Commentary on 1 Kings (part 2 of 2)

Gregory the Great (c. AD 540–604)

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Book 4

Commentaries on the Book of 1 Kings BOOK FOUR. CHAPTER I. 1. The deeds of holy men who came before are often the consolations of the elect who follow. For by a wonderful dispensation of divine counsel, they were raised to the citadel of the highest way of life in such a way that they might do mighty things for themselves and provide right governance for their subjects; yet sometimes so left to themselves that those things which they arranged with right intention would not turn out rightly according to God's providence — so that their weakness might become the strength of the elect who follow: because even though as men they can err in managing the affairs of the holy Church, those ecclesiastical arrangements themselves are not to be abandoned. For behold it is said: (1 Kings 8:1–3) And it came to pass when Samuel had grown old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. And the name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of the second was Abiah, judges in Beersheba. And his sons did not walk in his ways.

2. Behold, he who had been full of the spirit of prophecy did not know that those whom he was appointing as judges of Israel would afterward turn aside after greed, and accept bribes, and pervert judgment. What wonder, then, if those who do not receive the grace of prophecy can be deceived in arranging appointments—if those who have the spirit of prophecy do not have that same spirit for disposing all things? Who would doubt concerning so great a man that, if he had foreknown the future perversity of his sons, he certainly would not have advanced them to public honors? Those, therefore, who knowingly promote the reprobate can in no way flatter themselves with this example of the prophet, because it is done innocently only when no signs of subsequent iniquity were apparent in them at the time they were promoted. For this reason also, those who were appointed by Samuel as judges of Israel were fittingly called his sons when they were appointed, so that from this they might be believed not only to have been begotten from him according to the flesh, but also adorned with the splendors of his manner of life. For this reason also their names are carefully recorded, so that from the title of the name that form of virtue which was then in them might be recognized. The name of one, he says, was Joel, and of the other Abiah; they were judges in Beersheba.

But also concerning those who are said to have turned aside to greed after receiving their office, it is clearly shown that before they attained the height of that same office, no signs

of future depravity were seen in them. But behold, while we attend to the consolations of pastors, we perceive no small dangers for the Lord's flock. For the prophet's sons stood firm as subjects, but fell when placed at the height of authority—so that if, while we are placed under the care of superiors, an unceasing zeal for holy life or the confidence of a great manner of living smiles upon us, we should nevertheless hold the governing of others not in the appetite of desire but in the greatness of fear. But carnal people, while they attend only to visible things, do not deserve to know the spiritual manner of life of the saints. They look upon the eminence of the pastors of holy Church, but they do not know how to consider how unwillingly those pastors bear inwardly the distinction which they hold outwardly in the splendor of eminence, that they endure the loftiness of honor as the oppression of a great burden, that they flee with great desire what they pursue in outward ministry. For with the outstanding teacher as witness we have learned that the natural man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

Whence also, pursuing carnal things, he errs all the more madly to the degree that through the power of discernment he no longer penetrates any spiritual things. And some such people advance to so great an evil of madness that they do not fear to disturb even the very state of ecclesiastical eminence. Whence it also follows: (Verses 4, 5. Therefore all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Ramah, and said to him: Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Appoint a king over us, to judge us as all the nations have.

3. But for those who were living under spiritual governance, to ask for a king—what else is it than to eagerly desire to transform that same spiritual leadership into secular domination? Yet when holy men see that they are despised by their subjects, what displeases them is not so much that they are despised, but that those who despise them do not please God. For by the contempt shown to them, they see that increases are given to their own interior glory; but they groan that their merits are increased by the failings of their subjects, whom they would rather have advance in merits, so that in the eternal reward of merits they might have been able to have with them those over whom they preside. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 6) The word was displeasing in the eyes of Samuel, because they had said: Give us a king, to judge us.

4. For what displeased him was that through which he judged those who were speaking to be displeasing to God. But because it is not simply said, "the matter displeased Samuel," but "in the eyes of Samuel," and immediately it is added: (Verse 6. "And Samuel prayed to the Lord for the people," we ought to consider these things somewhat more carefully. Holy men, who greatly fear displeasing Almighty God, are not hasty in their judgments, but first arrange all things rationally within themselves, so that they may dispose of them outwardly in action without reproach. For they accept no choice of judgment unless it is approved by the contemplation of reason. The Lord indeed wished to open these eyes of the prophet when He said: "See with your eyes, and hear with your ears" (Ezek. 40:4). Hence in the Gospel He said to the disciples: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see" (Luke 10:23). For the eyes

of the saints are the understanding of reason, opened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And therefore they are said to be Samuel's, because all carnal people, even if they seem rational through human wisdom, are all the more blind to this light of reason, inasmuch as they see only with those eyes which the serpent opened. For if they could behold the splendor of spiritual virtues, they would surely desire to possess it as the adornment of their mind.

So great indeed is the beauty of these virtues that their sight can never fail to be desired with longing by the one who sees them. Therefore the wise of this world, when they suppose themselves to possess the eyes of reason, can recognize from this how madly they rage: because not to be attracted by the beauty of holy virtues is surely not only not to perceive their glory, but not even to dream of it. Therefore holy men, who are already bound by the love of interior things through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, have the eyes of their mind all the clearer for seeing the glory of inward brightness, the more they have no desire for anything from the darkness of the world; and they can discern carnal things all the more rightly, the further they have been raised up from carnal things and have advanced more deeply into the grace of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Apostle Paul also, from the experience of so great a vision, pronounced the sentence, saying: "The spiritual man judges all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). Rightly therefore it is said: "The matter displeased in the eyes of Samuel. Because by spiritual men nothing is despised before it is judged to be worthy of contempt through the spiritual insight of the mind. And because the more abundantly they are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the less they presume upon the loftiness of their own virtue, there follows: "And Samuel prayed to the Lord.

For what did he pray to the Lord, if not that He would deign to show him whether he ought to give assent to the petition of the tumultuous people? (Verses 7, 8. "And the Lord said to Samuel: Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them, according to all their works which they have done from the day when I brought them out of Egypt even to this day."

5. Because it is said to the prophet as he prays, "Set a king over them," it is clearly shown that he asked for it to be revealed to him whether this should be done. And because He adds, saying, "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them," it is fittingly shown how displeasing to Him was the request which is reported to have been displeasing in the eyes of Samuel. This harmony of judgment arises in the saints from the power of charity: because while they love the Creator with their whole mind and devoutly strive to obey His will, they receive as a reward of heavenly recompense that they do not diverge in their thinking from that same will of almighty God, which they always hold fast in good works. For it is written: "He who clings to God is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). For he clings to the Lord who always strives to carry out the commands of His will. But he becomes one spirit with Him: because through long devotion of pious work he is raised to such a degree of grace of divine knowledge that he can no longer dissent from the fairness of His inner judgment through the error of a worldly spirit. But it is very difficult to answer if it is asked

why almighty God both complains that He was rejected in the request for a king, and yet decrees that what was requested should come to pass;

and again, if royal dignity was to be established, why it was permitted as though by an offended divine majesty; and when a foreseen king is decreed to be chosen, why one who would be rejected is chosen. What else can we answer to these things except what the apostle Paul would answer to those daring to search the ineffable abyss of God's judgments: "O man," he says, "who are you to answer back to God? (Rom. 9:20). But if we cannot resolve this effectively, we can touch upon it by inquiring. Perhaps He complains that He was rejected in the request for a king? On account of the reprobate will of the people asking wrongly, the requested king is granted as a punishment. If this is said reasonably, since He put forward both things, He showed both the fault and the retribution together. For he who is shown to have rejected the Creator by his asking is convicted of having made an unjust demand out of a reprobate will. Therefore the penalty of strict justice followed upon the fault of the wicked request. For great indeed is the punishment that proceeds from the severity of the inner examination, when a reprobate mind is so cast away that it is permitted to carry out what it wrongly decides.

Those, therefore, who were convicted of having rejected the Lord in asking for a king—since they were permitted to do that by which they would cast the Lord away from themselves—there was no heavier punishment with which they ought to have been struck here.

6. In this place it should be noted that the Lord makes the rejection of the prophet His own. For He does not simply say, "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them," but rather, "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them. So as to clearly show that in the person of the chosen bishop, He Himself presides over His subjects; and when a carnal ruler is raised to the spiritual summit of the elect, He Himself is seen to be rejected whose precepts are cast aside. Therefore, how worthy of reverence the best pastors of the holy Church are is plain. For behold, while they faithfully serve God, they are joined to Him by so great a bond of love that whatever is inflicted upon them is ascribed as an injury to God. Whence also in the Gospel He says to the first pastors of the Church: "He who despises you despises me" (Luke 10:16). Where something even graver is perceived: because when He complains that the pastor has been rejected, all the sins of those who reject him are recalled, and even the evils of their forefathers are mentioned. "According to all their works," He says, "which they have done from the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. For the supreme crime is recognized, for whose examination all past sins are brought back into the memory of God.

And so the Lord complains that He has been rejected, and yet grants that one to be ordained in whom He is rejected: because when He executes the power of His strict justice, the desires of carnal men are by no means prevented from being fulfilled through His mercy. But also that dignity which could have been granted as a punishment ought not to have been granted with the tranquil majesty of divinity, but as if with indignation. However, we do not assert that the indignant majesty of God is indignant in itself, which is not subject to passion: but

because when He examines faults, He speaks words of indignation through the Scriptures. Likewise, because a king is taken up as a type of carnal prelates, a king destined for rejection is chosen, not an elect one. Or perhaps a reprobate king is chosen for this reason, that his elect successor, King David, might learn from him what he ought to have guarded against. Thus indeed we also read concerning that court of angels, because of the first apostate angel it is written: "He is the beginning of the ways of God" (Job 40:14); but he who was created before all things fell through pride, and in his ruin the holy angels learned by what virtue they could have stood firm. Which indeed, whoever can behold with the open eyes of right faith equally observes: that Almighty God bestows the gifts of great mercy even when He inflicts punishment;

because while He punishes the reprobate, He instructs the saints, so that from where those fall, these may be aided in their progress.

7. By strict judgment indeed He permits evils to be done, but mercifully He provides from those evils which He inflicts through judgment, things which He arranges to make into good. For what greater fault is there than that by which we all die? And what greater goodness than that by which we are freed from death? And indeed, if Adam had not sinned, it would not have been necessary for our Redeemer to take on our flesh. For He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). If therefore He came for sinners, if sins were lacking, it would not have been necessary for Him to come. If the sins, which He is believed to have come to destroy, are understood to have been permitted by the justice of God: since God was to be born as man for sinners, almighty God had foreseen that from that evil by which they were to die, He would bring about a good that would overcome that evil. The greatness of this good—what faithful person does not see how wonderfully it excels? Great indeed are the evils we suffer through the desert of the first sin, but what elect person would not prefer to endure worse things rather than not have so great a Redeemer? Let a king therefore be chosen—but one to be rejected; let him be chosen as if by the indignation, not the will, of God.

Let there then follow a king after God's own heart, so that from the severity of His judgment the evil of vengeance may proceed against the reprobate, and the good which He was to bring about from evil may, through the bounty of divine grace, overflow upon the pious, while those others are permitted to fall into the evil they desire. But from what those men cast themselves down, it is brought about that others may not fall at all. But since by these words the judgment of divine severity is affirmed, let us now see how great a dispensation He employs, lest those deliberating wrongly do that for which they would be punished. For there follows: (Verse 9) Now therefore hear their voice; yet solemnly warn them, and declare to them the right of the king who shall reign over them.

8. As if by an open display of clemency He says: So hear their voices, yet let them first hear concerning the right of the king whom they seek, something that will make them tremble; and let them then abandon what was badly begun, when the thing they were seeking is recognized to be how burdensome it is. There follows: (Verses 10-17.) So Samuel told all

the words of the Lord to the people who had asked him for a king, and said: This will be the right of the king who is to rule over you. He will take your sons and place them in his chariots, and will make them his horsemen and runners before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions, and plowmen of his fields, and reapers of his harvests, and makers of his weapons and chariots. Your daughters also he will make his perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will also take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his servants. Moreover, he will take a tenth of your grain crops and the produce of your vineyards, to give to his eunuchs and servants. He will also take your male servants and female servants, your best young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will also take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will be his slaves.

9. When subjection is sought by carnal men, assuredly whatever is commanded them is burdensome, even if it is not difficult: because since they have it from the swelling of pride that they follow the judgment of their own will, whatever opposes their deliberation they consider most grievous. But indeed when harsh and contrary things are commanded, what a weight of burden is that! What swelling of heart! When they could scarcely bear even pleasant and light things unwillingly—things which, if they had been willing, they would have borne most easily. Let us therefore see how the pious dispensation of the Creator worthily answers the foolish audacity of man. The laws of men are set before those who despise the laws of God; and upon those who had spurned the mild and salutary counsels of the Divinity, the harsh and unbearable burdens of human servitude are proclaimed: so that from these things they might reckon with themselves how intolerable the commands of man would be for those who had refused to obey the counsels of God—who was not so much commanding as advising them not to seek this. But the hearts of carnal men possess recklessness from the increase of audacity, and hardness from the nature of pretense. From recklessness indeed they deliberate upon things easy to do; but because they do not understand what they wrongly propose, they cannot be helped by the counsels of those who are wiser. Wherefore here too it is added: (Verse 19.) The people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel. And they said: By no means: for a king shall be over us, and we also shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and shall go out before us, and shall fight our battles for us.

10. It was indeed a matter of great rashness to ask for a king against God's will; of great hardness, to be unable to be overcome by the counsels of the prophet. It was of great rashness to put forth arguments to him whom they knew, by the Lord's revelation, to know beforehand all that he was about to do. Of great hardness, not to yield to him whom they knew to command only those things which he had learned by the Lord's revelation. For what is it that they say in response: "By no means, but a king shall be over us"? But those who say "By no means" surely deny what they hear. It is therefore openly shown by this word that the prophet set forth the heavy right of the king for this purpose: that he should by no means be requested. But they hear the right of the king, and they detest the very purpose for which it is set forth—so that the progress of reprobate hearts is expressed, in which there is the consummation of an evil purpose and the unconvertibility of the will. But

we blame ancient times, we who do not care to see our own. Which times, indeed, the more aged they are as the world grows old, the more lax they become in many things through the fault of time and negligence.

For so much the more boldly do we now propose evil things, inasmuch as already, with the vigorous youth of the age, the strength of the human condition has withered; so much the more difficultly do we recall what has been badly proposed, inasmuch as from the loosened vigor of the spirit, our mind becomes carnal. For such are human failings, that what is lacking in spiritual virtue is strengthened in carnal life. All these things indeed, according to the voice of the excellent teacher: "These things happened to them in figure, but they were written for our sake" (1 Cor. 10:11). Already indeed we openly recognize the audacity of these Israelites, which the judgments of divine indignation followed; and yet we do not fear to propose courses of action against the will of God, against the counsel of the prelates of Holy Church. When rebuked in an evil purpose, we also resist, and we attempt to overcome the salutary counsels of our superiors by the unconquerable evil of obstinacy. We see how great an increase of evil it is to behold those who perish, and not to fear to follow their footsteps to perdition; to see those running into the penal snares of death, and by no means to dread being entangled in the same snares. And they indeed asked for a king against the Lord's will; but from the royal dignity it afterward came about that the people, who had cast God aside, worshipped idols and adored images.

We therefore see how worthy of reverence the counsels of our elders are, if we carefully consider this: that those who dared to despise them did not foresee that they were doing that by which they could be plunged into so deep a sea of error. Rightly therefore does the Lord complain that He was rejected in the petition for a king; rightly does He grant the royal dignity in anger. So great indeed was the iniquity of those asking, that when they sought that through which they would depart from God, it could be permitted by God's judgment but could not be prohibited. But since we have said these things according to the letter, let us also see what those things which are contained in the right of the king signify spiritually.

CHAPTER II. 1. For when Samuel was rejected, a king was sought: when the reprobate multitude of the people despises a spiritual pastor and seeks a carnal one to rule over them. With such people it is often dealt by the severity of divine justice, so that by the very fact that they despise the chosen preacher, they are permitted to be subject to a reprobate, from whose imitation they perish all the more grievously, the more boldly they despised with greater pride that by which they could have lived forever. When therefore the right of the king is foretold, clearly it is shown in the conduct of one carnal ruler what the other carnal ones will do through tyranny, not what the elect ought to imitate. For in the same history of Kings it is read that when King Ahab took away Naboth's vineyard, he incurred the wrath of almighty God. But here, when the right of the king is foretold, fields, vineyards, and the best olive groves are mentioned as things to be seized (1 Kings 21:2 ff.). When therefore what was committed and punished there is foretold here, it shows that it is not commanded by divine judgment. Wherefore also the chosen King David, when he sought the threshing

floor of Ornan the Jebusite for building an altar to the Lord, did not wish to use that royal right of tyrants (1 Chronicles 21:24), since he would by no means consent to receive it unless he had first given a worthy price for it.

2. Since, therefore, the things contained in the law of the king are declared to be avoided rather than imitated, they must be considered all the more carefully inasmuch as they cannot be avoided if they are not known. He says, then: 'He will take your sons and place them in his chariots.' The sons of the elect are those who imitate their virtues. The chariots of carnal prelates, moreover, are the pomp of worldly pride. For while they glory in being more exalted than others, they stride through the heights as if carried on chariots. The sons of the faithful are therefore placed in chariots when they follow reprobate pastors through the desire for worldly glory — when, abandoning spiritual pursuits, they seek the advantages of a carnal life, and, laying aside that lofty intention directed toward heavenly things, they strive to attain the heights of the world. Fittingly, then, the sons of the Israelites are said to be placed not in a chariot but in chariots, because from everything that excels at the summit of carnal prelates, they advance in pride, and they raise themselves on high by as many lofty chariots, so to speak, as the lofty things they behold by which they consider themselves superior to others. The king, therefore, places the sons of the good in his chariots when a carnal ruler drags the imitators of the elect by the example of his own depravity into the vices of pride — so that they set aside heavenly things, seek earthly things, and rejoice in this alone: that by reason of what is temporally exalted, they are preferred above others.

3. And because against the lesser they are not only raised up but also strong, there follows: "And he will make for himself horsemen." For they rage as if on horses, who are both exalted in rank and fierce in power. They are horsemen also because, while they direct the fierce impulses of their heart against the powerless, they are swift toward everything that they desire to carry out through tyranny. They pant with violence, they foam with rage, and those whom they attack in the course of their tyranny, they crush. But while among wicked pastors some emulate the pride of worldly arrogance, and others by their example oppress those whom they can: there are even some who, to carry out the evils that they cannot inflict upon the good by themselves, bring in others more wicked than themselves. Whence there also follows: "And the forerunners of his chariots."

4. For what are the chariots of the king, if not the perverse minds of wicked subjects, in whose counsels the reprobate prelate finds his rest? For chariots are what carry kings: since through the wicked counsels of the depraved, the deeds of rulers are aided. In them, as it were, the king is carried on high, since through those who favor them for the sake of temporal honors, whatever carnal superiors desire from the loftiness of the world they carry out. These are rightly designated by the name of chariots. For a chariot stands firm on the very thing by which it turns: because the reprobate mind has as the end of its intention the fickleness of the world. Indeed, it finds rest in the very thing from which, through innumerable cares of a revolving mind, it does not cease to fan the affairs of the world. Therefore they are chariots of kings, since through everything lofty they think of by turning it over,

they carry upon themselves the commands of carnal superiors. But those who hold a place of familiarity alongside carnal prelates have subordinates whom they may command. They themselves, therefore, are like the chariots of the king, while the others are the forerunners of the chariots; because in the same way that they convey the carnal superior to oppress the humble, they themselves too are led through the service of others to harm whomever they can.

For he is, as it were, a forerunner of the chariots, who by the wicked cunning of his mind devises a stratagem by which he may introduce that one to inflict evils upon the meek. But if, as many manuscripts have it, we read not ”forerunners” but ”pursuers” of the chariots, they are certainly those who imitate the reprobate as they rush toward evil. A chariot is also customarily used to carry kings as a mark of honor. Therefore the king is, as it were, stationed in a chariot, when a carnal ruler glories in the flatteries of the great men who appear to be near him. But whoever precedes or follows these men in their praises is a forerunner or pursuer of the chariots, because these men utter either after or before the same flatteries that those others have scattered in the ears of the people by going ahead or following behind.

