. And so the prophet Isaiah himself says at the beginning of his book: "How has the faithful city Zion become a harlot, full of judgment, in which right- righteousness slept in her, but now murderers? Your silver is worthless; your innkeepers mix the wine with water; your rulers are disobedient, companions of thieves, loving gifts, pursuing rewards, not judging for orphans, and not paying attention to the judgment of a widow. And the Savior himself also accuses them, saying thus:

”Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe dill and mint and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: judgment and mercy and faith. and what is even more unholy than these things, they have also become slayers of the Lord. For this reason, they were cast out from the honors of the priesthood, and have been removed from ruling the peoples, and have been thrown out of the economy entrusted to them according to the law; they have come to be outside of sacred crowns and of sacred vestments; and after them our Lord Jesus Christ has been called, our great high priest. For as the blessed Paul writes: ”No one takes the honor for himself, but is called by God, just as Christ did not glorify himself to become a high priest, but he who spoke to him, ’You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” For being God by nature and Lord of all, and receiving the worship of all, since he became man, he has also been named our high priest. And he is said to have also received the glory of David, that is, the rule and kingdom over Israel. But by Israel we do not at all mean the one according to the flesh, but the one in spirit and intelligible.

For not all, he says, who are from Israel, are Israel, nor because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but as many as have been justified through faith, following in the footsteps of their father Abraham, these are also his children, and sons of the promise, and are named Israel. When Christ, the high priest of us all, was revealed, therefore, there will be none, he says, who speaks against him. For an enemy will not prevail against him, and a son of iniquity will not presume to harm him. And in another way as well. For Israel spoke against him, but the nations welcomed being ruled by him. And so he is found saying through the voice of David, concerning Israel: ”Deliver me from the contradictions of the people; and concerning the nations, ”You will make me the head of the nations; a people whom I did not know served me, at the hearing of the ear they obeyed me. Strange children lied to me, strange children have grown old, and they have become lame in their paths. For they have grown old and have come near to destruction, and they have, as it were, a broken mind, having become strange children, that is, those from Israel. For formerly he was the firstborn, but since they lied against Christ, they have become strangers. For they are henceforth called children of perdition, sons of Gehenna. But when, he says, I reveal Eliakim (which is interpreted God’s resurrection;

for the Word, being God, was raised up for our help, who also long ago said: ‘Because of the oppression of the poor, and because of the groaning of the needy, now I will arise,’ says the Lord), then, he says, everyone who is glorious in the house of his father will trust in him. And what other house of the Father of Christ could there be than the Church? But if anyone is glorious in it, this one will trust in Christ, and not only the glorious, but also if one is small, I mean according to the world. For the God of all is just and impartial, but rather according to the measure of spiritual age, for some are fathers, and others still children, and young men and youths, spiritually speaking. Thus says the Lord of Sabaoth: The man who is fixed in a faithful place will be moved, and he will fall, and the glory that is upon him will be taken away, for the Lord has spoken. After so long a narrative, a concise and brief word has been introduced, showing the severity of the divine judgments, and as it were of

a king decreeing with fitting authority that it should come to pass. And again the power of the sentence looks, if one should wish, to Somnas the treasurer; but if also more broadly upon those who minister according to the law, he will understand it thus, just as also we have just now rendered.

For those who seem to be established in the security of their prosperity, for this is what it is to be established: to seem to be in a faithful place, have fallen and have been stripped of the glory that was in them, with no one defending them, that is, able to raise up those already cast down, because the Lord has spoken. "For if he shuts a man in, who can open? he says.

Discourse 15

Wail, you ships of Carthage, because it has been destroyed, and they no longer come, from the land of the Kittim it has been brought captive. Come now, let us again, endeavoring to make clear as possible the oracles given by God concerning Tyre, first relate the history, and let us make it clear in what way it was captured and destroyed and brought captive, according to what is written. Therefore, when the Babylonians, having laid waste to Judea, and having also burned the holy city itself, were carrying away Israel captive, the surrounding and neighboring foreign nations, opening a bold and unbridled mouth, attempted to mock the glory of God. For they said that he was not able to save them, but rather that even the assisting God himself had been defeated by the hand of the Assyrians, and rather they thought that their own gods were even mightier than the God of the Hebrews, and that they presided over and fortified them, keeping them safe from every attack, and showing them to be superior to the Babylonians. And in another way they themselves also plundered the nation of the Jews, on the one hand by attacking those who were in distress, and seizing those who were left behind; and on the other by dedicating sacred vessels to their falsely-named gods, and by necessity sending those who had come under the yoke of slavery under them away from the worship according to the law. And so God spoke through one of the holy prophets:

"And what are you to me, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all Galilee of the foreigners? Are you rendering a recompense to me, or are you bearing a grudge against me? Swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense upon your own heads, because you took my silver and my gold, and my choice and beautiful things you brought into your temples, and the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel you sold to the sons of the Greeks, that you might drive them out from their own borders. Therefore Tyre was also captured by the wrath of God, in a certain manner as follows: For it was an island, still with a strait passing through the middle, and not separating it from the mainland by long distances. And when the Babylonian came, he sought to take it along with the others, and he commanded the armies under his command to fill in the sea between, and to join it to the mainland, and not to allow it to remain an island any longer. When this had happened, or was expected to happen before long, most of those in Tyre, since they had trade as their occupation and were accustomed to sailing, swam away from the island with their children and wives, and departed to other cities and villages.