5. There follows: ’And he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions.’ Tribunes and centurions are made when they come to such an advance in evil that, for carrying out the tyrant’s commands, they take command over impious attendants, when they arrange the battle lines of worldly forces, which they lead forth to wars against the innocent. Tribunes indeed are those who, through many supporters allied to them, lay ambushes against those living uprightly. Centurions, however, are those who omit no kind of harm. For they obtain the perfection of iniquity from this: that they always strive to inflict the many and enormous evils that they can. For the centurion is named from the number one hundred. And because the number one hundred signifies perfection, it is fulfilled in an evil sense when the summit of wickedness is reached by the impious. They are indeed smooth in cunning and violent in terror. They sweetly flatter some, so that with their help they may fiercely terrify others. And so there rightly follows: ’And the plowmen of his fields, and the reapers of his harvests.’

6. The fields of the carnal ruler are the minds of his subjects; and the plowmen of these fields are those who, by the craft of worldly cunning, persuade them to acts of wickedness. For they open up, as it were, the firmness of the fields by speaking, those who through wicked counsels corrupt the hearts of the simple. And they reap the crops when, by the seed of evil counsel, the deceived hearts of the lesser ones yield the fruit of wicked works. Which works are indeed designated by the name of crops: because the perversity of the wicked subject, when it is joyfully received by carnal rulers, is, as it were, the choice food of their mind. In which perversity, because they advance little by little, there follows: ”And makers of his weapons and of his chariots.” What are the weapons and chariots of tyrants, if not all those instruments of harm that are prepared for overthrowing the hearts of the lesser ones? But because by the chariot one arrives where one may strike with weapons, they become makers of the king’s weapons and chariots when, by the most wicked machination of their

hearts, they devise both the evils they should commit and the manner in which to inflict those same devised evils. For to forge weapons is to gather up kinds of harm with a wicked mind. And to forge chariots is to find the craft by which they can approach to inflict those same evils.

7. There follows: He will also make your daughters perfumers, and cooks, and bakers. By the name of daughters, the weak minds placed within holy Church are designated. These become the king's perfumers: because when they behold carnal rulers in the height of passing glory, they endeavor to soothe them with flatteries. The Psalmist, indeed rejecting the use of these ointments, says: Let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head (Psalm 141:5). The daughters therefore become perfumers: because when the weak fear to displease carnal rulers, they soften with blandishment the ferocity to which they are subject through fear. And it should be noted that the sons are said first to be taken by the king, and then made horsemen and centurions or makers of arms: but the daughters are not said to be taken, but simply to be made perfumers and bakers. For to be taken implies violence. The sons therefore are taken, because the strong are overthrown with difficulty. When therefore the daughters are said not to be taken but to be made perfumers, what else does this mean except that those who are weak in goodness are easily scattered by the examples of the wicked? They also become the king's cooks and bakers: because those who serve tyrants by flattering them, while they please them by showing favor, offer them food as it were. For the cooks are those who cook at the hearth what kings eat. They are therefore cooks who, through services of favor, kindle the swelling of pride in the carnal ruler's heart: so that he receives flatteries all the more boldly, inasmuch as they prepare for him, as it were, more delicate foods by the fire of aroused devotion. They also become bakers: because when they praise a reprobate life, they strengthen the carnal mind of the tyrant to practice wickedness.

8. There follows: "He will also take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. What are the fields of good men, if not the devoted minds of their subjects? For while they willingly hear their words, they yield an abundant fruit of good works. And what are their vineyards, if not the minds of those who so advance by imitating the proficient that they even offer the word of life to others, and those whom they set ablaze by speaking into love of the Creator, they make drunk, as it were, by giving them drink? And what are the olive groves, if not the hearts of listeners who, by the example and exhortation of good men, advance in the work of mercy? But when a king is established, the fields are taken away: because when carnal men reach the height of governance, some of the good listeners take up examples of wickedness. The fields are therefore taken away when recently devoted hearts are led astray, when from the seed of wickedness they yield fruit in evil conduct. The olive groves and vineyards are taken away when, by the example of a wicked superior, works of mercy and the words of holy preaching that ought to be displayed and spoken are abandoned. And rightly it is recorded that the taken fields, vineyards, and olive groves are given to the king's servants. For servants are those who, always subject to the authority of their masters, cannot escape the yoke of domination.

The servants of the king, therefore, are those who through abundant iniquity so bind themselves to the wills of tyrants that they no longer depart from them. The servants therefore receive the taken fields, vineyards, and olive groves: because the reprobate supporters of carnal prelates, when they transfer deceived hearts to the purpose of wicked work, impose the title of tyrannical power, as it were, upon the fields, vineyards, and olive groves of the elect. There follows: "But he will also tithe your crops and the revenues of your vineyards, to give to his eunuchs and his servants. When the wicked are in charge, it is very difficult that one who is subject to them should suffer no losses to his religion. For the minds of some perish entirely: but those whom they cannot completely pervert, while they unceasingly observe their wicked words and deeds, are stained with some sort of defilement. Rightly therefore it is said: "He will tithe your crops and the revenues of your vineyards. As if to say: Under a reprobate pastor, even the goods of the elect are not whole. But what is taken from the good is given to the eunuchs and servants of the king. The eunuchs and servants of carnal prelates are their hypocritical listeners. They are eunuchs indeed because they show themselves to have cast off worldly pleasure: but they are the king's servants because through everything they pretend to have of virtues, they bear upon themselves the yoke of their reprobate superiors.

And rightly the tithe of the crops and vineyards is said to belong to the eunuchs: because the poison of hypocrites is not easily recognized. Inasmuch as even holy men can be deceived in this, what they lose is ascribed to those by whose fraud they are captured. There follows: "He will also take your male servants and female servants, and your best young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. The male and female servants of the saints are those who supply them with temporal necessities. They are male and female servants because, while they provide them with bodily necessities, in this same work of mercy some are stronger than others. And the best young men: because both those who can do much and those who can do little, when they expend all that they are able in the work of mercy, like chosen young men, they powerfully carry out divine services. The donkeys of the elect are also those upon whom the burdens of obedience to be borne are imposed, so that they may help their frailty by bearing with them what they could by no means bear without them. But what does it mean that they are foretold to be put to the king's work? Those who are put to the king's work fulfill on appointed days the debt of compulsory labor owed to the authority of the public power.

What then does it mean that the male and female servants and the best young men are foretold to be put to the king's work, except that when carnal men are in authority, both the ministers of the elect and the hearts of those who devoutly obey are frequently stained? For while they unceasingly behold their reprobate life, they gradually decline so far as to imitate something of their deeds. Through long custom indeed they serve the elect; but since they often see the eminence of their high position, they sometimes desire to be served by others through the impulse of pride. They also give their own possessions mercifully, but often by the example of tyrants they take what belongs to others. But because they are servants of the saints, they cannot depart from their authority. They can indeed be abandoned for a

time, but from the error into which they fall, they are easily raised up through divine mercy. Because therefore those who quickly come to their senses fall through the examples of the wicked, they are put to the king's work as if by compulsory labor: in which they do not long remain through continuous servitude.

9. There follows: "He will also tithe your flocks, and you shall be his servants. As if to say: When a carnal pastor is placed over you, plunder of virtues is inflicted not only upon your possessions, but also upon yourselves. For the flocks of the elect are the multitudes of spiritual virtues. But since these very spiritual virtues are scattered by the example of the wicked, the king takes tithes of the flock when he who rules carnally destroys certain virtues in the hearts of the saints. He takes tithes: because while he scatters the integrity of the mind, he leaves the number of virtues incomplete. For perfection is signified by the number ten. Hence also, when the Lord showed the losses of our fallen humanity by an open comparison, He brought forward the woman who had lost one of ten drachmas (Luke 15:4 ff.); so that by this, because the number ten is shown to have been diminished, that heavenly fellowship which remained in the angels at the number nine might be taught to be imperfect without the restoration of our condition. And because tithes are exacted each year, those who do not cease to offer tithes are fittingly said to be servants of the king. For they serve each year those by whose example they often become worse. It can also be shown through this—that after the tithes are given, this servitude is asserted—as an evil progression. For those who gradually fail act daily in such a way that they are led to the depths of iniquity.

He says therefore: "He will tithe your flocks, and you shall be his servants. As if to say: By the example of the wicked you will gradually fall away, but in falling you act so that you never withdraw from imitating them. For it is written: "By whom a person is overcome, of him he is made a servant" (2 Peter 2:19). Because indeed through imitating a reprobate pastor they fall into the servitude of sin, they cannot be freed from his yoke even when they wish. Hence it is also added: (Verse 18. "And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day: because you asked for yourselves a king."

10. As if to say, you are gradually slipping into the knowledge of his wicked imitation; but the examples of his wickedness, to which you willingly submit yourselves, you are utterly unable to willingly abandon. For everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34). Those, therefore, over whom sins hold dominion cannot be freed from their yoke by themselves. For often they come to the Lord with prayers, they ask to be freed, but they cannot be heard. For by divine judgment it is dealt with them such that those who were unwilling to avoid evils when they could, are unable to avoid them when they will; and those who willingly rushed into evils foreknown cannot flee from them once experienced. Therefore, also indicating the reason why they are prevented from being heard, he says: "Because you asked for yourselves a king." As if he were openly saying: Because you demanded that be given to you in which, by my foretelling, you knew all these things would come to pass. These things, as I said above, are foretold in the type of carnal prelates concerning the future conduct of

the king: so that they might desist from petitioning for him in whom they had recognized such great evils. But it is the nature of the hearts of the reprobate that they quickly propose evil and do not more quickly come to their senses from an evil purpose. Therefore it is also added: (Verses 19, 20.) But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said: "By no means! For a king shall be over us, and we also shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and shall go out before us, and shall fight our battles for us."

11. By these words indeed the morals of carnal subjects are openly described: because while they seek after outward things, they do not attend to inner losses even when these are set before them. But those who rule carnally, by the very display of temporal power, give their lesser subjects great hope of protection. Therefore when they say, "A king shall be over us, and he shall fight our battles for us," what else do they suggest but the morals of reprobate subjects, who despise humble and spiritual preachers in order to be helped temporally by carnal men? This they would certainly never do, had they not first lost the light of the heart. For if they outwardly despise the humility of spiritual men, they do not deserve to discern by what sublimity of power these inwardly excel; in those others too they see the outward tyranny of power, but they do not see by what weakness he is inwardly oppressed. The former, because they cling to God, are powerful even in outward things when they wish; the latter, who depart from the Lord, cannot fulfill by strength of action the hope they promise from secular power. For, to take examples from nearby, Saul was chosen as king for those requesting one to fight their battles — strong and powerful, so that, as this sacred history testifies (1 Kings 9:2), he stood above all the people from the shoulder and upward.

Chosen therefore by God to govern the kingdom, when he was good and no one among the sons of Israel was better than he, nevertheless, when so great and such a man was left to carnal strength, he lost the battles he had undertaken to fight, and lost his life as well (1 Kings 31:1). But Samuel, who was not exalted by the power of the world, who humbly ministered not only to God but also to men, powerfully displayed trophies from outward wars as well. For was it not said of him just above: "Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, and Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. And it came to pass, while Samuel was offering the burnt offering to the Lord, the Philistines began battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great crash on that day upon the Philistines and terrified them, and the Philistines were struck down by the sons of Israel" (1 Kings 7:9, 10). Let him therefore say: "The people refused to hear the voice of Samuel," so that in their disobedience the hearts of the proud may be designated, so cast off by the judgment of divine equity that great evils threaten which they are about to incur — yet they cannot see them. There follows: (Verse 21. "And Samuel heard all the words of the people."

12. Samuel indeed heard what the people had spoken, but the people themselves did not hear him. For the reprobate people to speak and not to hear was to utter words against the will of God, yet not at all to foresee the punishment for their wicked speech. But Samuel heard the words of the people, because spiritual men, when they hear the voices of proud

speech, recognize the future desert of divine vengeance upon them. Let him say therefore: Samuel heard all the words of the people, because holy and spiritual men, whatever carnal people proudly sound forth outwardly, weigh inwardly what it amounts to in the divine judgment. But because, when they discover the damnable life of their carnal subjects, they intercede for the blotting out of their crimes, there follows: (Verse 21. And he spoke them in the ears of the Lord. We speak in the ears of those with whom we have the grace of great intimacy. But holy men, because they are joined to almighty God in the bond of great love, speak in His ears, because they seek the hearing of His divine propitiation with all the more confidence, the more sublimely they have received a place of obtaining favor before His mercy. They speak the sins of the people indeed for the humility of confession, but they speak in the ears of the Lord, because with great affection they knock at the door of the Lord's propitiation through prayer.

But perhaps he is said to speak in the ears of the Lord because, when holy men beseech on behalf of sinners, they do not reveal to men the prayers they offer to God for them. Whence also in the Gospel the Lord forbids the disciples, saying: When you pray, do not be like the sad hypocrites, who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, so that they may be seen by men (Matt. 6:5). They speak therefore the words or deeds of the people, when they set before the Lord the offenses of speech and action that must be blotted out by prayers. But they speak these things in the ears of the Lord, so that while they flee the testimony of men when praying, they may be heard more swiftly by Him who regards what is hidden. Therefore, when Samuel is reported to speak in the ears of the Lord, he surely suggests the manner by which one may deserve the hearing of divine favor. For a prayer can by no means reach God which is brought forth with the intention of being recognized by men. Whence also he who is declared to have spoken in the ears of the Lord is reported to have received His answers as well. For there follows: (Verse 22. And the Lord said to Samuel: Listen to the voice of the people, and establish a king over them.

13. In this matter it should be noted that Samuel spoke the words of the people, by which they had asked for a king, in the ears of the Lord; and the Lord declares Himself rejected in the fact that the people ask for a king. Therefore, when He responds to the one praying and commands the one praying to make a king, what else does He indicate except that the devout prayer of a chosen man is never fruitless? For if he did not obtain the correction of the people, he obtained the good of his own instruction, since he recognized the people as rejected for their evil request, and yet nonetheless knew what he himself ought to do for those who were cast off. The prophet, therefore, was able to be heard and not heard: because through praying he learned what he ought to be, but from the people demanding reprobate things, he did not remove the hardness of heart. But this he was able to obtain—he who spoke in the ears of the Lord—because holy men, by the very fact that they devoutly beseech the Lord on behalf of sinners, are fortified by the help of divine favor, so that they are in no way polluted by the crimes of those whose filth they cannot wash away by their prayers. But what does it mean that the Lord says, "Listen to their voices," when it was said above, "Samuel heard all the words of the people"?

He had heard the words of the people so as to know what was being said, not so as to grant what was being asked. Therefore, when the Lord says to him, "Listen to the voice of the people, and set a king over them," He commanded the prophet to comply with the will of the people. And behold, as is plainly seen, the prophet praying is not heard, while the people rejecting God and asking for a king are heard. What shall we say this means, except that by the wondrous and fearful judgment of divine incomprehensibility, holy men praying on behalf of the reprobate cannot be heard, while in the fulfillment of their own depravities, the reprobate sinners themselves can be heard—so that for the latter, unbridled iniquity may increase the merit of eternal punishment, and for the former, the reward of perpetual recompense may grow from the affection of compassion? And immediately, beginning to show the order by which the appointment of that same king was reached, he says: (Verse 22. And Samuel said to all the sons of Israel: Let each one go to his own city.

14. When we wish to examine spiritual matters, it is necessary that we remove carnal things from our attention: because the inner mind does not penetrate what the dust of outward actions blinds. Therefore, when the prophet of the Lord commands all the people to depart to their own places, he drives from himself the tumult of carnal concerns: so that he may see more clearly the spiritual matters that must be arranged, insofar as the intention of earthly actions does not obscure the keenness of his mind. But indicating what sort of person is foreseen by divine judgment, he says: CHAPTER III. (1 Kings IX, 1, 2.) There was a man of Benjamin, named Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of a man of Gemini, strong in might. And he had a son named Saul, chosen and good, and there was no man among the children of Israel better than he: from the shoulder and upward he stood taller than all the people.

1. When the person of the king to be appointed is set forth, why are the names of his fathers described, unless so that his kingdom might be perceived as not enduring? For concerning the kingdom which Moses had foreseen would come, he said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a ruler from his thigh, until he comes who is to be sent; and he shall be the expectation of the nations" (Gen. 49:10). Because therefore the tribe of Judah had been foreseen for the lasting duration of the kingdom, the lineage of Kish is mentioned, so that the royal dignity which was being established in his son might be openly known to be dispensatory, not permanent. But he who begets the carnal king, Kish—that is, "hard" as it is rendered in our language—is also proclaimed strong in might. Now also many carnal people are within the holy Church who seem to do great things; yet they are carnal because they do not have the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are therefore strong in might because everything which they seem to do greatly is bodily. For Kish the father of Saul is called strong in might so that he might be understood to have possessed great bodily strength. He who is strong in might, therefore, is hard, because he who displays great things carnally does not have a heart softened through compassion in fraternal charity.

He acts powerfully in things which men outwardly cannot imitate, but inwardly he does not know how to be joined to fraternal minds through the affection of love. He does mighty

things which God rejects, and he does not care to display the affection of charity which God approves. He is therefore hard, because while he does bodily things with a proud heart, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not soften his mind. Against this the holy man glories, saying: "God has softened my heart, and the Almighty has troubled me" (Job 23:16). And often those who imitate the ways of such people become rulers by the judgment of God. Whence also Saul is fittingly recorded to have been the son of Kish.

2. But it must be asked why the same Saul is said to be chosen and good, who is declared to be the son of a harsh man. But he is called chosen not according to grace, but according to judgment. He is also called good so that the disposition of divine equity may be commended. For even the evils that we often suffer on account of our sins, because they are inflicted on us through divine justice, are good. Whatever is just is certainly good. For by the justice of God, reprobate pastors are permitted to ascend to the governance of the holy Church; but those who are evil through iniquity are good by divine disposition; and those who are now chosen by the hidden ordering of God will ultimately be condemned at the universal judgment. Therefore, let the reprobate pastor be called chosen, because it is decreed by God's indignation that he should exist; and let him be called good, because he is justly permitted. Likewise, because he is provided as more useful than others for carrying out divine judgments, no one among the sons of Israel is said to be better than he. He is also recorded as standing out above all the people from the shoulder and upward, because he who follows the ways of carnal men in his manner of living strives mightily to do what another cannot do. For the carnal ruler stands out above the entire people from the shoulder and upward, since in external matters he is strong beyond comparison.

3. All these words can also be understood as words of praise, by which, while the person of the king to be appointed is commended, the intention of those requesting a king is confounded. For they say: "A king shall be over us, and he shall judge us, and he shall fight our battles for us" (1 Sam. 8). He is called chosen and good, and that there was no one better than he among the sons of Israel, so that all good qualities might excel in the person of the requested king; but when he proves insufficient for what the people had proposed, human presumption is confounded, so that it wastes away in defeat. And indeed, as I said above, the king who is chosen to go before the people and fight their battles, when he is abandoned by divine help, perished overwhelmed in battle, and for the people whom he had led into those same battles, he became a cause not of salvation but of death. What, then, would the people attribute to God if he who had been chosen as king by God's judgment had not proven so suitable for carrying out what the people wanted? He can also be understood as chosen and good, as he is described, not as he was foreseen to be in the future. He is therefore called chosen and good, so that he is understood to have been chosen as such by the Lord—he who through disobedience was later rejected. For this reason, logic itself demands that what is said about him as chosen and good up to the time of his rejection, we should understand in a favorable sense.

CHAPTER IV.

1. Therefore, repeating all things in summary, let us see what edification they contain in themselves according to another meaning. Because we said that in Samuel the new priesthood is signified, what does it mean that he grew old, except that while the holy Church is led through the passing spans of time, the beauty of conduct grows old in some priests? Now Samuel grew old because the vigor of authority withered. For Samuel was as if young when the order of priests, yearning only for heavenly desires, while seeking nothing earthly, the more effectively it could preach heavenly things, the more it nonetheless kindled the souls of those subject to them toward those things by words and examples. For he was strong in vigor and radiated with youthful beauty, while he displayed the power of the heavenly word in the splendor of holy conduct: because whatever he could powerfully preach by speaking, he strove also to show by living sublimely. For he both gave life to dead souls by the word; but shining forth with the wondrous flower of youth, he raised dead bodies by his command. Since he both gave sight to the blind, walking to the lame, and healing to all infirmities, and he so radiated with the beauty of most holy conduct, that it was of greater virtue to be able to live in this manner than to aid others in that way.