Therefore the Babylonians, having driven in, killed those who remained, and took many captive, and did the usual things for victors, except they were not moderately grieved having learned that a great many, and the most prominent among them, had put their possessions on ships and fled. And the account remembers the history, and the prophecy of Ezekiel. For thus spoke the God of all to him: "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army serve a great service against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was worn bare; yet he had no wages, nor his army, for the hard service that he had served against Tyre. In return for this I have given him the land of Egypt. For after the capture of Tyre, the Babylonian turned the battle to the nation of the Egyptians. Of this history the blessed prophet Isaiah now makes mention, and commands the things of Ships of Carthage. It is clear that Tyre is to wail because she was destroyed, and they no longer come from the land of the Kittim. Some say that the Kittim are Greek islands, that is, Macedonian; but others affirm that through this Cyprus is signified, named from one of the cities in it. But wail, he says, for what reason? For she has been taken captive. But perhaps someone will say, Does he bid Carthage, that is, the ships from there, to lament for Tyre? For what reason? For the Carthaginians have become colonists of the Tyrians.

And they were very proud, having Tyre as their mother, at once the most famous and most valiant among the islands, those, I say, in the east. And they say that those from the land of the Kittim are also proud of her, and revel in the profits of their commerce. Wail, therefore, he says, you merchants of Carthage, or rather, the ships, for she has been destroyed. And let Tyre also wail, for they no longer come from the land of the Kittim. For she has been taken captive. To whom have the inhabitants of the island become like, the traders of Phoenicia, crossing the sea in much water, the seed of traders, as a harvest being brought in, the traders of the nations. To which, then, he says, of the nations shall we compare those who inhabit this island? Who have suffered such things, or have been so sacked, as also the traders of Phoenicia? For trade is the pursuit of the Tyrians, and crossing the sea with haste, for the sake of profits and gains. And by adding that they are the seed of traders, he showed that their ignobility is also hereditary, and that they sprang from a wicked root, and that their ancestors from of old were overcome by the love of gain. And those who pursue such a shameful life among them are more than can be numbered, as he teaches, saying: As a harvest being brought in, the traders of the nations.

For when the grain is harvested, that is, the ears of corn in the field, the bringing in of sheaves from all sides is great, and the gathering into the threshing floor. Be ashamed, Sidon, the sea has said; and the strength of the sea said, I have not travailed, nor brought forth, nor nourished virgins, nor reared young men. The Carthaginians are colonists of the Tyrians. Yet the Tyrians have Sidon as a mother; for Tyre was from Sidon. Yet Sidon was very proud of Tyre as a brilliant and renowned daughter. But when she was captured, and has been taken captive, then, he says, the sea, that is, all the islands by the sea, will then say: Be ashamed, Sidon, for the finest of your boasts has perished, and she who was long ago formidable and most valiant, and most illustrious for her great wealth, is gone. Therefore, the sea will say these things; but the strength of the sea itself, that is, she who prevails over

the islands, clearly Tyre, lamenting her own misfortunes, when she is already stripped of her inhabitants, and desolate of children, then she will certainly say, "I have not travailed, nor brought forth, nor nourished young men, nor reared virgins. For I have become, he says, equal to those who have not borne at all, nor raised either young men or virgins, because all have utterly come to destruction, and absolutely no one was left. But when it becomes audible to Egypt, pain will seize them concerning Tyre.

The prophet has not been ignorant that, as I have already said, after the capture of Tyre, the Assyrian was about to move on to the land of the Egyptians. When, therefore, he says, these things become heard among the Egyptians, then they too will be pained in every way and altogether, not because Tyre has been sacked, perhaps, but because the evils of war have moved on to them. Go away to Carthage, wail, you inhabitants of this island. The discourse of the prophecy is of great character. For he does not properly and truly command them to depart from Tyre, and rather to remove to Carthage, nor simply to wail, but as it were to reproach them for fleeing, and being crushed by immeasurable cowardice. He says they should lament for themselves, and for the misfortunes brought upon them. Both of these are womanly, and more fitting for youths and for those already past their prime. For when war has been announced, and is expected to come against a country or a city, everyone who is in their prime prepares for battle, and practices tactics, and rages against the enemy phalanxes with all the zeal they have, even if they are not yet present. But women and young boys practice for flight, and wail, crying. For a young boy and a woman are somehow always ready for fear and lamentations. Therefore, the God of all smiles at the cowardice of the Tyrians.

For those who were formerly mighty in battles, terrible and hard to meet, bold and indestructible, are fleeing and wailing. Is not this your insolence from the beginning, before it was delivered up? Who has planned these things against Tyre? Is he weaker, and has no strength? I said before, that when Jerusalem was sacked, and the temple itself was burned by the army of the Assyrians, the surrounding and neighboring nations rejoiced as if Israel had perished, and as if it were utterly cut off, and they shook their own heads at them; and they thought that they had fallen into the hands of enemies, not because of their own sins, but rather that the one who saves them had grown weak, and that those who had conquered had become stronger than the hand of God. What then, O Tyrians, does he say? Before it was delivered up, did you not commit this insolence against me? Did you not say that my strength was weaker and inferior to your gods? Who then, he says, planned these things against Tyre? I, clearly, whom you have dared to call weaker and feeble. Therefore, judge from the events themselves, whether he is weaker than your gods, or has no strength. For I delivered Israel, who sinned against me, to their enemies. But since you are rich in gods, and many are honored among you, which of them planned such a design against Tyre? Who has delivered it to the enemies?

Therefore, it is a hard thing to await through experience itself what one must suffer. But I think the most prudent ought to see from afar with the slender eyes of the mind what

leads to benefit, and not to exult over the scourged saints, nor indeed to think that the hand which always saves them has grown weak, but rather to understand that they sometimes fall into temptations when God permits it. Her merchants are glorious, rulers of the earth. The Lord of Sabaoth has planned to bring to nothing all the insolence of the glorious, and to dishonor every glorious one upon the earth. The discourse returns again to the need to strip from them their excess of inherent arrogance, and moreover in addition to this, their insatiable greed. For being merchants, he says, and having such a shameful and ignoble occupation, they have advanced to such a degree of glory and preeminence, that they are even bound with the honors most fitting for rulers, and have become most renowned for crowns of good repute. But the Lord of hosts, he says, has planned to bring to nothing the insolence of the glorious and to dishonor every such person. And when God determines such a decree for them, and brings a sharp judgment, who is able to defend, or who could ward off the divine wrath? For who will be stronger than the all-powerful authority? Or who will turn back the high hand, according to what is written?

Therefore, let them not think, he says, that having offended their own gods they were brought down from glory to dishonor, but rather let them know that it was the judgment of the Lord of Sabaoth, against whom they dared to say, that he is weaker and has no strength. Therefore let us also say to the lawless not to be lawless, and to sinners not to lift up the horn, nor indeed to raise it impiously, and to speak injustice against the God who rules all things. Work your land; for ships no longer come from Carthage. And your hand will no longer have strength at sea, which provokes kings. He transfers, he says, their pursuits from commercial occupations to agriculture. For you will no longer engage in your most beloved commerce, nor will those who gather for you immeasurable wealth come from Carthage, running to your hand, that is, your power. You will be able to for nothing at all any longer, although she had been very powerful at sea, that is, having become most mighty against every island and city lying by the sea, she who also provoked very many kings. For Tyre was formidable in ancient times, as I said, both to those farthest away and to her neighbors and to the leaders of the nations. But the Lord of hosts has given a command concerning Canaan (that is, concerning the land of the foreigners), to destroy her strength.

For the evils from the war have been brought through the cruelty of the Assyrians, not indeed upon Tyre alone somehow, but also upon other nations, both Moabites and Idumeans, and certain others. And collectively all are called Canaanites, the worshipers of idols, and not being of the blood of Israel, and indeed let one who hears reproach, seed of Canaan and not of Judah. When therefore, he says, the harms of the war come upon all the Canaanites at once, then some, understanding the causes of what has happened to them, will say: No longer continue to insult and wrong the daughter of Zion. For I said that they reproached Judea, and mocked those from Israel as having been captured, and they pitied Jerusalem, that is Zion, not as having been overlooked by God the savior, but as having fallen into capture and suffering for this reason, that the God honored among them has been defeated and grown weak, to whom they performed the worship according to the law. And if you go to the Kittim, there also will be no rest for you; and to the land of the Chaldeans, it too

has been desolated by the Assyrians, its wall has fallen. When God drives one to sweat and toils, who is able to help? When the almighty right hand wages war, who is so great that he will deliver the weary from incurable disaster? No one at all.

For the nature of things follows his divine nods, and whatever he wishes to happen, this is brought to pass in every way and completely. If, therefore, he says, you should go on a long journey, so as to arrive even at the Kittim; for they say it is one of the cities in Cyprus; but the Kittim, they maintain, is Carthage itself; there also will be no rest for you, that is, wars, and the fear of death, and the dangers of death will find you. But even if you, having become a captive, should reach the land of the Chaldeans, not even so will you cease from needing to be grieved. For there will be no rest for you, how or in what way; for it too has been laid waste by Persians and Assyrians plundering it, that is, when Cyrus was campaigning, at which time its wall also fell. And by "wall" of the land of the Chaldeans, I think, he means either the one who presides and the one who reigns, or even the wall itself, in which the Babylonians had especially trusted, expecting to suffer nothing grievous, but that the attack of those warring against them would be fruitless. For it was so constructed that even with wagons coming side by side, a wide road could be seen on it. And so through the voice of Jeremiah the God of all says, shaking the hope of the Babylonians in this very thing: "The wall of Babylon has been widened;

being dug up, it will be utterly dug up. Wail, O ships of Carthage, because your stronghold has perished. A song and lament from the beginning of the vision is placed in the middle; that it is most fitting for such voices to be spoken by all against Tyre, the account in a way confirming the prophecy. And for the ships from Carthage to wail, because their stronghold has perished, that is, Tyre. And the occasion of the matter has been stated clearly through what has already passed. And it shall be in that day that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the time of a king, like the time of a man. Tyre mocked Jerusalem, as having been plundered, and she did not attribute the causes of their suffering to the indolence of the Jews, as having offended God through their outrageous behavior toward the law, and what seemed good to him; but rather she thought that their protector was not able to save them, that is, the God of all. Therefore she herself was also captured for this reason, And it endured a desolation of equal duration to the captivity of those from Israel. For they had completed seventy years among the Chaldeans, having the burdensome yoke of slavery.

Therefore, at that time Tyre will be left behind, that is, it will be desolated, and it will remain depopulated, and it will extend to such a length of time so as to seem to be the lifetime of a man, that is, of a kingdom, that is, the seventieth year, just as the blessed David also sings in the Psalms: "The days of our years are seventy years in them, and if in might, eighty years, and the greater part of them is toil and trouble. And it shall be after seventy years, Tyre shall be as the song of a harlot. Take a harp, wander about, O city, a forgotten harlot; play the harp well, sing many songs, so that you may be remembered. The promiscuous and wanton woman, selling the beauty of her body to her lovers, as long as she is youthful and young, she snares many, and the bloom of her body is itself a trap

and, as it were, a charm for those who see her. But when she has passed her prime, then indeed, when her beauty has faded, she is no longer successful in the hunt, but by another method she pursues the ability to devise again provisions of wretched gains. For her pursuit becomes song and melody; for many are charmed by her playing the harp. From this, there will sometimes be for her some brief remembrance of her past life, and some will praise her beauty in its prime.