Therefore Samuel flourished as if in youth, when in the order of priests there equally shone forth both the wonderful virtue of works and such immense beauty of holy conduct. But it has already been a long time since Samuel grew old. For many ages have elapsed, during which many of those by whose virtue the joys of the world should have been driven from the hearts of others follow the love of the world. Yet we do not say this as though the holy Church has no religious men: but that few are those who at the height of preaching have perfectly known how to despise the world and cling to the highest desires. Therefore it is aptly said that Samuel is both old and prophesies. He is indeed old, because he has lost the rigor of austere conduct in many: yet he does not cease to prophesy, because while he has some spiritual strength, he powerfully displays the virtue of the provident spirit. This can fittingly be understood of one and the same preacher. They are indeed old and prophesy, who are so dissolved through negligence that they teach well but live badly. They set their sons as judges when they establish in the dignity of the priesthood those who look upon the times of their more lax life. Yet the young are ordained by the old: because those who come to be promoted promise strong things. Indeed they pledge the strongest profession of the priestly life, whose virtue they do not possess in their future conduct.

Therefore the young are promoted: because those who ordain them do not raise them to the height of so great an order before they receive from them a profession of virtue. For first they instruct them both how sublimely they should live and how carefully they should teach: that they ought to live sublimely for this reason, that they may be able to preach profitably, that they should always direct the purpose of their life toward heavenly things, that they should not seek temporal rewards from the labor of preaching, that they should not show partiality in judgment, but arrange all things with the just balance of equity: so that they may hear the difficulties of the ways of God, and say whether they are willing to undergo their labors.

2. Indeed, most people profess that they walk difficult paths while they seek after sacred orders; but when they arrive at what they sought, they neglect to maintain the steadfastness of their promise. Hence the sons of Samuel are fittingly reported not to have walked in his ways, but to have accepted bribes and perverted judgment. For the ways of Samuel are so called because they are set forth by the office of a preacher. His sons, therefore, do not walk in the ways of their father when those who ambitiously attain to sacred orders abandon the arduous paths of religious life shown to them by their elders, and by their perverse intention are plunged ever deeper into the desire for earthly things. Hence they are openly declared, after avarice, to have turned aside, accepted bribes, and perverted judgment. For those who neglect to labor for heavenly things must necessarily be bound more tightly in the desire for earthly ones. To turn aside after avarice is to be wholly carried away in intention by ambition for earthly things. For there are some who seek earthly gains through avarice, yet do not turn aside after avarice, because although they desire temporal things, they avoid incurring guilt in their pursuit of them. Those, therefore, turn aside after avarice who, for the sake of the earthly things they ardently seek, have no fear whatsoever of incurring guilt. They consider their own soul to be of less worth than anything they can covet. Hence comes violent plunder, hence secret thefts arise:

because those over whom the avaricious have power they oppress by violence, and upon those whose goods they cannot assault by force, they contrive to inflict theft. Often, too, those whom they cannot overpower by theft of hands, they ensnare by the falsehood of words. Hence the sons of Samuel, in an orderly progression, are marked out in the disordered confusion of avarice, when it is said: (1 Kings 8:3) "They turned aside after avarice, accepted bribes, and perverted judgment."

3. For those who perverted judgment in order to receive gifts did not seek the darkness of night to commit the theft of a coveted thing, but the darkness of reason. And it should be noted that the burning of avarice is the cause of accepting gifts, and the acceptance of gifts is the cause of perverting judgment: so that by the prophet's narration the depravity of this vice may be shown, not only how it advances in the hearts of the reprobate, but how it can be utterly uprooted from the minds of the saints. For if this perversity of judgment is born from the acceptance of gifts, he who does not accept gifts does not pervert judgment, and he easily rejects offered gifts who has thoroughly uprooted the root of avarice from his heart. But we gather this fault of the sons of Samuel more fully by seeing than by speaking. For if we look at the desolate places of the Churches, where the father grows old, the sons incur the mark of avarice, of accepted gifts, and of perverted judgment: because where the person of the ruler is dissolved through shameful gains, the hearts of the subject flock are easily scattered, so that they live wickedly in themselves and offer examples of depravity to others. But it is pleasing to greatly admire in these things the judgments of almighty God.

For the sons of Samuel, while they turn aside after avarice, while they accept gifts for the purpose of perverting judgment, bestow examples of depravity upon the people over whom they preside. But the people themselves, when they ask for a king, cast down the prophet's

sons from the height of power. But almighty God both receives the prayers of those asking for a king, and is angered that one is asked for. By these things we can certainly be disturbed, if we do not carefully examine their rationale. For what is more just than that he should fall by the judgment of the people, who so pursued the reprobate judgment of his own mind that the people following him would perish? But nevertheless, when priests live badly, they are not to be judged by laypeople. Therefore they worthily receive one more unworthy, who presumed to unworthily cast out one who was unworthy. For of the sons of Samuel it is said: "They accepted gifts and perverted judgments. But concerning that king whom the children of Israel request, very terrible threats are uttered, for it is said: "He will take your fields and olive groves, and give them to his servants" (1 Kings 8:14). And what wise person would not observe that it is more wicked to seize fields and vineyards by public violence than to exchange judgment under the pretext of truth in order to receive gifts? This fault is covered by a certain modesty, overshadowed by shame.

But that fault is seen as so much more wicked, the more openly and more atrociously it is perpetrated. But we have not yet arrived at discussing those times of the kingdom, in which these evils are described as happening even according to the letter: therefore while we speak according to our purpose about the chosen one and what is good, it seems useful that we also carefully examine how the law of the king, which is foretold, can be received in a good sense. For if it did not show something good spiritually, it would by no means be said in this sacred history: "Samuel spoke to the people the law of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book and placed it before the Lord" (1 Kings 10:15).

4. What does it mean that the sons of the Israelites are said to be placed in the king's chariots? The chariots of the prelates of holy Church are their devout desires. For while they fervently seek heavenly joys, they are carried aloft as if in chariots. Hence Elijah is said to have been raised to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:1), because indeed one who does not seek heavenly joys through lofty and fervent desires cannot be raised to them. When, therefore, good hearers begin through the examples of preachers to despise earthly things and to love eternal things, the sons of the Israelites are indeed placed in the kings' chariots. And it should be noted that they are said both to be taken up and to be placed in chariots, because they must first be drawn away from carnal desires so that they may be properly inflamed by the fires of heavenly love. Because these earthly desires are not easily abandoned, the sons are said to be taken up. For it must happen through great violence that the chosen hearer completely abandons earthly desires and raises himself on high to heavenly things. Concerning this violence the Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it" (Matt. 11:12). Concerning this Paul says: "No one will be crowned unless he has competed lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). This is also shown covertly by these words, because the sons who are taken up are said to be placed not on seats but in chariots.

The ancients were indeed accustomed to fight in chariots. And he who is carried in a chariot is borne lofty and terrible against the enemy. For chosen men are all the more lofty and terrible to hidden enemies the higher they have advanced in the sublimity of interior love.

They are indeed lofty because the suggestion of evil spirits does not reach up to their intention. They are also terrible because they can reject the counsels of evil spirits all the more easily the more firmly they stand in the contemplation of heavenly joy through the vigor of their innermost affection. Indeed whenever this is said to those who are still carnal, the goodness of holy warnings is shown to them. This is as if he were saying: Because you seek the role of virtue, under its discipline you cannot be free for the leisure of life. Therefore they are also said to become the king's horsemen and pursuers of the royal chariots, tribunes and centurions. All these indeed belong to earthly warfare. Therefore when they are declared to become horsemen, pursuers of chariots, tribunes, and centurions, they are summoned to every exercise of war. They are indeed horsemen when by the power of the spirit the flowing pleasures of their flesh are restrained and they rule with great power over all enticing impulses.

For he rides aloft as if on a horse who, set above his flesh through the good of chastity, free and swift, is able both to flee the enemy when he disdains him and to attack when he deigns to. Indeed through the fact that he has learned to rule well, he has received such increases of virtue that the enemy cannot withstand the charge as of a rushing horseman. And because in the strength of their virtue they follow the examples of the chosen Fathers, they are pursuers of the royal chariots. For the chariots of the king are the good examples of the chosen preacher. In them indeed he is shown both fighting and triumphing, because when we behold the holy works of the preacher, we indeed see him exalted both in the struggle of contest and in the power of triumph. But those oppressed by carnal desires can see him in his chariots but cannot pursue his chariots. For like foot soldiers on level ground they are sluggish in running, weak in battle. Therefore, that they may be able to pursue the royal chariots, let them first become horsemen, trample earthly desires, rule over their flesh, and glow white with the armor of chastity. Then indeed we can run after the chosen Fathers in spiritual battle all the more fittingly the more powerfully we strike the ranks of hidden enemies through that by which we laudably govern ourselves.

But if, as many manuscripts have it, we read not "pursuers" but "forerunners," it is not without a good meaning. A forerunner of the royal chariots is one who praises with his word the examples of the just. He certainly ought to be a horseman, because he is a worthless praiser who proclaims the lofty life and teaching of the saints which he by no means takes care to imitate with a lofty purpose. But he who knows how to set forth the life and teaching of others for the imitation of others already begins to be a master of spiritual warfare. Therefore it is well added: (1 Sam. 8:12) "And he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions."

5. They are tribunes when they begin; centurions when they are perfected in spiritual teaching. For indeed, as we said above, a centurion is so called from the number one hundred. Tribunes can also be understood as spiritual men, simple in knowledge, but inflamed with love of God and neighbor. Although they do not know how to speak of lofty and spiritual things, nevertheless through the examples of the elect, which they know, they strive to kindle those whom they can to the love of the Creator. A tribe is indeed called a kinship, or an

assembly. If therefore tribunes are so called from "tribe," those who bring forth the examples of the saints for the advancement of their neighbors are named tribunes. They come as an assembly, as it were, to destroy our rusticity, when they set before us those things by which holy men pleased almighty God. And when they set forth the particular virtues of very many saints, they open to us, as it were, the nobility of spiritual kinships. Centurions, therefore, can be understood as more perfect men, who, while they advance well under the teaching of preachers, become their hearers and co-workers. Concerning whom the Lord indeed says in the Gospel: 'Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder, who brings forth from his treasure things new and old' (Matt. 13:52). Such men indeed are not only outstanding in action, but also learned in the knowledge of God's word.

Hence they can exhort their neighbors to the struggle of spiritual warfare all the more usefully, inasmuch as they demonstrate in the work of virtue the lofty things which they know how to preach. They have words in their learning, and they have works as examples for the simple: so that the wise may understand the lofty things they speak, and those who do not perceive the secrets of words in their depths may imitate the works which they see outwardly. They are therefore appointed centurions when, by the perfection of virtue, they obtain the summit of dignity: so that they may live sublimely, and the more loftily they live, the more usefully they may teach.

6. But those who are centurions, when they have arranged the times of war, ought to advance: so that they may be recognized as bearing fruit in peacetime as well. After the tribunes, therefore, the centurions become plowers of fields and reapers of crops; so that they may open the hearts of the now-victorious with the plowshare of exhortation, from which they may reap more abundantly the wheat of good works. As if now indeed plowing in peace, they rouse to the practice of works of piety those hearts that had conquered spiritual assaults. And they reap the harvests when they rejoice that chosen works have sprung forth from the seed of the divine word which they had scattered in the hearts of their hearers. For just as they reap wheat from a field with sickles, so through the embrace of charity they receive from heavenly conversation that by which they may be satisfied with inner devotion.

7. But as long as we live in this life, we possess nothing in peace. For since the ancient enemy always opposes those who act well, it is necessary that we always defend the things we do well. Wherefore they are also rightly said to become, after being plowers of fields and reapers of crops, makers of arms and chariots of the king. They make arms and chariots so that they may defend those very fields which they cultivate and those crops which they reap. They make a chariot so that they may be swift to meet adversaries, and arms so that they may be powerful. They mount the chariot so that with great force they may crush the camps of demons, and they carry arms so that they may destroy those whom they attack. In this lofty height of the chariot stood he who said: "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Whence also, now secure, he who appeared superior to all his enemies, affirming, said: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). But he

who had mounted the chariot held arms; whence he also explains, saying: "But I so run, not as uncertainly; so I fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. 9:26, 27). What then is more rightly expressed by this chariot than the loftiness of right intention? To make a chariot, therefore, is to raise up the height of right intention in the minds of hearers.

For those who obtain the ministry of preaching through the examples of their betters make chariots after the labor of plowing and reaping, when they teach their well-doing subjects that from all the good works they do, they should await only the rewards of eternal recompense. Indeed, to despise earthly things, to desire nothing transitory, to love eternal things, and to hasten toward them with great desires, is already to preside over a lofty chariot. Of which chariots indeed it is said through the Psalmist: "The chariot of God is multiplied ten thousandfold, thousands of those rejoicing; the Lord ascends in them" (Ps. 67:18). But their arms are keen counsels, by which they strike their enemies the more powerfully as they more quickly detect their cunning. Whence also that powerful one spoke as if armed: "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). He was also making arms when he said: "And the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:16, 17). The elect, placed in those chariots and arms, are indeed swift and powerful. Swift indeed, because while they desire spiritual things, they detect spiritual wickedness in a moment. And they are powerful, because while they more ardently desire the highest things, whatever is suggested to them from the lowest love of the world, they count as nothing;

and like chariots carried by their weight, they have great force against enemies, who, filled with holy virtues and keen counsels, destroy in a moment all the temptations that are brought against them. Nor is it without meaning in this regard that a chariot, while it rolls along the ground, both lifts the lower part upward and brings the upper part downward. So indeed also the right intention of holy men, while from the earthly things it does it expects heavenly things, as it were directs upward the part that it drags along the ground. And because it humbles itself before the Creator both for its good work and for its expectation of eternal recompense, it as it were plunges toward the earth the part that it lifts upward. Our chariot indeed revolves unceasingly on its wheels, if from good work we always aim at eternal things, and from every height of our advancement we take care to be humble. These arms and chariots are indeed the king's when they are seen to differ in no way from the pattern and teaching of the preachers of holy Church. The elect preachers therefore make chariots and arms when they teach their hearers to hasten toward the heavenly homeland, both by the rectitude of intention and by the fortification of virtue. But there is nothing to prevent us from understanding all these things, which we have shown in the advancement of one person, as distributed individually among many.

We have shown indeed that the elect, advancing through the degrees of virtues, are first placed in chariots, then appointed as horsemen and runners before the royal chariots, es-

tablished as tribunes, centurions, plowers, and reapers, and finally become makers of arms. But because holy Church makes use of the diverse ministries of the elect, whoever wishes may attribute individual gifts of graces to individual orders, so that each of these may be proper to those who are more closely joined to their respective dispositions.

8. What then is the meaning of what he adds: that the daughters of the Israelites would become perfumers, cooks, and bakers? But by the term "daughters" sometimes weakness is signified, sometimes fruitfulness. Who then are the daughters of the Israelites, if not chosen souls, prepared for the conception of the divine Word? They become the king's perfumers: because as they advance through the instruction of their preacher, they receive within themselves the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, through which they can wholesomely heal the brokenhearted. They also become cooks: because while they are filled with the fervor of the Holy Spirit, by their example they kindle the hearts of their neighbors to love of the Creator. They become bakers, when they restore chosen souls with the nourishment of the Word of God. The daughters therefore become perfumers when they heal the wounds of sinners. Cooks, when they set ablaze hearts purged from the filth of sins toward the pursuit of good works by the example of their virtue. And they are bakers when, to those advancing through their examples, they no longer set forth examples, but bring forth words of deep knowledge; so that, fed as it were with solid food, they may act all the more strongly, inasmuch as, now spiritually instructed, they more fervently desire eternal things. There follows: (Verse 14.) "And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants."

9. What are the fields, what are the vineyards, what are the olive groves that are taken from us by the right of rulers? But the holy preachers, when they speak for the correction of sinners, rebuke the pleasures of the flesh, the lusts of the mind, and the pretenses of good works. For if the pleasures of the flesh were not the fields of wicked possession, the Apostle would never say: "He who sows in the flesh, from the flesh shall reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8). To sow in the flesh, indeed, is to bury the purpose of the mind in the pleasures of the body. And they truly reap corruption from the flesh, because in the resurrection of the elect they shall in no way receive the renewal of eternal incorruption. By the name of vineyards, the lusts of the mind are also rightly represented, because they intoxicate the hearts of the reprobate and estrange them from the knowledge of truth. Criticizing the fruit of this vine, Moses says: "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the suburbs of Gomorrah; their grape is a grape of gall, and their cluster most bitter" (Deut. 32:32). For he draws his vine from the vineyard of Sodom and his shoot from Gomorrah, who fills his mind with the most abominable lusts. For he makes, as it were, a vineyard, who thereby forgets eternal things, by which he is also intoxicated through lusts;

and he who refreshes himself as if under the shade of a vineyard and the pleasantness of depraved delight, prepares for himself the retribution of eternal fire. Hence, most fittingly setting forth the fruit of that same vineyard, he called it a grape of gall and a cluster of bitterness. For the grape is pleasing to the sight but gall to the taste — delighting the eye,

embittering the palate — because indeed what it lusts after greatly pleases the reprobate mind, but in eternal punishment what is now sweet to it turns bitter. The king, therefore, takes away our fields when the chosen preacher by his words removes the joyful impulses of our flesh in its delight. He takes away the vineyards when he utterly cuts off the intoxicating lusts from our heart. He also takes away the olive groves when he rebukes the works of false mercy, when by rightly exhorting he suggests that there is no merit in a work unless it proceeds from the purpose of a good intention.

10. But it must be earnestly inquired why these things are said to be given to the servants of the king. For if these things are justly taken from us, who will there be to whom they may not be unworthily assigned? Yet if we examine this more carefully, we find that our holy preachers are great in their dominions. Who then are these servants, if not those of whose head the Lord says to blessed Job: "Will you take him as a servant forever? (Job 40:23) For evil spirits are the servants of holy men — in this life perpetual servants, and in the next life eternal servants. For daily they bring about that by which holy men are crowned. For since from the battle of this life the victory of eternal glory is granted to us, those who renew against us those wars by which we are led to eternal rest assuredly render us great services. They are also the servants of the victors, as the Truth testifies: "By whom a man is overcome, of the same he is made a servant" (2 Peter 2:19). For while they stir up battles against those who will be victorious, they serve those who are thereby crowned, inasmuch as these for a time valiantly withstand their attacks. But because what advances the glory of the saints increases for evil spirits as an addition to their damnation, the fields, vineyards, and olive groves that are taken away are assigned to the servants.

Indeed, demons will be punished with eternal punishment for all their wickedness. In the encounter of the hidden contest, when the elect conquer, they assign the evils which they repel to their enemies: because the former are tested as gold in the furnace (Wisdom 3:6), while the latter are punished for their wicked suggestion. Therefore the servants receive the fields, vineyards, and olive groves: because when sinners return to life through the preaching of teachers, this also contributes to the heap of damnation for the demons — that the penitent were held so long in past sin by their deceit. These things are also given to the servants when sinners, converted to the Lord through the office of the preacher, recognize that they were held in love of their past crimes by the deceit of demons.

11. But what does it mean that the crops and the returns of the vineyards are said to be tithed and given to the eunuchs and servants of the king? The crops of the elect are tithed when we gather their most excellent works so that we may bring them forth as an example for the faithful. For there was only one who had in himself the fullness of all virtues, into whom all the fullness of the Godhead poured itself bodily (Col. 1:19). But we, because we have all received from his fullness, possess the gifts of graces in divided portions. Hence Paul says: "To one indeed is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of speeches, to another faith in the same Spirit, to another the working of powers, to another prophecy, to

another the discernment of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:8). By the number ten, because it is perfect, we tithe the virtues when we gather the gifts of individual elect persons for the lesser ones to imitate. For it is written of Moses: "He was the meekest of all men on earth" (Num. 12:3). Of Abraham also it is said: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). When therefore we wish to imitate gentleness together with faith, it is necessary that from the example of Moses and Abraham, as from choice crops, food be tithed for the refreshment of our mind.