Something of this sort will happen to the city of the Tyrians, he says. For it will be like the song of a forgotten harlot, no longer having the adornment it had in the beginning. It will be a song and a melody to many. For they will remember the things that formerly belonged to her. But you, O Tyre, like an old harlot who has passed her prime, take a harp, wander about as a city that has become like some forgotten harlot. For when, as I said, the beauty of women has faded, even those who were once captivated and became her lovers forget her. Play the harp well, therefore, and sing many songs, so that at least some memory of you may arise. And it shall be after seventy years, God will make a visitation to Tyre, and it shall be restored again to its former state, and it shall be a marketplace for all the kingdoms of the world, and her merchandise and her hire shall be holy to the Lord, and it shall not be gathered for them, but for those dwelling before the Lord; all her merchandise to eat and drink, and to be filled to satiety, a memorial before the Lord. By a just decree, God, as I said, made the desolation of the Tyrians of equal duration to the captivity of those from Israel.

And since Cyrus with the Persians and Medes had taken the city of the Babylonians by force, and had laid waste the whole land of the Chaldeans, Israel was released from captivity, and returned again to his own land, and inhabited the holy city. And God, the ruler of all, not remembering evils, also turned away His wrath from the Tyrians; and He reconstituted it again, and it has returned to its former state, and has become a marketplace and a lodging, just as it was long ago for all the kingdoms of the earth. But observe the difference. For in the past, the hire from the merchandise was collected only by those who practiced it, and absolutely no fruits at all were brought to God by anyone. But since the Gentiles have been called to grace through faith, she herself also came to know the Savior and Redeemer of all, and a holy temple has been raised among them, and a divine altar has been set up, no longer is the hire from the merchandise collected for them alone; but indeed it will also be holy to the Lord, that is, for a votive offering and a fruit-offering, so as to eat and drink before the Lord. For in the past, taking possession of the shrines of the idols and the precincts of the demons, they would offer sacrifices, and they would hold festivals in them, for the honor and glory of their own creations; for they were still wandering in error.

But since, as I said, they have come to know the true God, the hire of the merchandise has become holy to the Lord, and they eat and drink as a memorial before the Lord, clearly dedicating to God thank-offerings for the things in which they might prosper. Behold, the Lord destroys the inhabited world, and will make it desolate, and will uncover its face, and will scatter those dwelling in it. I have already said that Jerusalem has been sacked, and with it the other cities of Judaea have also been laid waste. Indeed, the surrounding and

neighboring nations smiled upon her as she lay fallen, and practically shaking their heads over her, laughing broadly, they were saying that God was being defeated by the hand of the Assyrians; just as, of course, the Rabshakeh, being full of Persian arrogance, said to those sitting on the wall: "Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying, that God will deliver Jerusalem out of my hand. Therefore, since together with those from Babylon the other nations also, mocking the glory of God, said that he who had long presided over them had not been able to save them, for this reason indeed, and very rightly, suffering punishment both for their sins and for this impious insolence, they themselves also have been given over to the Babylonians for desolation. And the word of prophecy has related to us the vision concerning each of the nations.

For they have fallen under the movements of divine wrath, both the Philistines and Moabites, Damascenes and Egyptians, and indeed also those from the desert, the Ashdodites and Idumeans, and Tyre in addition to these, and last of all Babylon, and the whole land of the Chaldeans has been laid waste in the same way as the others, when Cyrus son of Cambyses and Mandane roused up against it the Assyrians and the Medes. Therefore, the blessed prophet, having narrated the things brought upon each of the named nations by divine wrath, through the preceding words, virtually makes a recapitulation of the whole discourse, and calls the destruction that happened to many nations a universal one. For this reason he says: Behold, the Lord destroys the inhabited world, and will make it desolate, and will uncover its face. For not just one or two cities have fallen, but lands and nations have been destroyed in the ways already mentioned. Therefore He will destroy and make desolate, he says, the inhabited world, and will uncover its face. For as long as the God of all is long-suffering and postpones punishments, the life of the impious somehow remains hidden, and the face, that is, the appearance, of each one's life is, as it were, concealed. But when He brings His wrath and inflicts on each the fitting and deserved punishment, the face of those being punished is laid bare.

For the manner of the punishment shows what sort of people they are and have been, if it is true that God will render to each according to his works. But I think I should also say this. For since the prophet named the inhabited world, and said that it would be destroyed and indeed also come to desolation, some wish the prophet's discourse to pass from a partial indignation to one that is universal and against all; and indeed they say that he clearly relates beforehand the things that will happen to the world, also at the time of the consummation. Therefore we must also, choosing to follow their thoughts, make a twofold narration for each of the things said. Therefore he says the inhabited world will be destroyed and will be made desolate, and its face will be revealed, with the things done by each one, whether good or evil, obviously being made manifest, and he will scatter those dwelling in it. And if the force of the meaning were applied to the nations, you will understand that when the named lands were brought to desolation, of those dwelling in them, some were scattered, and others, having become captives, were enslaved to their captors, and leaving the land that bore them, they migrated to other lands.