Just so, just so indeed, preachers bring forth the chastity of Joseph (Gen. 39:8), the patience of Job (Job 1:21), the zeal of Phinehas (Num. 25:7) as an example for us: because when they display the virtues of the perfect, they gather, as it were, the tithes of choice harvests, which they may set before those who are making good progress. Hence also it is rightly said that these same tithes of the fruits are given to the eunuchs and servants. Eunuchs, indeed, are those who by strength of soul have crushed in themselves all the fuel of lust. Of whom the Lord certainly says in the Gospel: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12). Servants are those who still serve under another's care in the pursuits of the active life and cannot yet go forth free to the heights of charity. These are also found in Moses to owe six years of service to their masters (Exod. 21:2), so that in the seventh they may go forth free: because indeed they must first be perfected in works so that they may be able to go forth in due order into the summit of contemplation. The teacher therefore assigns the tithes of the harvests to the eunuch-servants when those who obey him in the splendor of chastity follow the chosen works of the great ones.

He also assigns the tithes of the vineyards when he shows them with what wondrous charity our Fathers loved God and neighbor, so that they too may strive to be filled with the same abundance of charity, and as though inebriated and forgetful of things past, may love only the things to come, and not fail to run fervently toward them.

12. After all these things, the servants and maidservants of the Israelites, the best young men, are declared to be taken away and put to the king's work. Who are the servants of the carnal, except those who, by the example of the wicked, have been so corrupted by long habit that they seem to have perpetually subjected the necks of their minds under the yoke of most wicked imitation? Their servants, therefore, are taken away when, by the zeal of chosen preachers, even those abandon their sins who seemed to be vehemently subjected to the reprobate imitation of the carnal. They are also called the best young men. They are young, indeed, because they are strong in evil; they are also called the best because they are more wicked than the rest of sinners. To whom, of course, it is said through the prophet: "Woe to you who are mighty at drinking wine, and men of strength at mixing drunkenness" (Isaiah 5:22). They drink wine, indeed, who by deliberation of mind recklessly take in the heat of concupiscence, and they mix drunkenness, because while they are inflamed by the fires of their lusts, they know not how to return to the ways of righteousness, their reason being lost. They are mighty and strong both at drinking and at mixing drunkenness, so

that on account of their fervent devotion to evil they are shown to be, as it were, the best servants. These best young men the divine word likewise points out when it describes the greed of the devil, saying: "His food is choice" (Habakkuk 1:16). For the ancient enemy is greatly refreshed by the wickedness of those who are more wicked than the most wicked.

13. By the name of maidservants, that most wicked condition of sinners is designated—those who through iniquity are exceedingly depraved and furnish examples of wickedness to others. For like maidservants they bear slaves, since they are not only workers of great iniquity but also mothers of it. But because through the preaching of the saints even such people are converted, who afterward render great services to almighty God, the servants and maidservants are fittingly said to be taken away and placed in the work of the king. Did not the King of kings then take a maidservant when He said of that great sinful woman: "Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much" (Luke 7:47)? And He placed her in His work when He entered the village and she received Him in her house (Luke 10:38). He also placed her in His work because, rising from the dead, He entrusted to her the proclamation of His resurrection (Mark 16:7). He also took a servant when He called Matthew from the profit of the tax booth to follow Him. He placed him too in His work, because Matthew provided a banquet for Him in his house and He made him a preacher to Ethiopia, an Evangelist of the converted world (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:14; Luke 5:27). Therefore, because through the ministry of preachers even those return to the Lord of whose salvation human thought could have despaired, the servants and maidservants and finest young men are fittingly described as being placed in the work of the king.

14. By the name of male and female servants, the movements of the heart and its affections can be understood. For when they suggest wicked things to us, they are male servants; when the affections of the mind desire to submit themselves to the suggestions of depraved impulses, they are female servants. Then indeed it is necessary that we master both through the rigor of our resolve. Preachers take away our male and female servants when they instruct the movements of our hearts and affections as to how they should be directed toward the service of God. They place them in the work of the king when we now exercise that very service of almighty God which we learned through their instruction. Moreover, what is more fittingly represented by donkeys than the lustful movements of the soul? They are placed in the work of the king when that mind which was accustomed to be moved to lasciviousness by depraved thoughts profits from the preaching of the teacher and directs its affections toward the desire of imitating chastity. By the name of male servants, female servants, and donkeys can be designated those who vigorously render bodily service to worldly men. But they are placed in the work of the king, because once converted to the service of almighty God, they endure spiritual labors all the more devoutly for eternal recompense, the more clearly they recognize that they had been enduring great things without fruit.

The king is also said to tithe the flocks, because whoever desires to please almighty God must be clean through innocence and intent upon the pursuit of good works. By the former he is a good tree; by the latter he also bears fruit. Since indeed we employ many things

in order to preserve innocence and to be able to perform good works, these very crowds of innocent thoughts are our flocks. What then does it mean that they are tithed, except that the subtlety of thoughts is not easily discerned? For often we think we are thinking good things which, when carefully examined, are not good. Therefore the flocks must be tithed, so that only what is contained in the number ten belongs to the king's right. This is rightly accomplished in us when, through the instruction of our preachers, we learn to be perfect not only in the performance of works but also in the examination of thought. Finally it is said: (Verse 17. And you shall be his servants.

15. So that, namely, they may know themselves to be subject to his authority in such a way that they dare not transgress his commands. The Lord indeed wished to establish this royal dominion when He said: "Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). This power also He demanded from His subjects, who said: "If anyone shall preach to you a gospel other than what I have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8). Likewise the Lord, sending His disciples to preach, says: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me" (Luke 10:16). Hence concerning the preachers of Judea the Lord says to those same disciples: "Whatever they shall tell you, do" (Matt. 23:3). We are therefore servants of our kings, when we are so subjected to the authority of our prelates that we presume to do nothing apart from their authority. Since, therefore, those who strengthen their virtues in the power of obedience are set over them, at the end of the royal law it is said: "And you shall be his servants" — so that faithful subjects may then also recognize that they ought to be subject to the command of their preachers, when through the advancement of virtues they are led to the heights of perfection. The Truth itself also taught this to the disciples in these very words, saying: "When you have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). Nevertheless, because He was speaking these things to carnal men, He added, saying (v. 18): "And you will cry out on that day before the face of the king, and the Lord will not hear you on that day, because you asked for yourselves a king."

16. Those who had asked for a king cry out from the face of the king, when those who had vowed to lead a spiritual life under a good ruler attempt to abandon the labors of that same life. Indeed, all are recognized by their face. Therefore the face of the king is the known manner of life and teaching of a good preacher. Because they do hard and harsh things for the sake of eternal life and command hard things, their carnal subjects strive not to imitate but to flee from their life and doctrine. For those who had asked for a king, whose appearance they did not know, then see the face of the king; because they consider how laborious is the strictness of the heavenly journey in their superior, which they had desired as if it were an easy thing before they knew it. Then those who had asked for a king cry out from the face of the king; because while they are unwilling to abandon the habit of carnal life, they strive to escape the praiseworthy imitation of the excellent pastor whom they had wanted to be set over them. And because with a blind heart they cannot see the light, they cry out to the Lord, that is, they beseech the Lord that they might escape the

spiritual yoke of God. But the Lord does not hear them on that day. What is that day on which the reprobate subjects beseech the Lord, if not the pursuit of vain prosperity? They are not heard; because indeed it never happens through divine grace that subjection once promised to good rulers can freely go out to the pleasures of the world. Therefore he also added the reason, saying: (Verse 18.) Because you asked for yourselves a king.

17. As if to say: The promised subjection to spiritual pastors is indissoluble. You ask for a king easily enough, but because royal authority is burdensome, you cannot easily escape their power. Because we say this with regard to the historical sense, we think it should be noted that almighty God, while foretelling the rights of a king, bestows upon religious superiors a pattern of governance. Why? So that those who command the most strict way of life should not easily grant entrance to newcomers. For this reason also the best teacher of that most strict life, a disciple well-trained by the highest Truth, commands, saying: ”Test the spirits, whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1). And likewise: ”Let the hard and difficult things through which one goes to God be announced to him, so that he may know what he is entering into. The Lord therefore proclaims the rights of a king — let him speak, let him know all things, what sort of carnal persons will exist under his rule — and so that the weak may not easily approach the life of virtue, strong superiors should by no means easily accept the weak. For swiftness of conversion most often arises from rashness of counsel, not from growth of devotion. For when the weak promise strong things, it is not a proven strength of soul but a confusion of discernment. The wise man admonishes all such persons under a single designation when he says: ”Do not lift a burden above yourself.

Therefore those who preside over others in the strong resolution of the regular life ought to receive converts to that same life with all the more discernment, inasmuch as it is all the more useful to know beforehand whether the petition of those approaching comes from strength of soul or from rashness of will. For those who are fickle in their actions are accustomed to eagerly desire the harshness of the spiritual life, so that they may appear to desire what they seek with great strength of soul. (Verses 19–20. But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said: ”By no means! Rather, a king shall be over us, and we too shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and he shall go out before us, and he shall fight our battles for us. Because this has been expounded at length above, we are detained needlessly in examining it further. There follows: (Verse 21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he spoke them in the ears of the Lord.

18. To hear the voice of the people is to recognize outwardly what those seeking the habit of holy life say. For we hear, as it were, only the voice of those approaching, when we know what they assert outwardly; but what kind of people they will be amid the assertions of their promise, we do not see. Therefore we ought to speak these things in the ears of the Lord, so that He Himself may receive the words of their promise: He who, while hearing the words, examines the hearts, and from the course of their progress, demands the returns of vigorous work. Let the minds of our novices hear this and tremble: because indeed what they say to us, we speak in the ears of the Lord. For what they promise before us, we offer to

God, so that He Himself may now hold from our hands what He will demand an account of. This freedom of the superior is indeed the obligation of the subject: because he is subjected to a stricter judgment in proportion as he can more clearly know that he must render an account to almighty God for what he answers. Therefore, when we offer to God the things that novices promise, we give to Him, as it were, the written bond that they make to us. And because this is done in secret, Samuel is said to have spoken in the ears of the Lord the things that the people had said. For we speak in the ears of friends when we conceal from outsiders what we say. There follows: (Verse 21.) And the Lord said to Samuel: Hear their voice, and establish a king over them.

19. Above, the prophet, foreseeing the future, said: 'You will cry out to the Lord, and He will not hear you, because you asked for a king for yourselves.' But now the Lord says: 'Listen to their voice, and appoint a king over them' (1 Kings 8:18). What is shown to us through this, except that it is often divinely inspired in the good rulers of holy Church to subject to the pursuits of the heavenly life those who are afterward not devout under the discipline of the same profession? These will indeed afterward cry out from before the face of their king, and yet by divine command they receive a king: because those are divinely inspired to approach the service of God devoutly whom the anxious care of pastors, involving great labor, must restrain under the bond of that same service for the increase of their eternal reward. They are said to cry out to the Lord from before the face of their king; but let the kings themselves hear what the prophet sent by the Lord responds, so that they may know what they ought to do amid those very outcries. 'He will not hear you', he says. Therefore neither should they themselves give ear. For those who are lukewarm in holy monasteries must be healed, as though sick; they are not to be cast out, as though dead. For if they have been sent by the Lord, they will come to their senses amid the applications of spiritual ointments.

Let the Lord therefore say: 'Appoint a king over them': because indeed many come devoutly to the service of God who are then permitted to grow cold, but through the zeal of pastors—to whose authority they had submitted themselves by divine inspiration—they are rekindled to the love of the heavenly homeland. But now he sets forth what kind of pastor is fit for these things, saying: (1 Kings 9:1–2) 'There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a man of Jemini, mighty in strength. And he had a son whose name was Saul, chosen and good, and there was no man of Israel better than he; from the shoulder and upward he stood above all the people.'

20. What does it mean that when the king to be appointed is shown, the names of the fathers are proclaimed, unless that he is unworthily taken up to the leadership of the holy Church who does not maintain the nobility of the holy Fathers in his conduct? Moreover, six names of fathers are assigned, so that the perfection of their holy way of life in good action might be designated. For the world was created in six days and is completed in six ages. Therefore there are six fathers who are named in the order of the genealogy of the chosen pastors of the holy Church: because indeed those who obtain the summit of perfection in

the pattern of those who follow are sons by imitation. But the father of the king, Kish, is said to mean ”hard”: because surely those whom the holy preachers imitate are not lax in life and zeal. For they are hard because they do not speak soft things to sinners; they are also hard because, in order to correct others well, they demonstrate in their own conduct the hard things they prescribe to them. For he seemed hard who rebuked the Jews, saying: ”O generation of vipers, who has shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth worthy fruits of repentance” (Matt. 3:7). But he who was hard to others was not lenient with himself. For to show that he maintained the harshness of penance that he preached, the Evangelist says:

”He had a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather belt around his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey” (Mark 1:6). To Ezekiel also it is said: ”Behold, I have made your forehead harder than their foreheads; I have made your face like diamond and flint” (Ezek. 3:8). But he who came so hard against those hard in evil, to show that he was about to speak the hard things that were coming, wept for seven days in their midst before he spoke. For thus he says: ”And I sat where they sat, and I remained seven days mourning in their midst. Therefore, because the holy preachers are not gentle and meek toward obstinate sinners, and because they practice what they preach harshly, Saul is rightly called the son of a hard man. For the chosen preacher ought to imitate those who both preach sharp things and observe what they say. Whence also concerning the same father of the king it is added: ”strong in might. There are some within the holy Church who are strong in pride and arrogance. For they do great things; but when people cease to praise the things they do, they themselves cease to do those great things. Therefore he is strong in might who has from the Holy Spirit the virtue that he displays in good work. Concerning this might, Anna prophesied above (1 Sam. 2:4) in her canticle, saying: ”The weak have been girded with strength. Concerning this the Lord promises the disciples, saying:

”Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). In this might he walked strongly, of whom it is written: ”Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee” (Luke 4:14). He therefore who is called hard is declared strong in might: because chosen men, while they preach the highest things, demonstrate mighty deeds; and everything lofty they prescribe and everything great they do, they accomplish in the power of the Holy Spirit. Concerning whom it is fittingly added: ”And he had a son whose name was Saul, chosen and good. For he who is an imitator of such men is useful not only for the labor of ministry but fit for the fruit of inheritance. Indeed, Judas too was chosen for ministry; but because he was not good, he lost the right of succession. Who then are signified by Saul, still chosen and good, if not the chosen imitators of the holy Fathers, who are useful to others through teaching and to themselves through their way of life; who are able so to govern others that they by no means cease to provide for themselves? For they are chosen and good because they so seek the gain of others that they suffer no losses of their own. For they are full in themselves, overflowing to others, and from their own abundance they so give to others that they lose nothing of their own fullness.

They have what they may offer to others, yet having what can suffice for themselves, they offer to no one at their own expense. They strive so to supply oil to others that the fuel of their light is not taken from them: so that while they illuminate others, they do not extinguish themselves. Rightly therefore he is called chosen and good: because certainly he who takes up the governance of the holy Church ought to be rich, adorned with spiritual gifts and the fullness of merits. And because those who excel must be chosen from the common order, it follows: "And there was not among the children of Israel a better man than he. His excellence is indeed commended when it is added: "From the shoulder and upward he stood above all the people. By this bodily appearance, in the person of the bishop to be ordained, the deeds of virtue are prefigured. For what is designated by the shoulder if not strength? But he who from the shoulder and upward stood above all the people was of such lofty stature that he who was tallest among the people reached only to the shoulder of the king; while the future king surpassed the height of all by his neck and head. But what are the heads if not the minds of the subject people?

When they are greatly stretched, they reach up to the shoulder of the king to be ordained, because he who is sought for the summit of governing the holy Church ought to be of such perfection that whatever the people wish to set before themselves as good works, he ought to demonstrate in his own conduct. For the heads of the people touch, as it were, the shoulder of the king when their hearts find in their pastor whatever virtue they seek. But the king excels by his neck, and excels by his head. For what is designated by the neck if not speech, and what by the head if not the contemplation of the mind? Therefore he surpasses the heads of all his subjects by head and neck if he is admirable in the height of contemplation and in the sublimity of teaching. For he is, as it were, lofty by his head when he contemplates those things about the heavenly secrets that others cannot contemplate. He also has his neck above others, who, admirable in the height of his speech, cannot be equaled by others. For he had, as it were, raised his head on high who said: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows" (2 Cor. 12:1–2). But as a chosen and good king, to show that his neck also rose above all heads, he said:

"He heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to speak" (2 Cor. 12:4). But why do we marvel at his neck, as it were towering, in those things he kept silent? Let us equal him, if we can, in those things he said. From the neck of the apostle Paul proceeded his epistles, and although wise men have been expounding them since that time, they still strive to better understand what he said. And though they daily advance in learning from him, as if straining toward the summit of his neck, they can by no means reach it. Let the king therefore stand out by his neck, stand out by his head, be lofty by his shoulder: so that he may be perfect in conduct, admirable in speech, above all others exalted on the heights of contemplation. But he who is great in conduct, preeminent in speech, raised above all in contemplation, before he arrives at the summit of governance, ought to have outward signs of fraternal charity: that is, he should have such concern for his neighbors that he seeks the gain of souls for eternal life. Rightly therefore it is added in the type of these men: (Verses

3–4) "Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost; and Kish said to Saul his son: Take with you one of the servants, and arise, go and seek the donkeys.

And when they had passed through Mount Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha and had not found them, they also passed through the land of Shaalim and they were not there, and through the land of Benjamin and did not find them."

21. Kish, who is called harsh, signifies not only his elect, but also the Redeemer himself. For no one was harsher toward himself than he. For the prophet, indicating the severity of this harshness, says: "Truly he himself bore our infirmities, and he himself carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). For to die is not to suffer for mortals, who are subject to the suffering of a condemned nature. He therefore was exceedingly harsh toward himself, who had nothing in himself by which he might suffer; but in order to free us by suffering, he graciously assumed that by which he might be harsh toward himself and be able to suffer. The donkeys of Kish are sinful souls (1 Sam. 10). Because even though they have been regenerated in the faith of the Redeemer, they are called stubborn; and lost donkeys, because through uncleanness they have been separated from his service. Hence it is that, as he was heading toward his passion, he sat upon a loosed donkey and her colt (Matt. 21:7), to show openly that he had come to suffer for this purpose: to come to the aid of sinners. For he acknowledged that he was seeking lost donkeys when he said: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). These donkeys he both sought by himself, and still sends preachers to seek them.

Therefore Kish tells his son to seek the donkeys, when the Redeemer commands the hearts of the elect by spiritual inspiration to go forth into the ministry of preaching. But those going forth in the office of preaching, because they ought to bring with them only spiritual understanding, are commanded to take one of the servants. For he takes one servant who, while going forth to provide others a pattern of living, is spiritual in everything he does. For he took one of the servants, of whom it was foretold: "He himself will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). He had taken one servant with him, who says: "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God" (1 Cor. 2:12). Hence he says again: "We have the mind of Christ" (ibid., 16). Hence through Ezekiel it is said of the holy living creatures: "Where the impulse of the spirit was, there they went" (Ezek. 1:12). Therefore, when seeking the donkeys, he takes one of the servants: when he who newly begins to seek the gain of souls arranges to do all things spiritually, whatever he thinks to do. But to find the donkeys is to behold sinners converted in the light of holiness. For like lost donkeys they are not found, when in the darkness of sins, reprobate hearts bury themselves.

22. And because through the five senses of the body they fall into those same darknesses of sins, they are sought in five regions where they cannot be found, namely Mount Ephraim, the land of Shalisha, and Shaalim, and the land of the Benjaminites, and Zuph. For everyone is hidden where he is cast down through sin; and as one who is lost, it is not known where he is, when he abandons the light of justice in which God placed him. Hence it is

that in paradise after the sin, He seeks the first man, saying: ”Adam, where are you? (Gen. 3:9). As if to say: Because I do not find you in the light in which I placed you, show yourself where you have placed yourself. Hence He inquires about the dead Lazarus, saying: ”Where have you laid him? (John 11:34). But the one whom He sought as lost, He commanded to come forth that He might find him, saying: ”Lazarus, come out. Therefore man is lost when he sins; he is found when, now repenting, he declares his sin against himself. For since through the sacred Scriptures the sinner is commanded: ”Declare your iniquities first, that you may be justified” (Isa. 43:26, according to the LXX), when the one who has sinned begins to be justified by confessing, he is now seen in the light, where he is now found to be placed. Now Saul, who seeking the donkeys did not find them, represents the character of a learned preacher, but one newly beginning.

Almighty God indeed does not allow him to bear the fruit of preaching, lest he esteem the conversion of sinners as a cheap thing, since he can easily convert them to the Lord. The conversion is therefore delayed, so that the converted may be cherished all the more; and the preacher loves them all the more greatly, the more clearly he sees that he cannot quickly win them over. But while holy men cannot convert others through their preaching, they begin to fear intensely for themselves—lest they displease Almighty God in the very thing by which they thought they were greatly pleasing Him. And it often happens that the hearts of new preachers are so frightened that they now resolve to abandon the office of preaching itself and to devote themselves to God through silence. For this reason it is added: (Verse 5. ”When he had come to the land of Zuph and had not found them, Saul said to his servant: Come, let us return, lest perhaps my father has stopped thinking about the donkeys and is anxious for us.”

23. He deliberates about returning to his father who, having set aside the intention of preaching, desires to be free for God in the secret of silence. He is said to return who is reported to have been sent before. For the sons are, as it were, in the presence of their father when chosen men linger in the secret contemplation of the Redeemer. They return, therefore, when from the public work of holy preaching they come to search out the joys of eternal brightness. But because holy men do nothing without counsel, Saul consulted the boy about the return to his father. For we consult the boy when with attentive mind we take care that what we attempt to arrange should not differ from spiritual understanding. Indeed, he had resolved to return to his father who said: ”I said, I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue. I set a guard over my mouth, when the sinner stood against me” (Psalm 38:1–2). The sinner stands against the preachers when, in response to their preaching, he does not abandon the state of his iniquity. And because the preacher then proposes to be silent toward him and to be free for God, so that he may return to the Father, he becomes mute. But because through silence he better learned the will of God, his heart grew warm, and with the fire of inward meditation blazing forth, he spoke. This is shown also in this passage, because the boy, when consulted, bestows counsel upon the one consulting him, saying: (Verse 6) ”Behold, there is a man of God in this city, a noble

man; everything he says comes to pass without ambiguity. Now therefore let us go there; perhaps he will show us our way for which we have come."

24. He calls Samuel a man of God, in whom we have already said that the preachers of Holy Church are designated. He is indeed called a man out of reverence for his holy manner of life, and everything he speaks is declared to come without ambiguity: because whatever he threatens concerning eternal punishments, whatever he promises to the just concerning eternal joy, comes to pass just as he announces it, and the impious shall go away to punishment and the elect to glory. He is also said to be in the city: because a chosen pastor is known to be always vigilant in the common guardianship of the people subject to him. The pastor is in the city, because while he guards others, he is fortified in himself. Whence also through the prophet, in the praises of all men of God, it is said under the description of one: "He shall dwell on high; the fortifications of rocks shall be his loftiness" (Isa. 33:16). For the higher he is raised up in the vision of the eternal citizens, the stronger he is found to be in himself, and the more useful to his neighbors.

25. He is also called noble: because he is conspicuous for his heavenly manner of life, and has nothing of the rusticity of worldly life. For he is seen to be noble from the same source whence he is a citizen. For secular men, because there is no composure of morals in them, are rustic, as though nurtured in outlying places. For from their habitual dishonesty of mind, they produce unseemly movements of body; and like those who are very degenerate, they do not know the bearing of urbane custom, while through everything they do, they cover the appearance of their life with the vileness of earthly obscurity. On the contrary, the men of God are noble, who while they vigorously pursue the things that are divine, shine with heavenly light in all their work: and they have nothing of degeneracy, who in the great light of all their conduct display the rays of their celestial origin. To this end, therefore, Saul is led by the boy, that he may be instructed: because those who are to be placed on the height of prelacy are admonished to submit themselves to the spiritual understanding of perfect preachers through their teaching. He who says this admonishes us to be led by this boy: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). But it must be asked why it is said with hesitation: "If perhaps he may show us our way, on account of which we have come.

But because he desires to learn spiritual things, because he longs to receive great gifts, he cannot know whether he is worthy of those same gifts. Therefore he begins to doubt, who does not presume that he merits such great things by his own merits. Which doubt indeed arises in the elect from the virtue of humility. Wherefore also in the voice of the accompanying boy it is said to Saul: "If perhaps he may show us our way. Because indeed the spiritual sense suggests that we should not think lofty things of ourselves, not presume boldly concerning almighty God, but seek His gifts with the utmost reverence of holy fear. Rightly therefore he is called a boy, who is proclaimed as always teaching humble things. Therefore when he says, "Let us go there," and suddenly adds, "If perhaps he may show us our way," he openly indicates that the Spirit of God works in the understanding of the elect,

while He both makes them approach devoutly to seek spiritual gifts, and makes them fear with great reverence the omnipotence of the Giver. Whence also he who is led by the spirit is said to look upon the poverty of his own merits, when it is added: (Verse 7. "And Saul said to his boy: Behold, we shall go, but what shall we bring to the man? The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no small basket to give to the man of God, nor anything else."

26. The minds of the humble have this characteristic: that they possess spiritual gifts, but do not regard themselves in those things which they possess. For because they receive the gifts of virtues from the Holy Spirit, therefore the Holy Spirit, who bestows the gifts, removes them from their own estimation, so that they may have these things in the virtue of their conduct, but not have them in the swelling of pride. Rightly therefore it is said of Saul: 'From the shoulder and upward he was taller than all the people.' And he said to his servant: 'The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no basket'—because chosen men, fit for governing the summit of holy Church, even regard themselves as small through humility in that very thing in which they are great through virtue. And indeed they have bread for the refreshment of the souls of the faithful in the wisdom of the word, and the basket in the memory of inner meditation. For when they preserve in memory for the instruction of the faithful those things which they gather in secret meditation, they store bread, as it were, in a basket. For concerning these baskets it is said in the Gospel: 'They filled seven baskets with the fragments' (Matt. 15:37; Mark 8:8).

When loaves abound on the Lord's table, the baskets are commanded to be filled—because when the soul of the elect is refreshed in the heavenly contemplation of the Redeemer, it is instructed in that same contemplation of the truth, so that the nourishment of the word, which is seen to grow abundantly in itself, may be stored in the memory for the instruction of the faithful. They also abundantly have something else besides bread and a basket—those who, along with the virtue of contemplation and the teaching of the word, abound in a wealth of holy works. Therefore, so that the humility of the saints may resound in the speech of the king about to be appointed, he says: 'The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no basket to give to the man of God, nor anything else'—because the Holy Spirit makes those who are being prepared for the governance of the ecclesiastical summit great in the virtue of their inner gift, but altogether small in the regard of their own estimation. Let the servant therefore say: 'Let us go there, if perhaps he may show us about our way.' But let Saul look upon himself as empty—because the Holy Spirit, while he instructs the senses of those living uprightly, makes them now bold, now timid. Bold indeed, so that they may venture forth; timid, lest they become proud. He impels them to seek what is necessary; he holds them back, lest by presuming too much they fall into the vice of rashness.

And because those whom he makes fearful he raises up to venture forth through the strength of confidence, it is suddenly added: 'And so the servant of Saul answered again and said:' (Verse 8) 'Behold, there is found in my hand a fourth part of a silver stater; let us give it to the man of God, and he will show us about our way.'

27. As it were, the boy speaks the good understanding of the chosen man, when he is impelled to speak by the direction of the Holy Spirit. What then is it that he says: "There is found in my hand a fourth part of a stater of silver"? What is this part of a stater of silver? But because by the name of silver the divine words are signified, silver in the hand of the boy is the divine word in the power of knowing. Indeed, it is one thing to be able to speak the word, and another to be able to feel it. For even the reprobate speak the divine words, but none except the elect can truly feel them. For that thing is truly felt whose power is recognized. For the sick also eat fish, but the force of their sickness takes from them the experience of taste, so that what they seem to eat, they are prevented from also tasting. Just so indeed, all carnal persons, when they speak of heavenly things which they do not love, like the sick make use of things which they are prevented from tasting. Therefore silver is found in the hand of the boy, when through the merit of humility holy men receive the heavenly things they speak of with great affection of charity, so that it is very sweet for them to speak of heavenly things, because they are sweetly, and indeed very sweetly, satisfied through love. Whence also it is written:

"The poor shall eat and be satisfied" (Psalm 21:27). For because the food of the soul is the word of God, the poor eat and are satisfied, but the rich cannot be satisfied; because indeed the elect, who love heavenly things, as often as they hear these things, are more fervently inflamed toward them; while the reprobate speak and hear heavenly things, which they receive with no sweetness for the refreshment of their mind. But a fourth part of a stater of silver is said on account of the quality of the time. For that we may see the other parts of this stater, we must consider the prophets, apostles, and martyrs. For because according to the quality of the time the sound of preaching has been distributed to each order, each as it were held a fourth part of the stater. The prophets therefore presented their fourth part of the stater when they promised the coming of the Redeemer to the Synagogue. The apostles gave their part when they preached to the Jews that he who had been promised had now come. The martyrs also contributed their part when they brought unbelievers to faith in the Redeemer. Therefore the fourth part of the stater is known to have remained, because through the bishops and doctors of the holy Church the word of faith is presented to the elect faithful until the end of the world.

But the word of faith is well preached by those to whom it is supplied through the hand of the boy, because indeed those ought to preach heavenly things who in the sweetness of their mind have merited to know their pleasantness. For this part of the stater is given so that one may more fully merit to know the way of right preaching, because the chief doctors of the holy Church commit the authority of preaching to none others except those whom they know to love the heavenly things they speak of. By these words the simpler folk are to be admonished according to the letter, that they should not dare to suspect the depravity of avarice in the man of God on account of what is said: "That we may give to the man of God, and he may show us our way. For if the prophet had his word for sale, he would not be a man of God, and could in no way possess the spirit of prophecy itself. Therefore when this is said, it is not the character of the man of God that is set forth, but the devotion of the one

approaching him, because Saul held him in great veneration, and was ashamed to appear empty-handed in his sight. And because a celebrated fame invited them to veneration of this same man of God, he adds: (Verse 9) "For he was called the Seer."

28. For to be called is to be spoken of by public report. But a Seer is one who looks upon even inward things, which the mind of carnal men does not attend to. Whence it is also said of the holy living creatures: "Round about and within they were full of eyes." They are watchful in outward things and provident inwardly. Against which presumption of carnal teachers the Lord rebukes in the Gospel, saying: "If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). A Seer is also called one to whom distant and absent things are present. This well befits holy preachers, who through knowledge are as present to spiritual things as they disdain to fix their attention on outward things. For they hold hidden things as open and distant things as present, who always understand those things which carnal men cannot know. For such ought the pastor of the holy Church to be, because he is placed on the way of the heavenly homeland to provide light to those under him. Therefore let him always scatter rays of light, so that the faithful subjects, from the experience of his illumination, may draw others to illumination. There follows, and he says: (Verse 9.) "Formerly in Israel everyone going to consult God spoke thus: Come, let us go to the Seer."

29. We go to consult the Lord when we proceed to learned preachers, so that we may find counsel for our salvation. But because there is now such a rarity of perfect men, while we consider the flower of religion in ancient times, let us bewail its decline in the present time. Struck with compunction over the misery and calamity of the present time, let us sigh that the flower of the past age has withered together with the beauty of holiness. Therefore, when we see the pastors of the Churches clinging to earthly things, seeking what is passing away, displaying no marks of the spiritual life, when no light from our prelates is poured upon us, remembering those things which have passed away unto the labor of compunction, let us say: "Formerly everyone in Israel who went to consult the Lord used to speak thus: Come, let us go to the Seer." Israel means "seeing God," or "in whom God is." This name is certainly fittingly applied to the holy Church, whose people it is said to be. For in the Gospel it is also said: "Behold, I am with you even to the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Since she indeed had in former times pastors flourishing in spiritual conduct, learned in great knowledge, who with great contempt despised earthly things and contemplated heavenly ones, the people could exhort one another toward the light which they saw in them, saying: "Let us go to the Seer." If therefore we must go to those who see, we must equally turn away from the blind, because we ought not to imitate but flee the examples of reprobate prelates; but from those who through the merit of their conduct know spiritual things, we should always seek instruction for our edification. And because none but spiritual men do this, there follows: (Verse 10.) And Saul said to his servant: "Your word is excellent; come, let us go."

30. The best speech is that than which no better can be heard. Therefore, whenever counsels of our salvation are spiritually suggested to us, a speech is made within us than which no

better can be found. We praise the speech of the boy, therefore, whenever we are pleased with ourselves in the purpose of our spiritual understanding. And we promise to go with him when we consent to spiritual thoughts. But because a good thought is then fruitful when it is perfected in action, there follows: (Verses 10, 11.) And they came into the city in which the man of God was. And as they were going up the slope of the city, they found young women coming out to draw water, and they said to them: Is the Seer here?

31. Those who seek the man of God come into the city, because it often happens that the life and teaching of a prelate is sought in the conduct of his subjects. So indeed trees too are often examined, whose beauty is found not in their leaves but in their fruit. Often, however, undergrowth that has sprung up is mingled with great trees, and its fruits falsely claim to be the fruits of those trees with which they are mixed. Therefore, whoever wishes to discern the fruit must first discern the branches as well, so that he may recognize from which tree the fruit comes. So indeed it is in the conduct of the faithful: because in the chosen people of a good preacher, while many wicked ones are mixed in, thorns spring up as if among good trees. Therefore the conduct of the chosen preacher is not to be examined in all his subjects, but only in the elect. Then indeed we separate, as it were, the branches of a good tree with discernment, when among the people we imitate those rulers like choice fruits who advance by the example of their master, and we flee from those like thorns who are condemned by the deceit of the ancient enemy.

Well therefore is it said of Saul and his servant that they came into the city and ascended the slope of that same city, because indeed when the perfection of holy men is sought in their subjects, it is not the imperfect members but the chosen and perfect ones that must be sought out. For artisans too first begin their works, then adorn them. A painter too, when he desires to apply beautiful colors or gold, first lays down a baser color. Therefore, whoever wishes to judge the skill of artisans should look not at their unfinished works but at the completed ones. Let him therefore ascend the slope of the city, so that he who desires to find the Seer may discover him. For the slope is a low and sunken place. In that part of the city, indeed, those are represented who have not yet advanced to a higher manner of life. We therefore ascend the slope when we avoid setting before ourselves as an example the level ground of weak hearers.

32. And then indeed we find the girls going out to draw water: because we behold the beauty of holy minds in a more perfect way of life. The girls are indeed the minds of the elect, pure through innocence, beautiful through the splendor of virtues. And because they preserve their beauty in a more hidden life, they cannot be seen unless they go out to draw water. The girls draw water when chosen souls, from the deep sorrow of their present exile, pour forth streams of tears. They are said to draw water because, while they remember themselves cast down in this valley of tears, mourning, they send, as it were, the rope of thought into the deep, from which they draw the waters of tears with labor. Then also they are seen going out: because although what they are like within remains hidden, they nevertheless appear in their eyes; and how much they love their Creator is shown by those who endure

life amid such great sorrow of the present age. From these, therefore, one must ask: Where is the Seer? Because the dwelling place of the perfect is then well known when it is shown to us by those who, through the progress of their life, are close to their way of living. But preachers have different places. For they have one place for themselves, another for their subjects: because indeed in themselves they dwell in the loftiest contemplation, but for their subjects they descend to the mountain of teaching.

Through contemplation they are as if in heaven; and because what they teach is lofty, they both descend when they teach and yet keep themselves on high while speaking sublime things. The more perfect hearers, therefore, are close to their ruler not when he is in the highest contemplation, but on the lower mountain of teaching. Wherefore the girls also answer and say: (Verse 12. He is here, behold, before you: for today he has come into the city.

33. As if they were saying: We can point out his place because he comes there where we used to see him. For if he remained in the citadel of his own loftiness, no one could show him to you. For a teacher is in the city when he lingers in the instruction of the people subject to him through the ministry of preaching. A teacher is in the city when he leaves his own affairs to arrange what is common to all. For since the people, fortified and made strong through the exhortation of a good preacher, are protected when he lingers in their ministry, he is known to be in the city. Likewise, because among the multitude of the subject people some are simple and others are wise, the young women add: (Verses 12, 13.) Make haste now, today he has come into the city, because there is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. As soon as you enter, you will find him immediately, before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he himself will bless the offering, and then those who have been invited will eat.

34. When Samuel came to the city, he went up to the high place: because the chosen preacher, in the instruction of his subjects, sometimes utters plain words, sometimes lofty ones. Therefore, when he commands plain and intelligible things, he is in the city; when sublime things, and those which are scarcely understood, he is in the high place. He is in the city when he sets forth examples for the simple; but he is in the high place when he utters to the perfect the lofty things of spiritual words. For he was, as it were, in the city, who said: ”I judged not myself to know anything among you, except Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Likewise, he was in the city when he showed remedies to the weak, saying: ”Because of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (ibid., 7). But he went up to the high place, because not long after he adds: ”But concerning virgins I have no commandment, yet I give counsel. I would that all men were even as myself” (ibid., 8). He also confesses that he often ascends to the high place of words, because he says: ”We speak wisdom among the perfect” (ibid., 6).

35. What then is the meaning of what the maidens say: ”Hurry now, today he comes into the city,” unless that he was rarely seen in the city, namely coming late and departing quickly? By this teaching indeed the doctor of the holy Church is instructed to be rarely in public

and frequently in secret, so that the more slowly he is seen, the more devoutly he is revered. Then indeed he is received as though heavenly, because the more he has hidden himself in the secret of contemplation, the richer the treasures of the Word of God he brings to those who await him. For he is able to speak many good things about the lowest matters to whom it is granted through the secret gaze of the mind to see the highest things. And because those things which are spoken seem sweeter, the maidens say: ”Hurry.” As if they were saying: if he has completed that for which he came into the city, you will not be able to see him hidden away in his secret place.

36. Which statement indeed is now not to be taken literally, but is an example for religious persons. For the holy man was of such strictness that he had appointed days and hours in which whoever desired could see him. They say therefore: ”Make haste.” As if they were saying: If the appointed time passes, during the hours of his rest, he does not attend to words or actions. We therefore who have taken up the rule of a secluded life ought to observe this more attentively. Hours of ministry must be appointed for us, so that we may persist briefly in work and be able to return hastily to the citadel of contemplation. Moreover, the periods of our secret silence must be guarded with such a strict rule that even those who are accustomed to approach may know that they do not have access to us contrary to our purpose.

37. But since we have begun to explain these things spiritually, this can fittingly be understood as spoken concerning the simple. For in the city, one who appears a stranger is thought to be able to address Samuel, but on the high place he is not thought so: because those whom we believe to be simple, we consider to need plain, not lofty instruction. Therefore they ought to hear the holy preachers when they speak plain things to the simple, which they understand: not when they say lofty things, which they can in no way understand. They say therefore: ”Hurry now, today he has come to the city, because there is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. Which is as if one were to say: Because there are many who desire to hear the highest things, now you ought to hurry, when he appears to be instructing the simple like yourself. The sacrifice of the people is indeed the devotion of the chosen people. Which devotion, assuredly, because it is aroused in the hearts of the elect by the word of preaching, is as it were accomplished by Samuel. But the sacrifice of the people is on the high place when the hearts of faithful subjects eagerly desire to hear devoutly the lofty words of holy preaching. Whence it is also aptly said: ”Because the people do not eat unless Samuel first blesses the sacrifice”:

because the more perfect hearers, while they desire to attain the summit of the perfection of virtues, await with great longing the word of knowledge, through which they may arrive at what they desire. In this passage it should be noted that the sacrifice had not yet been offered, and yet it says: ”There is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. For if a sacrifice does not exist before it begins to be offered, how was there a sacrifice that did not exist? But because we are pursuing spiritual meanings, the sacrifice did not yet exist, and yet it did: because when the faithful elect desire to be instructed in loftier things, they already indeed

have a great devotion for hearing, which, after the preaching has been heard, they have much greater. The sacrifice has therefore not yet been offered: because that greatness of devotion which is born in the heart of the elect from the word of preaching does not exist in the heart before the preacher's word. And yet the sacrifice is indeed on the high place: because from the expectation of the word, there is already a great force of devotion in the heart of one who wishes to hear. Wherefore it is also well said: "Because the people do not eat until he blesses the sacrifice. For because they eagerly love the highest things, they do not rest until they receive those same highest things.