But if it applies to the universal judgment, "the inhabitants of the earth will be scattered" would signify that they will be divided, and the Savior will teach this clearly, saying, "When the Son of man sits on the throne of his glory, he will set the sheep on his right, but the goats on his left. Therefore, instead of to separate, or to divide, the inhabitants on the earth, to scatter has placed in them. And the people shall be as the priest, and the servant as the Lord, and the handmaid as her mistress; the buyer shall be as the seller, and the lender as the borrower, and the debtor, as he to whom he owes. The earth will be utterly corrupted with corruption, and the earth will be utterly plundered with plunder, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things. When peace prevails, it is in every way necessary for cities and countries to be administered by the proper laws, both divine and human, and for the ranks of dignities and pre-eminence to be preserved, and for the wealthy to be secure in their wealth, and for the free their freedom. But if the phalanxes of the enemy should descend, and a city or country should become the work of barbaric cruelty, there will perchance be a confusion of affairs, and nothing will remain in order.

For the honor of priests will be gone, and in equal rank will be servant and master, handmaid and mistress, the buyer and the seller, the lender and the borrower, the debtor and he to whom he owes; and by these are signified the rich and the poor. For corruption and plunder, that is, pillage and devastation, proceed in the same way against all. And the prophet seals the saying with truth, adding: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things. And that judgment at the divine tribunal is without respect of persons, who would dare not to say? For pre-eminence of dignities does not save anyone, unless they have the good fruits of a lawful life; and wealth in no way benefits those who have it, but we shall all stand before the judge on an equal footing and in such a rank, whether small and great, rich and poor. For there is no partiality with God. Something of this sort is also written in Job: "Small and great are there, and the servant does not fear his master. The earth mourned, and the world was corrupted, the high ones of the earth mourned; and the earth transgressed because of those who dwell in it. The appearance of mourners is always somehow gloomy, and their eyes and cheeks are full of dejection, and their foreheads pale; for grief for the dead consumes a man's heart like fire.

It is possible to see a city, or land and country, that has suffered such a thing when occupied by barbarians; for all things become gloomy, when those in them have been consumed by swords, and houses have been burned, and have suffered the damages of war. Thus you will understand that the earth mourned, and since it suffered such things, it is necessary for the high ones in it also to suffer, that is, the most distinguished. For are not those who are deprived of honor and wealth and the other things that are wont to accompany the glorious, who have a more burdensome grief in their sufferings? And he says that the earth transgressed because of those who dwell in it. For a city is called lawless, and indeed a country very often, although the insensate earth does not know how to be lawless, but they receive this judgment from the wickedness of the inhabitants. And you will again take the saying in a general sense. For if, as one of the holy disciples says, the earth and all the works in it will be burned up at the time of the consummation, the face of the earth will

be gloomy, and like those who mourn. And as a lawless earth, that is, having served the lawless, it is burned up.

For we await new heavens and a new earth and his promises, according to what is written, and Paul also writes that creation itself will be set free from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Because they have transgressed the law, and have changed the ordinances of the everlasting covenant, therefore a curse shall devour the earth, because those who dwell in it have sinned. The discourse returns again to the precision of the prophecy. For lest some think that the God of all brings punishments upon some without cause, they connect the causes with the movements of anger, and clearly proclaim the accusations of those being punished. Therefore, the earth will mourn, for what reason? Because they have transgressed the law and broken the everlasting covenant. For this reason he says: And the earth shall be cursed. having transgressed- for its inhabitants have ceased. And again the prophet seems, since along with the other cities or lands he also demanded justice for that of the Jews—for, as I said, the sins of those under the law have been destroyed—to bring it into the midst;

For they transgressed the law, he says, those of Israel considering it of no account, but turning as it were to another path, and paying attention to doctrines which are the commandments of men, since indeed, applying the universal principle as the rendering of the concepts, we say that the God of all created man in the beginning, and engraved in him a natural law, instructing him in the knowledge of both evil and good. And this, I think, is what was said through the voice of John concerning the only-begotten Son of God: that "There was the true light, which enlightens every man coming into the world. This, then, we understand to happen also in the last times—I mean those of His coming; for it is written that, "In those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and I will write them on their hearts. Therefore, those on the earth transgressed this law that innately steers us toward the knowledge of good and evil, and they changed the commandments. For, having been created for good works, they turned to love of the flesh and an earthly mindset. For this reason the earth has become cursed. For its inhabitants have offended the Creator through very many sins. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth shall be poor, and few men shall be left. For since, he says, the earth has become cursed, on account of the great lawlessness that has occurred in it, for this reason also, burdened with unexpected poverty, they will scarcely be saved;

for few and easily counted shall be left. And these things, indeed, pertain to the letter, and the outward aspect of the history. But as for the innermost meaning, we say again that those who are to be condemned for very many sins at the divine tribunal will surely be poor in every way, and in want of the good things from above, and stripped of the hope prepared for the saints; for they will go down to Hades to be punished, and few will be left, that is, those who through righteousness have pleased God, and possess the wealth that comes from good deeds; and these are few in number, according to the voice of the Savior, that "Many are called, but few are chosen. The wine shall mourn, the vine shall mourn, all those who

rejoice in soul shall groan; the gladness of timbrels has ceased, the arrogance and wealth of the impious have ceased; the voice of the lyre has ceased. They were ashamed, they did not drink wine, the strong drink became bitter to those who drink it. Every city was laid waste, he will shut a house so that none may enter. Wail everywhere for the wine; all the gladness of the earth has ceased, and the cities shall be left desolate, and the abandoned houses will be destroyed.