For if the sacrifice of the mind is its devotion, the sacrifice is blessed when it is sanctified by the voice of preaching, so that the purer it becomes, the more acceptable it may be held for divine reception. For what is blessed in God's sacrifice is indeed clean when it is offered, and material: but once offered it is so much cleaner, inasmuch as it is not only material but spiritual, inasmuch as it is not only clean but also cleansing. For who would doubt that sins are cleansed by the offerings of sacrifices? For so, so it is with the devotion of the mind: for when it longs to hear good things, it is clean; but when it has been received and blessed by the hands of holy preaching, it is rendered so much more ardent and sacred, the more clearly it has learned whom it can love more sweetly once known. It was indeed clean before, like a preparation of the sacrifice, which desired to know the good, and yet it was a material arrangement: because it did not yet know what it desired to learn. But it is very clean and spiritual when, now sanctified by the words of doctrine, it no longer desires to hear what it may know, but delights to experience through what it has heard the things it loves. Then also the sacrifice is not only clean but cleansing:

because the more fervent the love of heavenly things by which it is kindled, the more powerfully the darkness of carnal negligence is driven away from it. For it is written: "Because charity covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8): because assuredly we destroy our carnal things when we are lifted up to heavenly things by ardent devotion.

38. And because it is added: 'And then those who have been called will eat.' What else does this signify, except that the affection of devotion is food for the mind? For we will eat then, when the sacrifice is blessed: because when our devotion is raised up to the love of the Creator at the voice of the preachers, the soul that has arrived at the sweetness of the Creator already has its food. Therefore those eat then who were unwilling to eat before the blessing of the sacrifice. For those who prepare themselves with the highest expectation of intention for the perception of divine sweetness, while they receive no evil desires through appetite, are, as though fasting, filled more eagerly with the refreshment of devotion. For they wait, as it were, for the blessing of the sacrifice for their refreshment, who flee all unlawful desires, so that they may be satisfied by the vision of interior glory through devotion. For indeed it is written: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8). For he who does not admit foolish things into his heart, while he desires heavenly things, is pure in heart: and while he is led through the good of preaching to the

sweetness of divine contemplation, he has, as it were, the blessing of the sacrifice in the satisfaction of his soul.

Therefore he says: 'Then those who have been called will eat.' For those who are fasting are called to the meal, while the preacher speaks outwardly, who guard their mind from wicked desires, and are drawn through the grace of the Holy Spirit to the experience of interior sweetness. For those who had been called were the invited ones who had come. Therefore the called who are fasting then eat, when those are fed with the devotion of spiritual grace who have prepared themselves to receive it by great watchfulness of their mind. But what does it mean that they say: (Verse 13) 'Go up, for today you will find him'?

39. But while the elect praise the good deeds of preachers, they illuminate the hearts of their hearers with great light. For that heavenly manner of life of the good teacher, which they proclaim, is a day. Let them say therefore: "Today you will find him." For the preacher is found on that day when his life is not less than his reputation: when he is praised by the voice of the elect, but those who hear the praises find and recognize in his praiseworthy manner of life everything that they hear. Against this, the Lord rebuking the Pharisees says: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, who are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful to men, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones" (Matt. 23:27). Hence again He compares the vainglorious to unbelievers, saying: "How can you believe, you who receive glory from men?" (John 5:44). Those who are of this kind are indeed praised in the day, but they are not found on that day: because those who hear their praises gaze, as it were, at the whiteness of the tomb from the outside; but when they seek the virtues that were praised, they find within the night of sins, like the grim and rotting bones of the dead. Let them say therefore, to signify the true glory of the righteous: "Today you will find him": because when the righteous are praised, they possess in the truth of their manner of life whatever shines forth brightly about them through the voice of praise. And because such a great man must be sought with eager devotion, there follows: (Verse 14.) "And they went up into the city. And as they were walking in the midst of the city, Samuel appeared, coming out to meet them, to go up to the high place."

40. When we hear the praises of holy men, we ascend in the city, because we seek them where they descend, not where they are. But, as I said above, the place which preachers have for themselves is the secret contemplation of divinity, while the place for their subjects is preaching. Sometimes indeed they speak plain things, sometimes lofty things. They have therefore a common place for all, they have a sublime and special one for some, and they have a secret one for themselves. These three spiritual places are surely signified, because Samuel is said to go out, and to appear in the midst of the city, and to ascend to the high place. For he who went out in order to appear was somewhere where, before he appeared, he had been hidden. Priests therefore go out when they come from the secret of meditation to preaching. They appear in the city when they speak plainer things, that is, things for doing or for understanding. They ascend to the high place when they either command the wise to perform mighty works, or reveal the depths of mystery. Our ordered ascent is therefore

shown by the fact that Saul is reported to ascend in the city. For the places of our Pastors, in which they are accustomed to pray or to be in seclusion, are to be venerated by us, not approached. This we can know not only by example but also by divine exhortation. In the Song of Songs indeed the bridegroom declares, saying:

”I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not cause the beloved to awaken until she herself wishes” (Song 3:5). For the minds of the perfect are brides, because while they place themselves in the secret of divine love as if in a bridal chamber, there through vision they find the one to whom they are joined by ineffable love. When therefore the bride sleeps in the bridal chamber, she is joined to the bridegroom, because while the chosen soul of the preacher is hidden away in secret contemplation, it is placed as it were in the bridegroom’s chamber. Whoever therefore rouses her takes her from the bridegroom, because indeed the rest of the chosen soul is not only its own delight but also the delight of the bridegroom. Whence also it is said through the prophet: ”The bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride” (Isa. 62:5). Rightly therefore the bridegroom adjures the daughters of Jerusalem that the bride not be awakened by them as long as she wishes to sleep, lest while she rises from the quiet of the chamber, he himself lose the enjoyment of love. Let the going forth of Samuel therefore be awaited, because holy men are to be venerated in the secret of their silence, not to be disturbed. Therefore one must ascend in the city, because the chosen teacher in the common place of teaching appears as so great a gain to his people, inasmuch as he is known to go out in order to be of benefit.

In this place it should be noted that it is not said of Samuel, ”Today he ascended in the city,” but ”today he came into the city”; but of Saul and the boy it is not said ”they came,” but ”they ascended. For he came as if on level ground, while the other climbed as if to heights. What else is shown to us by this, except that the plain things which preachers speak are not plain to us? In the city therefore we do not come but ascend, when we either look with difficulty upon the plain things of preaching, or bear with labor the small things that are commanded to us. But because to stand in the city is to be fortified, therefore we ascend, because when great men teach us to do small goods, they vehemently forbid us from yielding to the counsels of evil spirits. And because it is very laborious to overcome all temptations, we strive to reach the words of the teachers who command this of us, as if through the labor of ascending. But because it is written that ”each one shall receive his reward according to his own labor” (which indeed is understood not only of eternal retribution but also of the present), almighty God, according to the merit of the work, grants to his elect increases of virtue (1 Cor. 3:8). For also to Abraham, who did not spare his son, it is said: ”By myself I have sworn:

because you have done this thing and have not spared your son for my sake, I will bless you and multiply your offspring” (Gen. 22:16). For often those who labor faithfully in doing the things they know deserve through divine grace to know greater things to do. As a figure of these, Saul is rightly said first to ascend in the city, and afterward is reported to be led by Samuel to the high place. But to come to meet someone is to encounter the one coming by

the same road. When therefore we wish to learn the way of salvation from holy preachers, they indeed come to meet us when they encounter us with the word of salvation that we seek. For they come as if by the same road when they hasten to teach us what we have resolved to learn. This indeed is the moral sense for all; but if we investigate what pertains spiritually to certain individuals, he comes to meet him because he foreknows that the king who is to be anointed is coming to him. But from where he knows this is added: (Verses 15, 16. But the Lord had revealed to Samuel's ear one day before Saul came, saying: "At this very hour which now is, tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as leader over my people Israel, and he shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines."

41. He went out therefore to meet him, in order to lead him to the high place: because he who is sought for the governance of the holy Church must both be shown forth by divine gift and called to a lofty manner of life. The ear of Samuel, because it is said in the diminutive, what does it signify if not the humble understanding of the spiritual teacher? The ear therefore is opened by the Lord, when the humble understanding of the preacher is instructed by the Holy Spirit, so that he may hear what he is to do, and arrange what he has heard. But we must carefully consider what is said: "The day before. For the day is the life of the just, as Paul attests when he says: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). When the life of the chosen one is revealed, the hidden day is made known. For man sees the outward show of good works, but God sees the light of the heart. Because therefore both the elect and the reprobate are hidden as regards the intention of the heart, the Lord makes known the coming king the day before; when through his grace the holy preachers recognize in those who are to be promoted that the testimony of good works is preceded by purity of intention. For there is no light of works that is not preceded by rightness of intention.

Rightly therefore the king who is to be appointed is recognized the day before. But they do not perceive the following day unless it is born from the preceding one: so that they may consider the day before the day, that is, the intention before the action, and may perceive as sent by God in the light of holy works the one whom divine grace shows to shine through the purpose of the heart. And because at the very hour when he is promised, he is presented: what does this give us to understand, if not that he who is chosen must be perfect, not only in body but in mind? For when God speaks to holy men, it is the full light of day. For a day has its beginning, and it has its end. At the end he reproves sinners, saying: "Adam, where are you? (Gen. 3:9). And because neither those who merely begin good things, nor those who grow sluggish in good works, are to be promoted, the preacher is sent at the hour of perfect speech, when such a one is presented who shines with the full light of good works and gleams with the full splendor of truth. He is also described as a man coming from the land of Benjamin. He is called a man on account of the strength of his works; from the land of Benjamin, on account of his right confession of faith. Benjamin indeed means "son of the right hand.

Who then is called this son of the right hand, if not he of whom it is written: ”He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father” (Mark 16:19)? The land of Benjamin therefore is the holy Church. Because therefore the heretics have been expelled from this land, the king comes from the land of Benjamin, when one who is not polluted by any heresy but is catholic in faith receives the primacy of the holy Church. He enjoys the title of ”man” if he is firm in faith and strong in action. He indeed is commanded to be anointed as leader over the people of the Lord: because the outward sacraments profit those priests who are not unworthy of the gifts of those same sacraments. Or priests are anointed when through the ministry of those who ordain them they receive an increase of spiritual graces. Whence it also follows: ”He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. As anointed ones they can save others, because they have received spiritual graces more abundantly. For those who save the people are anointed over the people: because those who are appointed by the Lord to govern others receive the spiritual gifts of charisms by which they can benefit them; and they are superior in merits also to those whom they precede in rank. And because often a good pastor is chosen on the merit of a good people, it is well added: (v. 16) ”Because I have looked upon my people.

Likewise, because a good pastor must be sought from the Lord with great prayers, it is added: (v. 16) ”Their cry has come to me.”

42. But perhaps some are troubled, because what is said here and what was said above seem contradictory. For there he says: ’They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them, according to all their works which they have done from the day I led them out of the land of Egypt even to this day’ (1 Kings 8:7). But now he says: ’You shall anoint him leader over my people Israel, and he shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked upon my people, for their cry has come to me.’ Above, a king is permitted to be appointed as if by one who is angry; now he is appointed as if by one who is merciful and kind. And who does not see how much these words of kindness differ from that sentence which was pronounced upon him by Samuel? ’Because,’ he says, ’you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king’ (1 Kings 15:26). This we certainly resolve quickly if we examine carefully the force of the words themselves. For all these words of divine kindness are ascribed to the merits of the people: ’He shall save my people;’ and, ’I have looked upon my people;’ and, ’their cry has come to me.’ Therefore a king is decreed to be appointed for those whose cry is heard.

For even though Saul was to be cast from the kingdom for his future wickedness, nevertheless he had in himself, as long as he reigned, that by which he could benefit the people subject to him. He was certainly to be valiant in war, yet proud in mind. He would have that by which he would fall for himself, and that by which he would stand for others. Therefore, foreseeing that by which he could benefit his subjects, the Lord says: ’He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines;’ and, ’their cry has come to me.’ Yet still it seems very contradictory that he should be believed to hear the cry of that people who are rebuked for having rejected him. To which it must be answered: that in that people there were both

the reprobate and the elect. There, then, the reprobate are accused of having rejected the Lord; here the desires of the elect reach the ears of almighty God. From which what is to be gathered, except that it is often good for the elect that wicked rulers are appointed? It is therefore not surprising if God is angered, as it were, at his own rejection, and yet appoints a king: because the very office of the future king was both bad and good. Bad, indeed, because proud; but good, because vigorous in the defense of his subjects. And we see all of this happening now in the holy Church:

because very often the one who receives her primacy is one who is useful to others in word, yet swollen with pride in his own mind. By preaching virtues, he destroys vices as if by standing firm, but by thinking highly of himself, he falls. Thus by preaching he saves the people of God, but by swelling with pride he casts himself down headlong. Like a mighty king, by his word he crushes the hidden adversaries of God's people, but through pride he falls from the height of the kingdom. Therefore a king is not appointed for his own sake, but only for the people; when one is permitted to preside in the holy Church who tramples upon the good things he preaches, either by being proud or by living wickedly.

43. In this passage it must be noted that when a pastor is chosen in the holy Church, sometimes he is ordained for himself and for the people; sometimes neither for the people nor for himself; sometimes for himself, not for the people; and sometimes indeed for the people, not for himself. For himself and the people, when a chosen preacher is given to chosen subjects: because from the very thing by which the multitude of subjects is led to the eternal homeland, gifts of merits are heaped upon the good pastor. A pastor is given neither for himself nor for the people when a reprobate populace is permitted to have a reprobate pastor, since he presides in such a way and they obey in such a way that neither he who teaches nor those who are taught deserve to arrive at eternal goods. Of whom the Lord says through Hosea: "I will give them kings in my wrath" (Hosea 13:11). For a king is given in the wrath of God when one worse than the wicked is appointed to preside over them. Such a pastor is given when such a people is taken on to be governed, who may equally be condemned by eternal punishment. A pastor is given for himself, not for the people, when a good man is placed over the wicked; as the Lord says to Ezekiel: "I am sending you to the children of Israel, to an apostate nation that has departed from me" (Ezekiel 3:3).

A pastor is given for himself indeed, not for the people, when even if a chosen preacher cannot convert his hearers to God, he himself nevertheless does not lose the eternal rewards of his labor. But for the people, not for himself: when a pastor is granted to good subjects who possesses gifts by which he benefits them but does not benefit himself. Such indeed were those about whom the Lord commands the disciples, saying: "What they say, do; but what they do, do not do" (Matthew 23:3). As if He were saying: What they have received that is useful for you, take from them as though it were yours; and leave in them as though it were theirs what they possess not for your gain but for their own destruction. Saul, therefore, with the Lord rejected, is chosen, and yet is declared to be one who will free the people of the Lord from the hand of the Philistines, because Almighty God often benefits His good

faithful ones through those prelates who do not please Him in the exercise of that same prelacy. There follows: (Verse 17. And when Samuel looked upon Saul, the Lord said: "Behold the man of whom I spoke to you; this one shall rule over my people."

44. For this was done on the following day, which the Lord had promised on the preceding day, saying: "Tomorrow at this same hour I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him over my people Israel." He is therefore seen on the second day, who was promised on the first: because the preachers of holy Church search out the virtues of the elect in their hidden life. For those who are to be promoted, when they bring forth good things, promise something great from themselves. On the first day, therefore, a king is promised; because preachers behold the great works of the elect, and, as if the Lord were speaking, they recognize inwardly those whom they wish to appoint as rulers of holy Church. Samuel therefore sees on the following day, when the preacher beholds the one who is to be promoted in the great light of his manner of life. And then indeed, as if by the Lord's indication, he recognizes the one who must be appointed king: because the one who stands preeminent on the lofty height of holiness, he sees as worthy to be set above others. And because those who are great in merits are small through humility, there follows: (Verse 18.) Saul approached Samuel in the middle of the gate, saying: "Tell me, I pray, where is the house of the Seer."

45. If a preacher is in the city when he speaks plain and common things that are understood, what is the gate of this city if not humility? For the knowledge of the divine word is hidden from the proud and revealed to the humble. Hence also in the Gospel he speaks to the Father, saying: "I confess to you, Father, King of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25). By the wise he meant the proud and those who think highly of themselves, but by the little ones he meant the humble. Of these another Scripture certainly makes mention, saying: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). For he resists the proud, lest they understand eternal goods, but he gives grace to the little ones, so that they may know those same eternal goods through his own revealing. The elect, therefore, because they come to spiritual understanding through humility, go to hear the preachers as if through a gate. The chosen preacher also, because he speaks spiritual things humbly, Samuel meets Saul at that same gate. For it is as though both are at the gate when the things that the chosen preacher speaks are humbly heard by another who is chosen.

46. But he who had newly arrived had found the one he was seeking, and did not know it. Therefore Saul himself says to Samuel: "Tell me, I pray, where is the house of the Seer. For this is characteristic of great men, that they are recognized with difficulty by the least. In the flesh indeed they are despised, but in mind they are exalted. They desire to appear contemptible outwardly, but they do not cease to do venerable things. Because, therefore, those who greatly desire to advance through their examples admire them not only in outward matters, but in their inmost qualities. They see in them outwardly what can be despised by carnal people, but they equally observe that inwardly, spiritual men ought to be venerated

with great admiration. When they hear that these men are exalted by fame, they desire to know them in the loftiness of their way of life. According to the historical sense, therefore, Saul was seeing Samuel and did not recognize him, so that what was happening to them in figure might signify spiritual things for us. For when we are little ones, we as it were see perfect men when we hear of their virtues from those who report them; but those whom we see, we do not recognize, because we cannot know through experience what we perceive by hearing and hold in the eyes of the heart.

When therefore we seek from them the secrets of their way of life for imitation, we are indeed asking them as it were about their own home. For their home is their way of life. This home the disciple of John wished to know, when he asked the Lord, saying: ”Master, where do you dwell? (John 1:38). He indeed, because he was to be led to intimacy with Him as one of the household, heard: ”Come, and see. This home Philip had seen but did not recognize, to whom He says: ”I have been with you so long a time, and you have not known me. Philip, he who sees me sees also my Father” (John 14:9). Of the Lord also it is written that He spoke to Moses as with His friend; but the same Moses, seeing and not recognizing, was asking, saying: ”If I have found grace in your sight, show me your face” (Exodus 33:13). But the spiritual way of life of the saints, because it is revealed to none but the devout and the suppliant, Saul similarly begs that the house of Samuel be shown to him. Holy preachers also, when they hear great things about themselves, cast themselves down through humility; they do not become puffed up. They know how to show to those who ask great things which they may imitate; they know how, among the great things which they show, not to appear great through boasting. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 19) ”And Samuel answered Saul, saying: I am the Seer.

But go up before me to the high place today, that you may eat with me, and I will send you away in the morning.”

47. What does it mean to say, ”I am the Seer,” except to show himself humble, as he appeared to their eyes? As if to say: In your estimation, the one you seek is great, but the one you see is small. For in this word, ”Seer,” it is not a title of praise, but ”I am. As if to say: That Seer is I—not what you suppose, but what you behold. But he who knew how to humble himself knew how to give gifts not as one who is lowly, but as one who is exalted. For this reason he also commands him to go up before him to the high place, so that he might eat with him. He ascends to the high place who raises his mind to know higher things. Indeed, to ascend to the high place is to prepare the heart for understanding lofty matters. Hence Peter too is taken up on the mountain, so that he might deserve to see the glory of the transfigured Redeemer (Matt. 17:1). For in that ascent of the mountain, the lofty preparation of the mind is expressed: because he who does not fix his mind on high things through earnest attention will not be able to see exalted things. Since, therefore, we better understand sublime things when we are prepared, Saul is commanded to go up to the high place before Samuel.

For we ascend, as it were, to the high place before the preacher when we first direct our mind to know lofty things, and they afterwards speak to us of those very things to which we

have directed our attention. But what does it mean when he says, "That you may eat with me today"? When holy preachers speak of heavenly things, they refresh the hearts of their chosen hearers: for as the Truth attests, the food of the soul is the word of God: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). For bread is the nourishment of the body; the word is the nourishment of the mind. But those who refresh the body without the mind are dead in mind, alive in flesh. Hence Paul also says of the self-indulgent widow: "She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives" (1 Tim. 5:6). For the widow would not die through the delights of food if she satisfied her soul with the food of God's word, since Paul himself says: "Nothing is unclean that is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). But the living widow dies when she nourishes the body with food and kills the soul with hunger (Matt. 4). Therefore man does not live by bread alone: because since man consists of soul and body, just as he lives in one way through the body, so it is necessary that each part be nourished by different foods.

Therefore we ascend with the prophet in order to eat, when we raise our mind to the heights of the divine word, so that we may be satisfied by its heavenly flavor through devotion.

48. And because the preachers themselves greatly love the heavenly things of which they speak, we eat together, as it were, when they devoutly bring forth in speaking what we devoutly place in the belly of the soul by hearing. For we eat together, because we hear the Word of God equally. For Truth says to the preachers: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:20). Which Paul also proves when he questions his hearers, saying: "Do you seek proof of Christ who dwells in me? (2 Cor. 13:3). Since, therefore, Christ and His Spirit speak in the holy preachers, the preachers themselves hear the One speaking all the more clearly inasmuch as they are nearer to Him whose seat they deserve to be. Therefore they can be more fully refreshed by the nourishment of the word, inasmuch as they already have within themselves the chamber of refreshment. For they are friends of the bridegroom, and they stand and rejoice with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom. When, therefore, the holy preachers speak divine things, they hear; but because they know by certain experience when the Spirit speaks in them, they hear themselves, yet not in themselves, because they themselves also speak, but having spoken in themselves, they venerate another who speaks. In this, therefore—that they hear and speak—they both refresh and are refreshed. They refresh their hearers when they bring forth the word with their own voice;

they themselves are refreshed when the word they bring forth is brought forth to them by divine revelation. Yet those are more devoutly satisfied who have experienced the delights of the mind in the speaking of the Spirit. Is not the experience of the speaking Spirit this: to perceive themselves unprepared and unpremeditated, and suddenly to be prepared and ready? To know what they had not known; to have what they had not had; to lose the torpor of the mind; to suddenly burn with wondrous devotion; to be wondrously filled at once and in a moment with fullness of knowledge; to bring forth with wondrous eloquence of speech the things they have understood? The elect preachers, therefore, have experience of the Spirit

speaking in them in the sudden revelation of truth; they have the sudden ardor of charity; they have it in the fullness of knowledge; they have it in the most eloquent preaching of the word. For they are suddenly instructed, and at once they grow fervent, and in a moment they are filled, and they are enriched with a wondrous power of speech. For concerning that sudden experience the Lord says: "It will be given to you in that hour what you should speak" (Matt. 10:19). Concerning that sudden fervor of charity, Cleopas says: "Was not our heart burning within us on the way, while He spoke and opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32). Concerning the experience of being filled and of eloquence, Luke also recalls, saying:

"Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). For in that same Spirit they were both filled and spoke, so as to signify what we assert: that namely, by speaking they feed others, who are themselves fed by hearing what they say. And because they recognize the sound of the mighty Spirit as ardor, or as speech, or as filling, they feast all the more sweetly on spiritual gifts inasmuch as they have been more worthily taken up to His table. He says, therefore: "Come up, that you may eat with me today"; because the good teacher, when he sweetly receives in the devotion of his mind the things he speaks, feeds both himself and those who hear him at the same time.

49. On the other hand, reprobate teachers, because they do not love what they say, fast while they feed others with their word. For since the Lord said that the word of God is the refreshment of the soul, and the word of God in a full mind is complete learning and complete devotion, those who do not devoutly hear what they speak are not fed by the word of God. Indeed the Apostle, as if already filled with that sweetness of the word, says: "Of his fullness we have all received" (John 1:16). The fullness of the word is one thing, the fullness of a book is another. From the fullness of the word, only the elect can receive; but from the fullness of Scripture, even the reprobate can receive. For the book of the blessed apostle John and the book of the blessed apostle Paul are indeed fullnesses, which are contained in them. Paul or John wrote their words, to be sure, but what each one wrote, the Word speaking in them inspired. Therefore, whoever receives the word of Scripture not in love but in knowledge receives from the fullness not of the word but of the book. And because he receives a dead thing, he himself does not live in its reception. But what am I saying—that Scripture is dead? It is not only dead but killing. For it is written: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). Indeed every divine letter does this.

For the letter is the body, and the life of this body is the spirit. He who reads the letter and refreshes his mind in the love of understanding receives a body that has been vivified and is vivifying. Therefore the reprobate, who search the Scriptures they do not love, who boldly speak outwardly of that whose savor they do not inwardly understand—while others perceive with devout mind the refreshment of the Scriptures they expound, it is as though others are filled from what they themselves give, but not they themselves. Let Samuel therefore say: "Come up, that you may eat with me today," because from what the elect

teachers bestow upon their subjects from the word, they both hear together and are filled together. For behold, this is demonstrated in the very word we are speaking. For who doubts that Samuel wrote this Scripture we are expounding? And yet he who wrote it says this: ”Samuel answered”—so as to show clearly that what he himself was writing, another was imparting. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit, who speaks through him, says through him about him: ”Samuel answered Saul: Go up before me to the high place, that you may eat with me today. He says what he hears, and he simultaneously hears and says. Therefore, while the elect preacher hears and speaks with great veneration of love, and good hearers receive with great devotion what is said, Saul and Samuel are said to eat together at the high place.

Likewise, because preachers are worthier and more fervent than their hearers in the refreshment of the same word, it is not Samuel who is said to be about to eat with Saul, but Saul with Samuel. But also because such splendid instruction of the mind exists in the great light of the spiritual life, he does not say: ”That you may eat with me this night,” but ”today. He also dismisses him in the morning. ”Morning” means the beginning of the following day. The following day is the serene light of holy conduct. He therefore says: (Verse 19. ”I will send you away in the morning.”

50. He is indeed sent forth in the morning from the height, who, when he advances to the light of higher knowledge, proposes to dwell in the great light of good work. Or he is sent forth in the morning, who intends to preach to others the word of great knowledge which he learned from the mouth of a preacher. For when we propose good things, we are as it were in the morning at the beginning of the day, because we have already begun to behold the brightness of good which we may follow. But this morning grows into full day when he who has proposed to do great goods or to preach the lofty joys of eternity displays what he has proposed in the great light of virtue. In the morning, therefore, Saul is sent forth from the height, because the hearers of good preachers do not delay to practice sublimely what they hear as sublime from them. But the elect know both how to hide and how to manifest the goods they possess. They hide them indeed, lest they perish through pride; but they manifest them, lest they remain unfruitful. While they hide them, they guard them; but while they manifest them, they bring forth fruit. For there follows: (Ver. 19, 20.) ’And all things that are in your heart I will show to you; and as for the donkeys which you lost three days ago, do not be anxious, for they have been found.’

51. How preachers strive to conceal themselves is shown above in the word of Samuel, where it is said: ”I am the Seer. But now, because he says, ”All things that are in your mind, I will declare to you,” what else do we understand except that holy men often both hide and bring forth the virtues which they have? But, as I said, they hide them lest they appear great on account of their great virtues; they bring them forth so that the elect may imitate them. And so they declare that they excel in the word of wisdom or the spirit of prophecy, not that they may be venerated, but that they may be heard. Wherefore also the Psalmist, intimating that he possesses the grace of the word, says: ”I have understood more than all my teachers”

(Ps. 118:99). Therefore, certain of the skill of the spirit, he confidently invites us, saying: "Come, children, hear me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33:11). For Micah was affirming himself to be a prophet when he said: "Would that I were not a man having the spirit, and that I rather spoke a lie" (Mic. 2:11). Hence Elisha says concerning Naaman the Syrian: "Let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel" (4 Kings 5:8). Hence Paul says: "They are Hebrews, so am I; they are the seed of Abraham, so am I;

they are ministers of Christ, so am I—I speak as one less wise—I am more so" (2 Cor. 11:22–23). But on the other hand, Amos says: "I am not a prophet, but a herdsman plucking sycamores" (Amos 7:14). Hence also Paul, when he wishes to hide himself for the sake of safeguarding, says: "I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). Hence John the Baptist, when questioned, said: "I am not a prophet" (John 1:21). For he was not a prophet unto self-exaltation, but he was a prophet and more than a prophet unto ministry. Samuel therefore, in order to guard himself, says: "I am the Seer"; and in order to present himself for the profit of others, says: "I will declare all things to you. And if anyone wishes, he can understand it in the same way: that when he says, "I am the Seer," if he declares himself to be a seer, he says this so that he may share the good that he has with the elect. Therefore, in order to prove what he asserts, he subsequently adds: "I will declare all things to you. This is what the doctors of holy Church do; for while they behold the virtues and vices of minds, they clearly know how to heal vices and to promote virtues.

He therefore declares all things that are in the heart when he deigns to set forth by the instruction of manifest teaching the way of virtue which the good hearer desires to hold. And if he is great and has resolved not only to do good things but also to preach them, preachers declare all things that are in his heart when they open to their minds whatever they desire concerning doctrine. But because he signifies to the one to whom he speaks the one who strives for the gains of preaching, he adds and says: "And as for the donkeys which you lost three days ago, do not be anxious, for they have been found."

52. This was explained above in the person of Saul, how it applies to inexperienced preachers. For he lost the donkeys, because he by no means drew to repentance the sinners to whom he offered the word of life. He would indeed have found them, if those who had hidden themselves in the night of wickedness had returned to the light of justice, in which they could have been found as men. Why then does he say, "They have been found," unless because often the great men of salvation consider that good can easily be found in those about whose life the unlearned despair? For even skilled physicians of bodies often presume to cure those whose health the unskilled cannot presume to restore. So indeed, sinners are often drawn to repentance and satisfaction by learned teachers who could not be drawn by unlearned and inexperienced ones. Since therefore, both by the preaching and by the example of the perfect, those return to the Lord through repentance who could not be converted through the ministry of others, Samuel rightly says that the donkeys have been found which Saul could not find. This saying can also be understood with respect to the advancement of

the ruler being ordained. As if to say: As you advance in learning and life, you will also be able to win for the Lord those whom you have not yet been able to win. So certain indeed is the virtue of advancement that its fruits, which do not yet stand firm in reality, stand firm in the certainty of hope. And because by these words he is invited to endure the labors of holy preaching, he explains what rewards of gain he should expect, saying: (Verse 20.) And for whom shall be all the best things of Israel? Shall they not be for you and for all your father's house?

53. Israel, which is interpreted "seeing God" — whom does it more fittingly signify in this place than that blessed society of eternal citizens who, from the toil of this life, have arrived at the eternal vision of almighty God? What then are the best things of Israel, if not the gifts of eternal recompense? Paul indeed says: "Each one shall receive his reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3:8). Likewise he says: "There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and of the stars. For star differs from star in brightness" (1 Cor. 15:41). Therefore the recompenses and rewards of all the faithful are the good things of Israel. But because the reward of the elect preachers is the highest, theirs are the best things of Israel. Concerning these best things of Israel the Lord promises to his faithful servant, saying: "Amen I say to you, he will set him over all his goods" (Matt. 24:47). For he who is set not among all things but over all things is declared to possess not merely the good things of Israel, but even the best. Let Samuel therefore say: "To whom shall all the best things of Israel belong, if not to you and to all the house of your father? As if to say: Even if the labor of preaching is great, it ought to be borne with all the more devotion, the greater the gains of its reward.

The teacher of holy Church ought therefore to weigh with anxious mind that not only the good things but even the best things of Israel are his, so that he who awaits things so supreme and excellent may always do what is greater and more excellent. For indeed those supreme rewards are owed not to the supreme rank, but to supreme labor. For the distinguished teacher did not say: "Each one shall receive his reward according to his dignity," but "according to his labor. When therefore the best things of eternal life are assigned to preachers, great toil in this life is enjoined upon them: because surely he who does not strive to be better than the rest cannot prevail in having better things than the rest. And because this is common to all preachers of holy Church, the best things of Israel are said to belong not only to Saul, but to the whole house of his father. For as sons are born from a father, so in the order of preachers new ones are successively raised up in place of others, resplendent with the same nobility of holiness. The house of the preacher is also his spiritual manner of life. Therefore the best things of Israel belong to the whole house of his father: because wherever there is a priestly manner of life, there assuredly it is, and it is so exalted that from the loftiness of its merit, its rewards in eternal life are the very best. In this, therefore, let preachers examine themselves carefully:

because the best things of Israel will belong not only to themselves but to his whole house — because if they depart from the house, they will not have the best things. For if they hold only the eminence of preaching, they will not have the best things, because they do

not maintain the loftiness of life. But every elect person, when he hears great things about himself, brings his own weaknesses to mind, so that he may guard himself against pride, lest he lose the good things he has. Hence it is added: (Verse 21. Saul answered and said: ”Am I not a son of Gemini, of the least tribe of Israel, and is not my kindred the last among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken this word to me?”

54. As if he were saying: Why do you ascribe such great things to me, when I am nothing? For he is a son of Gemini who imitates the negligent in the care of himself and in the example of his neighbor. He is indeed a twin, because while he neglects the care of himself, he does not bestow examples of good work upon others. Therefore whoever imitates such people is called a son of Gemini. He is said to be from the smallest tribe of Israel, because the last order of the holy Church is that of converted sinners. Rightly therefore, he who confesses himself to be a sinner is said to be from the smallest tribe of Israel. His family is also reported to be the last among the others, because according to the voice of Truth: ”Whoever breaks the least commandment shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). For Benjamin means ”son of the right hand. By this name indeed the people of the holy Church are designated, who, while being born in the faith of the Redeemer, are prepared through good works for the goods of the heavenly fatherland. The right hand of God is indeed that strength of eternal life. The families of the tribe of Benjamin are the diverse ways of life of the elect. For just as diverse families come from one principle of generation, so from the one origin of orthodox faith, many ways of life of the faithful arise.

Therefore holy men, when they cast themselves down through humility, because they confess themselves to be sinners, and yet rightly believe in God, assert themselves to be, as it were, both sons of Gemini and of the last family of Israel. But because the more they humble themselves, according to the voice of Truth, the more they are exalted (Luke 14:10–11), there follows: (Verse 22. So Samuel, taking Saul and his servant, brought them into the dining hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited.

55. Samuel takes up Saul when the preacher of holy Church opens the heights of his preaching to a chosen hearer. For a subject is taken up when he is elevated to the knowledge of heavenly things through the word of a teacher. And because he desires to know spiritual things not with carnal intention, he took up not only Saul himself but also his servant. For it was as though he had remained below without a servant, he who said: ”My heart has forsaken me” (Ps. 37:11). For our heart forsakes us when we are so overcome by carnal desires that we place the intention of our heart on earthly, carnal, and bodily things, and not on heavenly and spiritual ones. He had found this lost servant, who said: ”Your servant has found his heart” (2 Kings 7:27). For we find our heart when we seek spiritual things through the intention of the heart; when we tear it away from earthly things so that we may direct it toward heavenly ones. The chosen preacher, therefore, to those who are still carnal, neither commands difficult things nor reveals spiritual ones. For Paul also says to the Corinthians: ”I could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal ones, as

to little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:1). As if by these words he were saying:

I therefore did not lead you to the heights, because you did not have a spiritual sense with you, as Saul did not have his servant. Wherefore, also indicating the reason, he says: "For you are still carnal. Rightly, therefore, Samuel is said to have taken up Saul and his servant, because the teachers of holy Church command difficult things and reveal lofty ones to those whom they consider to be spiritual. They are also led into a dining hall, because the breadth of charity is shown to them. For one is placed as it were in a dining hall who, through what he has learned on high, dwells in the breadth of charity. Or certainly our entrance into the dining hall is love; the dining hall is the beauty of the spiritual life. Whence John says: "He who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14). For if he who does not love remains in death, then he who loves remains in life. We are therefore led into the dining hall when we rise to the affection of heavenly conversation through the affection of charity. In this breadth of dwelling, holy preachers indeed hold the higher place, because blessed John the Evangelist says: "And around the throne were twenty-four seats, and upon the seats twenty-four elders" (Rev. 4:4).

For the elders are holy preachers, mature in understanding, grave in character, who surround the throne of God with seats placed nearby, because those who love the Creator above all others rest closer to him through the loftiest manner of life. Rightly therefore Saul with his servant receives a place at the head of those who had been invited, because in them the type of pastors to be chosen is shown. The ruler is indeed placed at the head when, through the force of great love, he receives the singular resolve of the heavenly life; while he holds the catholic faith in common with the rest, he possesses a sublime virtue above the rest. Whence it also follows: (Verse 22. "For there were about thirty men."

56. Three times ten makes thirty. The number three suggests faith in the holy and undivided Trinity. The number ten, through the ten commandments of the law, signifies the perfection of good works. The number thirty, therefore, designates those who hold that faith which works through love. Saul is placed at the head of these, because through divine grace he who is to be the future shepherd of the Church is made more exalted in merit than those over whom he ought to be superior in dignity. Samuel bestows this exalted place upon him, because he who deserves such greatness of life advances to it through the instruction of his elders. And since great things, and not small ones, are now shown to him to accomplish, it is added: (Vers. 23, 24.) Samuel said to the cook: Give the portion which I gave to you, and which I commanded you to set aside with you. So the cook took up the shoulder and placed it before Saul. And Samuel said: Behold what remains, set it before you and eat, because it was purposely kept for you when I called the people. And Saul ate with Samuel on that day.

57. What is signified by the shoulder of the breast, if not the strength of action? This is bestowed by Samuel's cook, when it is demonstrated to lesser ones by the greatest preachers. For the cooks are priests, because while they speak to the chosen faithful in the fervor of

the spirit, they cook the foods of the mind, as it were through fire. But the portion that is given is said to have been set apart, because the strength of good work in a preacher ought to be singular. Saul places this before him, when he commands the one to be ordained as pastor of holy Church to consider how great a strength he ought to possess. But concerning what the cook had set aside, Samuel says to Saul: 'Behold that which is left, set it before you.' It remained indeed, because Christ did not fulfill all things that are ours; through His cross He indeed redeemed all, but something remained, so that whoever strives to be redeemed and to reign with Him must be crucified. He who said the following had surely seen this remainder: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him' (2 Tim. 2:12). As if to say: What Christ fulfilled avails nothing unless one also fulfills that which remained. Hence the blessed apostle Peter says: 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps' (1 Pet. 2:21). Hence Paul says: 'I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh' (Col. 1:24).

58. But it should be noted that the cook placed the shoulder before Saul, and yet Samuel instructed Saul to place it before himself. What does this mean? A steward usually places a dish on the table before those reclining; and when the one reclining draws it toward himself, he places closer before himself what was a little farther away. The cook, therefore, places the shoulder before Saul; Samuel instructs Saul to place it before himself: because what is enjoined upon a new preacher concerning the strength of good work, he ought to draw closer to himself, as it were, through the zeal of contemplation. And after he has drawn it to himself, he eats it: because what he has long contemplated, he resolves to carry out. Indeed, to eat the shoulder is to store away inwardly through purpose of mind what is outwardly commanded concerning strong action. For it was as if urging every chosen one to place the shoulder before himself and eat it, he who said: "If you sit down at the table of a mighty man, wisely consider what is set before you, for you must prepare similar things" (Prov. 23:1). At the table of the mighty one, he indicated the strength of the shoulder. And when he said, "Wisely consider what is set before you," he taught the one to whom he spoke to place the shoulder before himself. But he suggested that he ought to eat it, because he said, "You must prepare similar things. For by preparing similar things, we eat;

because when we resolve to perform the mighty deeds we hear, we store away the food of life, as it were eating, in the stomach of the heart. But the vessel of election commands even the highest teachers under the instruction of a single disciple, saying: "Lay hands hastily on no one" (1 Tim. 5:22). For since those who are to be raised to the heights must be chosen with great deliberation of counsel, what follows is fittingly added: "Because it was kept for you by design, when I called the people. As if to say: Place before yourself what, before it was set out, I placed before myself; consider what I considered. For the portion of the shoulder is kept by design, because the strongest action of a preacher is rightly entrusted to the one who is judged worthy of so great a ministry by the highest men with great consideration. This portion was kept by design when the people are called, because when faithful subjects come to undertake the ministry of preaching, what is enjoined upon good preachers is not weak things upon the weak, but strong things upon the strong. But those who progress well

strive above all to maintain the good of obedience in their lofty way of life. Therefore what follows is fittingly added: ”And Saul ate with Samuel on that day. As I have already said, for a teacher being advanced, to eat is to prepare himself to do what is commanded him concerning virtue.