The God of all very often accused those of the blood of Israel, as having sinned unbearably, and that, foreknowing for this reason that they would be punished, they had not chosen to ward off his wrath with the labors of repentance. For he said that the Lord of Sabaoth called in that day for weeping, and lamentation, and shaving, and girding with sackcloths, but they themselves made gladness and rejoicing, slaughtering calves and sacrificing sheep, so as to eat meat and drink wine, saying: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. And indeed through another prophet, he says: "Those who sleep on ivory beds and live wantonly on their couches. Those who eat kids from the flocks, and suckling calves from the midst of the herds, who drink strained wine, and anoint themselves with the best ointments, and suffered nothing for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore, having tended toward great extravagance, they lived luxuriously out of season, although it was necessary to wet the cheek with unceasing tears, and to ask for amnesty for their sins, the harms from the war have been justly brought upon them; and those who once lived in luxury have unexpectedly fallen into calamities. The vine has mourned, and not the plant itself, but those who drink the fruit from it, those who once, he says, rejoiced their soul will lament, and wailing will rather be their pursuit. For the gladness of tambourines has ceased, the arrogance and wealth of the impious has ceased.

He calls arrogance the exceedingly haughty brow, that is, boastfulness. And he says the things that come from wealth also cease, and the sound of the lyre, and strong drink is bitter to those who once lived in luxury, and cities and houses have become desolate. For all the gladness of the earth has ceased, and if one should reflect upon the consummation of the age itself, in which the time of judgment will be, he will say again: that all the luxury of those in the world will pass away, and there will rather be groaning and gnashing of teeth for those who go down to Hades; and wealth will not benefit at all those who have possessed it, and all luxury will be idle, and bodily things will cease, or rather, the love of the flesh, once so longed-for by them, will come to a bitter end for the lovers of sin. For they will render an account to the judge of all; for as the most wise Paul writes, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. In the same way as if someone were to glean an olive tree, so will they glean them; and if the vintage should cease, these will cry out with a loud voice.

He shows again, as from the most visible and manifest examples of the enemies' perversity, the harshness of those who spare no one, nor indeed tolerate anyone to escape without a share of their inherent cruelty. For with a precise eye they observe the plant, those who seek

the fruit from the olives; and if any should fall somewhere, they eagerly snatch it up, and they gather up to the very last one; so, he says, the enemies will glean them, destroying them with complete ruin, and when the vintage has ceased, these will cry out with a loud voice. But again he also takes this as from a custom that is wont to be done at the conclusions of the vintage. For the grape-gatherers, when they have come to this end of their labors, rejoice and shout, and composing some rustic song, they depart from the fields. When, therefore, he says, the enemies have gleaned every- one and left absolutely no one behind, then just as when the vintage has ceased, they will cry out with a loud voice, evidently shouting over the fallen and exulting over the dead. We say then again, looking to the innermost meaning, that at the time of judgment there will be no one of those who have lived unholy lives who will be able to escape notice. But those who have lived and gone through life rightly and lawfully will go to the mansions above; but the profane and wicked will be food for the all-consuming fire.

Therefore, he says, the gathering of such people will be exact, and the Savior himself will teach this, saying: ”The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind, which, when they had drawn it to shore, they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. Therefore, he says, the search for the unholy will be exact, and absolutely no one who has lived thus will be left behind; for he who knows hearts and minds will deliver them all to the angels appointed for this. But those who are left on the earth will rejoice together with the glory of the Lord. Saying that the examination of those caught in sins will be so exact that no one can escape notice, he does not permit the impious and God-loving person to be crushed by these fears. For even if it is said that the things from wrath come upon all, nevertheless the God of all does not destroy the righteous with the wicked. And he teaches this, saying through the voice of Ezekiel: ”Son of man, a land on which I bring a judgment of blood, even if Noah and Daniel and Job are in the midst of it, they will be saved by their righteousness, but the land will be for destruction. And indeed elsewhere the same prophet says to us; that he had seen a man clothed in a long robe, and having a girdle, and six men coming after him;

and of each, he says, the ax was in his hand, and he said: ”Go into the city after him, and strike and do not spare, and do not pity an elder, a young man, and infants, and kill women to extermination, but upon all on whom is the mark, do not draw near, and begin from the saints. But since I think it necessary not to leave the prophet’s words unexamined, come let us say, why ever, when Noah and Job were already dead, and perhaps also Daniel himself, he says that they will be saved in their own righteousness, even though all the rest of the earth, against which the vote of death might be cast, was being destroyed. It seems, then, that by Noah he represents those who through faith in God are pleasing to him; and by Daniel, the wise and discerning; and by Job, again, those who through patience, clearly in everything praiseworthy, are pleasing to him. When therefore, he says, wrath consumes those on the earth, not only of the Jews, but also of the gentiles, those who are left and by the just judgment of God who weighs all our affairs have escaped destruction will rejoice together with the glory of the Lord; for they will be glad, having been saved through the

ineffable glory of the one who presides over the saints, and who fortifies the pious with his forbearance and grace. We shall add this also to what has been said.

For indeed at the time of the consummation of the present age, those who have become lovers of wicked practices will be sent down to Hades to be punished. But those who are left, that is, the just, will rejoice together with the glory of the Lord, for they will be with Christ who is the glory of God the Father. For he himself said, "I have glorified you on the earth, I have finished the work that you gave me to do. And indeed God the Father himself says somewhere to the blessed Moses: As I live, and my name lives, truly all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. For all things have been filled with Christ. But the water of the sea shall be troubled. For this reason the glory of the Lord will be in the islands of the sea, the name of the Lord will be glorious. He enigmatically calls the multitude of the nations water and sea. For it is the custom of the holy prophets to do this. And so the blessed David says concerning the earth and those in it: "This is the great and wide sea, therein are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships: this is that dragon, whom you have made to play therein.

And we certainly do not say that his speech was about those swimming in the sea, nor indeed that he wished to indicate the different kinds of fish, nor do we say that some corporeal and perceptible dragon is in the waters of the sea. But he shows to us, as I said, through these things the turmoil in this life, and for those in it a life in the surge; and indeed also a dragon, that is, Satan, who goes about all men, and roams about our inhabited world, plotting against the souls of the saints. The water of the sea, therefore, he calls the multitude of the nations; and the islands, perhaps, the cities. And indeed he says that all those in them will be troubled, when the divine wrath leaps upon them. But he says that the glory of Christ will be in all of them in a certain way. For they will recognize that by the divine commands they have been ravaged and have utterly perished, and having not moderately offended the almighty one through their inherent unholiness, they are given over to desolation. And they will altogether and in every way condemn their own gods, who in no way defended them. And this was nothing other than the glory of the Lord being lifted to a great height. But the aim of the prophetic predictions seems henceforth to pass over to the mystery of Christ, and to make remembrance of the salvation that will be through him.

For indeed, he says, those who are left on the earth will rejoice together with the glory of the Lord; "For we were saved not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His great mercy, and not being justified through the shadow in the law. For the law justifies us least of all, but the grace through holy baptism will rather deliver us from sins, and making us rejoice in the hope of future good things, it richly nourishes us. For we expect that we will also be with Christ Himself, who is the glory of the Father, as I just said. But since the word of the holy apostles has gone forth from one end to the other of what is under heaven, removing the nations from polytheistic error, and bringing them to the grace through Christ; he says the water of the sea was troubled, that is, the peoples under the whole sun. They are troubled by strange voices, and departing from their ancient

error, they are brought to anchor at the knowledge of the truth. Therefore he says: The glory of the Lord will be in the islands of the sea. And by islands, as I think, he means the holy Churches of God, which, lying in this world as in a sea, both endure and rise above the turmoil in it, with Christ preserving them, and not allowing them to be shattered by the waves of persecution.

For since he enigmatically calls the nations a sea, following this turn of speech intelligently, he calls the churches islands, in which the glory of God is marveled at. Lord God of Israel, from the wings of the earth we have heard wonders, hope for the pious. Of those left on the earth and rejoicing with the glory of the Lord, and of those dwelling in the islands, I mean the churches, the prophet brings in the person for us in these things, of those glorifying the God of all and saying: From the wings of the earth you have heard wonders, and in addition to this, of those who have believed that there will be a good hope for the pious of being justified by him, and indeed also of richly partaking of his gentleness. And they seem to call the holy mystagogues the wings of the earth, by whose words, as if on wings, we mind the things above, leaping away from earthly affairs, and having cast off an earthly and carnal mindset, we have our citizenship in the heavens. From the thus understood wings of the earth we have heard the wonders through Christ, he says, clearly. For we have been initiated by the writings of the holy apostles and evangelists, and learning the divine signs through the Savior, we have the firmest faith in them, and we are confident and steadfastly disposed and believe that the hope of the pious is very good;

for we expect the kingdom of heaven, and the honors and glories prepared for those who love God. And they will say: Woe to those who set aside, who set aside the law; fear and a pit, and a snare are upon you who dwell on the earth. And it shall be, that he who flees from the fear will fall into the pit, and he who comes out of the pit will be caught in the snare. Who will say it? Those left upon the earth, surely, and rejoicing with the glory of the Lord, and those who inhabit the islands, that is, the Churches. And to whom will they say it? To those who set aside the law, that is, to those who have not believed. For if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ, for he wrote about him. But see how, having accepted the faith, they immediately admonish those who set aside the law, and hold up the fear of the coming punishment upon them, and they terrify them with dread, foretelling what is to come. For fear, he says, and a pit and a snare, that is, every kind of evil is upon you, and there will be no escape from the disaster. But even if someone should by chance escape one of the evils, he will be caught by another, and in every way and altogether he will be caught by one of the evils brought upon him.

And this happened to the Jews, after the cross of the Savior, when their country was plundered, and their cities and houses were shaken down; and it would be a long story to tell each detail, especially to those who are nurtured by the Church. Because the windows from heaven were opened, and the foundations of the earth will be shaken. The earth will be troubled with confusion, and in perplexity the land will be laid waste. The earth has swayed and all the earth will be shaken like a fruit-watcher's hut, like one who is drunk and carousing,

and it will fall, and they will not be able to rise, for lawlessness has prevailed upon it. He gives the reason for the things that were foretold would happen, and that they will fall into bitter and inescapable calamities. For he said that fear and a pit and a snare are upon you; and that if anyone should escape the pit, he will be caught by the snare. What then is the reason for this? Windows, he says, were opened from heaven, that is, God has visited those on the earth. For as long as he is patient with those accustomed to transgress, he seems, as it were, not even to be watching, but rather that heaven is closed. But when he examines the ways of those on the earth, then indeed, as if windows have been opened, he holds in his sight those who are on the earth;

and bringing charges according to the transgressions of each, all things are in turmoil; and he fills them with fear, and as if from drunkenness all those on the earth are thrown into every kind of evil. And it is usefully added, to say that the earth is shaken like one of the fruit-watchers' huts in the fields; that is, because lawlessness has prevailed upon it. For as long as those upon it commit tolerable transgressions, he postpones the punishments, and the God of all restrains the movement. But since the impiety of all has become unrestrained, it is altogether necessary both for the earth to be watched over by God, and, with lawlessness prevailing upon it, for it to be drunk, in a way, and to carouse, and to be shaken down into every form of calamity. And God will bring his hand upon the host of heaven, and upon the kings of the earth. And they will gather and shut them up in a stronghold and in a prison, after many generations their visitation will be, and the brick will melt, and the wall will fall. This too is a brilliant achievement of the incarnation of the Only-Begotten. For it was necessary, it was necessary, when the sun of righteousness had at last shone forth, for that spiritual darkness to be scattered, which Satan had poured into the hearts of all. For he darkened the minds of the unbelievers, as it is written, and persuaded them to worship the creation rather than the creator.

For those who were deceived divided among themselves the elements of the world. and some inscribed the sun as a god, others the moon, and others the stars according to their pleasure. And the peoples of the Jews themselves have also been sick with this impiety. And indeed God said somewhere to the prophet Jeremiah, when he was once offering up supplications on their behalf: "And you, do not pray for this people, and do not ask, and do not approach me concerning them in petition and prayer, because I will not listen. Do you not see what these are doing in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? Their sons gather wood, and their fathers kindle a fire, and their women knead dough to make cakes for the host of heaven, and they have poured libations to other gods in order to provoke me to anger. And indeed also through another prophet he says to them: "Did you offer me victims and sacrifices in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel, says the Lord? And you took up the tent of Moloch, and the star of the god Rephan, figures which you made to worship them. Therefore, he says, God will bring his hand upon the host of heaven, that is, he will scatter those who worship the host of heaven, I mean the sun and moon and stars. And it is likely that all idolatry is named in part in these.

For worship of the elements of the world has ceased since Christ was revealed. And understanding the host of heaven to be also the inventor and father of sin itself, that is, Satan, we will perhaps come straight to the truth. For it is said concerning him: How has Lucifer, who rises in the morning, fallen from heaven? And since, because of his ancient glory, and the glory before his fall, he is likened to Lucifer, the prophetic word now also names him the host of heaven for us. But he says that the hand will be brought, not indeed only upon the host of of heaven, but indeed also to the kings of the earth, that is, to those who have held sway by avarice over what is under heaven, and it is clear that this means the world rulers of this age, the wicked and opposing powers. For they have ruled the earth, having declared as their own worshippers those in it, and having persuaded them to completely disregard the love toward God. Therefore, these who held sway, that is, ruled, by deceit and falsehood and avarice, they will gather and shut up in a fortress and in a prison. For the power of the Savior has sent them down into the prison of punishment, into the inescapable fortress. And indeed, the demons, approaching him, were begging that he not command them to go into the abyss. And the prophet adds and says that after many generations there will be a visitation for them;

for they have tyrannized from the foundation of the world, and have not ceased warring against the divine and ineffable glory. And their madness was extended for them, even until the time of the coming of the Savior of us all, Christ. Then, when a visitation came upon them, they were shut up in prison. Yet they have suffered this for many generations, and he says the brick will melt, and the wall will fall, perhaps comparing Satan to a wall. For he is formidable in resistance and like a city with the finest towers; but he has been captured and has fallen, with Christ casting him down. For it was not possible to escape his invincible power. That when Satan had been cast down and had fallen, the trifles of idolatry were laid waste, and those who formerly wandered were called through faith to the knowledge of truth, the all-powerful right hand almost seizing them, the Savior himself will teach, saying: ”Or how can one enter the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his goods? But it is the custom of the divinely inspired Scripture to compare the exceedingly mighty to a wall and to cities, just as indeed also with the blessed prophet Jeremiah. For God said somewhere:

”Behold, they have set on this day as a fortified city, and as a strong bronze wall to all the kings of the earth, and they will fight against you and will not be able to prevail against you, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord. It is necessary to remember that Jesus son of Nave, having taken by force the five kings of the nations, and having conquered them, shut them in a cave, and rolled stones, blocking their escape route. And it was an image of a true barrier. For the wicked and opposing powers which once held sway over what is under heaven were shut up in a fortress and in a prison by the strength of Christ. And with them was also abolished the once great and ineffable wall, that is, Satan. And so the wanderers are called through faith to know henceforth the true and by nature creator and God and Lord of all. But it must be known that some interpret these things with another meaning regarding the cosmos of heaven, and say that at the time of the end the sun will be

darkened, and the moon will not give its light. But I think it is necessary for the meanings of what is presented each time to be concluded in accordance with the interpretations, and very harmoniously. That the Lord will reign in Zion, and in Jerusalem, and will be glorified before the elders.

Zion is interpreted as high, and a watchtower, that is, Jerusalem, a vision of peace. Therefore the true watchtower and indeed the vision of peace, would be, according to the truth, the Church of Christ. For in it the highest contemplation of his divine mysteries is accustomed to take place, and indeed also the vision of peace. And we say that Christ is peace, whom we know from the divinely inspired Scripture, the all-wise Moses having written about him, and in addition to this the holy prophets. Therefore, with profane and abominable idolatry having been removed, and the worship of creation having been taken out of the way, cast down- But when those who have seized dominion under heaven through greed are shut up both into a fortress and into a prison, and the wall has been melted down, and shaken from its very foundations, according to the meanings already previously given, the Lord will reign in Zion, and will be glorified before the elders. And elders, as I think, he says in these things are those who are perfect in mind, and who have, as it were, a mind grown gray, so as to be able to perceive with the eyes of the heart the depth of the mysteries concerning him. To these also the wise John writes, saying: ”I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. But those who have known, marvel and ascribe to him the glory fitting for God, confessing him to be King and Lord of all.

That Christ has reigned, the tyranny of the devil having been completely removed, he himself will teach, saying, when he offered himself as a ransom for the life of all to God the Father, enduring the precious cross for our sake: ”Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. Therefore, he has subjected to his own scepters those throughout the whole earth, having first cast out the ruler of this age. The name of ‘casting out’ seems to signify the overthrow of his greed against all.

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.