And he is rightly said to have eaten with Samuel, because when those who newly arrive resolve to do great things, the highest men become more fervent in the strength of good work. In this eating can also be signified that of which he promised above, saying: ”Go up before me, that you may eat with me today. Saul therefore eats with Samuel, because when the preacher inwardly hears the heavenly sweetness of the word of God, what the subjects outwardly hear as he speaks, they are both assuredly satisfied from the divine refreshment. There follows: (Verse 25. ”And they went down from the high place into the town, and Samuel spoke with Saul on the rooftop. And Saul made his bed on the rooftop, and slept.”

59. Whoever is raised to the height of pastoral care must have in that very sublimity of his office both loftiness in his own life and compassion for the weakness of others. Therefore let Saul ascend with Samuel, and let him descend into the town. Let the ruler know how to conduct lofty matters; let him know how to arrange common ones. Let him say with Paul: ”Our conversation is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20); let him say with us: ”Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? I see another law contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive under the law of sin” (Rom. 7:24). The ruler is on the height when he speaks wisdom among the perfect. When he arranges carnal matters, he descends into the town, saying: ”On account of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband; let the husband render to his wife what is owed, and the wife likewise to her husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). He is on the height when he says: ”No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ” (Rom. 8:39). But he descends into the town, for speaking, he says: ”I became weak to the weak, that I might gain the weak; I became all things to all men, that I might save all” (1 Cor. 9:22).

Samuel therefore brought Saul up to the high place and set him down in the town, because great men, when they appoint someone to the summit of holy Church, teach those whom they place on that summit to live sublimely, to preach plainly, to be strict with themselves but temperate with their subjects — to attend so to their own salvation that they can yet be weak with the weak. I say ”be weak” through the affection of the mind, not through the languor of inner sickness. For if the teacher lies prostrate through languor of mind, he cannot heal the sick or raise up those who are fallen. It is well, therefore, that Saul is reported to have descended with Samuel into the town and to have spoken with him on the rooftop. For the town is on the plain, but the rooftop is on high. Compared to the high place, the rooftop is on the plain; compared to the town, it is not on the plain but elevated. So indeed, when chosen preachers show compassion to lesser members, they seem to leave the height behind; but descending into the town, they are on the rooftop, because they come down from the height, yet they take on the weakness of their subjects by pitying and counseling them, not by acting out and sharing in that weakness. For though they show

compassion to the weak and command them to take wives, they themselves do not take wives by becoming weak.

Therefore, descending into the town, they are on the rooftop, because even though they command plain things, they do not retain what is weak in themselves. And since Samuel is said not merely to be on the rooftop but to speak with Saul there, this surely signifies that the future teacher must be taught to show compassion to his weak subjects in such a way that he himself nevertheless maintains the height of his way of life.

60. And because the new preacher needs much consideration for carrying out these things, Saul is said to have made a bed for himself and to have slept. For the new preacher to sleep on the rooftop is to arrange in his lofty contemplation how he ought to bear the burdens of those subject to him. For if he stays awake for worldly pursuits, he assuredly brings it about that he does not seek so great a good of discernment in his inmost depths. He ought therefore to sleep, so that he thinks of no worldly things, because one who is weighed down by secular concerns can never order spiritual matters. But neither can he sleep who does not make a bed for himself, because indeed if he does not reflect on the examples or sayings of good men, it is impossible for him to find rest from outward things. We lay soft things beneath ourselves, as it were, when we reflect on the teaching or life of the elect. We also sleep upon those same coverings, because we can then rest well in contemplation when we are occupied with spiritual matters. Let him therefore say, ”Because Saul made a bed for himself and slept,” to suggest to the chosen soul that if she carelessly occupies herself with outward things, she will not acquire the grace of inward rest. But he who wishes to arrange spiritual matters well through contemplation, until he has perfectly ordered them within, ought not to awake to those things which are outside. Fittingly, therefore, there is added: (Verse 26.) And when they had risen in the morning, and it was now growing light, Samuel called to Saul on the rooftop, saying: ”Arise, and I will send you on your way.”

61. Indeed, morning dawns when the splendor of truth opens itself to the quiet mind. For the human mind becomes dark through ignorance and bright through the illumination of truth. Therefore, one who is ignorant is in night; when illuminated, in day. Moreover, one rises in the morning who sleeps at night: when he rouses himself to carry out those things which he arranged through deliberation. And because the business of ordaining the king was being conducted, both are said to have risen. The supreme preacher rises in order to ordain his hearer for the ministry of that same preaching. He who is to be ordained rises, so that he may not presume that so sublime an order is to be received with anything less than the deepest affection of the heart. Indeed they rise together, because a sublime office is given and is received as sublime. In this passage another thing must be noted: that both first rose, and then Samuel called Saul, saying: ”Arise, and I will send you on your way. But according to the historical sense, if both rose, Saul is admonished to prepare himself for the work, because he is commanded to rise from sleep. Because indeed both the high priests and he who is taken up into the order of preaching attentively consider the burden of so

great a ministry, they sleep as it were together and rise together. But he who is newly to be ordained, rising from sleep, is commanded to rise again for the work:

because although he has striven to weigh the height of the order by meditating, he must nevertheless attain it through the merit of his way of life. Therefore, having risen, he is commanded to rise, so that he may resolve to match with his merits the sublime order which he deliberates to undertake. Hence he is also called on the rooftop: because he is commanded to strive for lofty things. He also says: "And I will send you on your way. He rises, of course, so that he may be sent forth: because that man will be able to be free in the ministry of preaching who has grown in the height of a great way of life. Indeed, he who had already risen rose again: because he who by contemplation had learned the height of the dignity took care to raise himself up in that same height of dignity through the sublimity of his life. Hence it is added: (Verse 26. "And Saul rose. Then it is added: (Verse 26. "And they both went out; he, namely, and Samuel."

62. The pastor goes out when he comes from the secret of meditation to the public sphere of action. For when he arranges what he wishes to do, he is within; but when he outwardly carries out what he has thought, he as it were goes out. Saul also went out, because in the outward dignity, the one who is promoted undertakes that which he had long considered whether it should be undertaken. Both therefore are said to have gone out, because both had been within: while the one with anxious mind foresaw what he should give and to whom; the other likewise more attentively considered what manner of man he was who would receive such high things. Because therefore the ministry of holy preaching must be bestowed and received with the utmost discernment, while the king of Israel is anointed, both the king and the prophet about to anoint him are reported to have gone out. However, many manuscripts have: "And when they had risen early in the morning, before dawn," which can indeed be fittingly understood. It is morning, before dawn, when in a certain way the day begins to breathe, and yet the full light of day has not arrived. Now when the holy preachers of the Church consider the good manner of life of those whom they intend to ordain, it is as it were morning. But because they cannot know their future, it is morning, but before dawn.

This is fittingly said in the ordination of him who is afterwards recorded to have displeased almighty God. For as it were at morning, before dawn, the prophet saw this man who appeared to him in the light of good conduct. But the full brightness of day had not yet come, because he could not see through the present light of knowledge the future darkness in him. This indeed happens in the holy Church as often as those who are chosen are good in the present but will not persevere in the same goodness. For he as it were goes out at morning and before the light, who displays the present light of good works but conceals the darkness of his future life. But what was done next follows: (Verses 27ff. "And as they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul: Tell the servant to go ahead of us and pass on; but you stand still for a moment, that I may make known to you the word of the Lord. Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him."

63. For what does it mean that the king is led to the farthest part of the city and anointed? But the farthest part of the city is the lowest part of the subject people. Those who therefore hold the last place in the holy Church are, as it were, in the farthest part of the city. Moreover, in the lowest part of the Church itself, converted sinners appear to be. For all the righteous are in the upper or first part. Or perhaps virginity holds the first place, continence the second, the married life the third, and the conversion of sinners the last. In the farthest part of the city, therefore, the king is anointed: because the ruler of the holy Church is ordained for sinners, not for the righteous. For hence Truth says of Himself: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Matt. 9:13). Hence again He says: 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick' (ibid., 12).

64. But we have said that the boy of Saul designates the spiritual sense. What then does it mean that Samuel commands him to go ahead and pass on? The boy goes ahead when what is done is what the spiritual sense suggests to us, not what the carnal impulse commands. But he goes ahead of some and passes by, while he goes ahead of others and does not pass by. Indeed the boy going ahead does not pass by the arrogant, but passes by the humble: for while the arrogant do great and spiritual things, they are great in their own eyes. They have the boy with them, as it were, whom they follow, who glory in being spiritual in the spiritual things they do. To these the prophet surely reproaches, saying: "Woe to you who are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight" (Isa. 5:21). The elect therefore, in all that they do, take care to be spiritual, yet avoid considering themselves spiritual. They are indeed great in merit, but humble in self-estimation: because they always do great things, yet in those same great things they never regard themselves as great. They make the boy whom they send ahead pass on, as it were, when they have the spiritual sense present in their work, but far from their self-estimation. But what does it mean that he is commanded to stand still for a moment, so that the word of the Lord might be shown to him?

He stands still for a moment, having sent the boy ahead, who for the time withdraws himself from his own judgment and does another's will. Therefore he makes the boy pass on and stands still for a moment, who at the command of his superior abandons even those things he considers spiritual: he abandons them so that he may be able to carry out fittingly what is enjoined upon him. This certainly befits the one being ordained as a preacher: for when he considers the weight of pastoral care and his own weakness, the spirit going before him says this to himself: that being so weak, he unworthily takes up so great a burden. Let him therefore not only send the boy ahead, but make him pass on: so that he does not follow his own judgment, but accepts what is determined for him by the provision of one who is better. And about him standing still, it is immediately added.

CHAPTER V. (1 Kings 10:1.) Then Samuel took a small flask of oil and poured it upon his head.

1. This indeed is expressed by this anointing, which even now is materially displayed in the holy Church: because he who is placed in a position of authority receives the sacrament of anointing. Because indeed the anointing itself is a sacrament, he who is promoted is well

anointed outwardly if he is strengthened inwardly by the power of the sacrament. Let us therefore first consider more attentively the very properties of oil. Oil indeed rises above other liquids, oil nourishes fire, oil is accustomed to heal wounds. By the first property, therefore, it signifies the good of mercy, because it is written of the Lord: His mercies are above all his works (Ps. 144:9). Because it nourishes fire, it designates the grace of preaching, which illuminates the minds of the elect. Because indeed wounds are healed by oil, this surely suggests that the wounds of sins must be cleansed. Let the head of the king therefore be anointed, because the mind of the teacher must be filled with spiritual grace. Let him have oil in his anointing, let him have abundant mercy, which is to be preferred above the other virtues. Let him have oil, so that while he nourishes within himself the ardor of the Holy Spirit, he may shine forth powerfully to others through the word. Let him likewise have the oil of medicine, so that he may wisely arrange how to cleanse the stench of sins and restore sick minds to health.

But Saul is anointed with a small flask, not to prefigure doctrine, but to express things to come. A small flask indeed is a small vessel: what then does it mean that Saul is anointed with a small flask of oil, except that in the end he is rejected? For because he afterward refused to obey God, he heard from Samuel: Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king (1 Kings 15:26). For as it were he had but a small flask of oil, he who received spiritual grace only to be cast away. This is fittingly understood also of the rulers of the holy Church. For very often those receive the height of prelacy who are not perfected in the love of God and neighbor. For they have a certain affection of charity, but they do not have its fullness. What then is that rough and imperfect affection of the mind but a small flask of oil? For while it anoints the head, it does not fill it: it is indeed all poured out, but it provides little. On the contrary, however, when the chosen king is commanded to be anointed, the Lord says to the same prophet: Fill your horn with oil, and come, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided myself a king among his sons (1 Kings 16:1). Hence it is that the same chosen king, ascribing the fullness of his anointing to the praises of God, says:

You have anointed my head with oil, and my inebriating cup, how excellent it is (Ps. 22:5). He therefore who received the grace of anointing without being destined to persevere, by God's dispensation, is anointed with the liquid of that vessel by which the failure of the anointed one would be signified. There follows: (Verse 1. And he kissed him and said: Behold, God has anointed you over his inheritance as prince, and you shall deliver his people from the hand of their enemies who are round about them.

2. The ruler is led to the height of holy Church so that he may hold this office by which he establishes peace between God and men. For by sinning, we incur the enmity of our Creator. Therefore, when a ruler is appointed for the correction of sinners, he removes from our midst that which has made us enemies of God. Rightly, then, Samuel is reported to have kissed Saul on the head. For that one bears the prophet's kiss fixed upon his head who bears in his mind the support of our reconciliation: namely, when he who strives in

his mind to restore the discordant to peace cherishes in himself no fuel for divine discord. Therefore, after the prince has been kissed, it is said: ”God has anointed you as prince over His inheritance. As if he were admonishing him by these things, saying: You who know yourself appointed for this purpose—that you ought to dissolve the enmities of sin—what you destroy in others you must not retain in yourself. For some are indeed anointed yet do not receive the kiss; they busy themselves with liberating the people of the Lord, but do not shrink from subjecting themselves to the yoke of His enemies. For he who preaches to others the good things he does not practice gives, as it were, a kiss that he does not receive. For he seeks to make others friends of God, yet he himself does not cease to be His enemy.

He builds up in himself the enmities of sin that he attempts to destroy in others by his word. Since, therefore, only he rules with benefit who is a friend of God through the disposition of great charity, Samuel is said to have kissed the head of the king. Hence Truth itself first kisses those whom it appoints, and then sends them to set others free. ”You are my friends,” He says; then He added, saying: ”I have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:14). Hence also, rising from the dead, He says: ”Peace be with you”; then He adds: ”Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained” (John 20:23). So that He might, as it were, fix the kiss of peace in the minds of those whom He had commanded to loose the hatreds of sin. The king, therefore, having been kissed, is established over the inheritance of the Lord, because the chosen teacher is selected so that he may stand preeminent in dignity over the faithful committed to him, yet from his position of authority he may seek not his own gain but the Lord’s. For this reason he is declared appointed for this purpose: that those who are under him may be freed from the hands of their enemies. The inheritance of the Lord is the multitude of the faithful.

Therefore every worldly intention is set aside when the king is declared anointed over the inheritance of the Lord. The fruit of anointing, then, is the cultivation of the divine inheritance. He therefore fulfills the office of his anointing who seeks only the gain of souls. He who remembers that he was anointed as prince over the inheritance of the Lord seeks from his earthly dignity only what Christ sought through His own ministry. By this word, therefore, the intention of negligent rulers is condemned.

3. For they hear that they have been anointed over the inheritance of the Lord: that the Lord seeks from the earth none but the elect; they know that He calls not the breadth of land, not abundance of gold, not the overflow of riches, but His faithful ones His inheritance, and yet they do not cease to seek earthly things and to gather what perishes. They direct all their care toward that which the Lord does not seek; and what He alone seeks, they neglect to seek. Therefore it is said, so that the negligent may see themselves in it; it is said, so that the good may become better: God has anointed you, he says, as prince over His inheritance. As if to say: He has made His inheritance yours; see that you do not rule in it otherwise. You shall therefore deliver the people from the hand of the enemies who are round about them. A great labor is enjoined upon the preacher by this, that the enemies are said to be

round about. For the battle would be grave enough if they endured the fury of evil spirits on one side alone. Hence, declaring through the prophet, He says: The wicked walk round about (Psalm 11:9). Hence blessed Peter, exhorting, says: Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; resist him, steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:8). Our enemies therefore are round about us, because unclean spirits always lie in wait against our thought, word, and deed.

For when they seek to suggest evil things to us, they are on one side; when they drag us toward evil, we are struck by their assault from another side; when they invite us to evil works, they stir up war from yet another side. We therefore have enemies round about us, since in everything that we think, speak, and do, we suffer the wars of evil spirits. But because it is said not to free the people from war, but from the hands of the enemies, great marks of virtue are ascribed to preachers: because they ought not only to protect the free lest they be captured, but also to free the captives from their servitude. This moreover is accomplished by our kings when those who through the boldness of transgression have been subjected to the yoke of diabolical power come to their senses through their preaching. Which indeed only those preachers can accomplish who arrive at the summit of governance by divine appointment. For those whom almighty God appoints, He sends to endure the battles of the ancient enemy, but He does not abandon them amid those very wars, because He protects His soldiers and makes them victorious. But when holy men are raised to the primacy of the holy Church, they greatly tremble lest the burden of so great an office has been imposed upon them by the judgment of men, not by the appointment of the Creator.

Therefore, for the strengthening of the humble, signs are given by which they may know that they have been chosen by God, not by men. Wherefore Samuel also, adding, says: (Verse 2. And this shall be a sign to you, that God has anointed you as prince. When you shall have departed from me today, you shall find two men by the tomb of Rachel, in the borders of Benjamin, in the south, leaping over great pits, and they shall say to you: The donkeys which you went to seek have been found, and your father, having set aside the matter of the donkeys, is anxious about you and says: What shall I do about my son?

4. For it is as if He says to the humble shepherd, trembling at so great a ministry: You tremble for this reason, because you do not know whether what has been done concerning you is from God; but because you can know this, you ought not to tremble. Therefore this shall be a sign to you that not man, but God has anointed you as ruler: namely, those two men will say to you: The donkeys which you went to seek have been found. As if He were saying: If you find those two men, and they tell you this, know that God, not I, has appointed you as ruler. What then do these two men signify to us, except certain perfect preachers of holy Church? They are two, because they are perfect in both precepts of charity; men, because they are strong in holy conduct. They are said to be found near the tomb of Rachel, because through devotion to the contemplative life they are separated from worldly pursuits; and while they seek the gain of souls, they are not buried. For it is the undoubted opinion of the venerable fathers that Rachel signifies the beauty of the contemplative life. Therefore

the men stand near the tomb of Rachel, because perfect teachers so devote themselves to heavenly contemplation that they also bear the care of holy Church.

They stand near the tomb of Rachel, because they direct the course of good works through the power of contemplation, and because they do nothing in action except what they arrange through contemplation. And because in the very height of heavenly contemplation they strive to maintain not their own presumption but the rule of holy Church, the tomb of Rachel is described as being in the borders of Benjamin. As I have already said, in Benjamin, who is called the son of the right hand, the Redeemer of the human race is signified. The borders of Benjamin, therefore, are the rules of the Holy Scriptures, concerning which borders it is written: Do not transgress the boundaries which your fathers have set (Prov. 22:28). Because, therefore, the holy preachers, when they see the highest things through contemplation, do not depart from the rule of faith, the tomb near which they stand is rightly said to be in the borders of Benjamin. These men indeed leap over great pits at midday, because through the fervor of perfect charity, in which they have been taken up, they despise all the heights of the world that are seen. For whatever is perceived as lofty in this world is not true height, but a pit, which deposits into hell all whom it receives in its ambition. Therefore the heights of the world are to be avoided by spiritual men, not sought after, because they open up from a hidden place, and lead down to hell those whom they swallow up and receive.

Spiritual men, therefore, leap over pits, because while they raise themselves up through heavenly desire, they despise earthly things. For they give a leap as if over pits they have seen, when in order to despise earthly things they raise themselves to desire eternal goods. They leap over pits at midday, therefore, because only those who possess the full light and ardor of heavenly charity can despise the world. Then let Saul understand that he has been anointed by the Lord as ruler, when these men say to him: The donkeys which you were seeking have been found. For they tell Saul that the donkeys have been found when they perceive him fit for gathering the gain of souls. As if He were saying otherwise: Do not believe from men that you have been chosen by God for the ministry of preaching, if those men declare this concerning you who, being full of the Spirit of God, are perceived to say things not human but divine. Because, therefore, concerning ourselves we must believe not ourselves but those better than us, fittingly Saul recognizes that he has been anointed by the Lord as ruler through men who leap over great pits at midday. But one is he by whom he is anointed, and others are those who attest that this anointing is from the Lord; because every affair of holy Church, just as it is more fully proved by the consultation of the holy fathers, so also is it more firmly established.

5. For blessed Paul sought this as a sign of his anointing when he came to Jerusalem to see Peter, and compared his Gospel with him and the other apostles. For he had received his apostleship not from man nor through man, but from heaven, at the call of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1); and yet he proved the ministry of his anointing through the consultation of his fellow apostles. For he says of himself: ”I compared my Gospel with them, lest I should

run or had run in vain" (Gal. 2:2). The Precursor of the Redeemer had also anointed his disciples, but so that they might recognize the signs of his anointing, he sent them as if to leap over great ditches, saying: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we expect another? (Matt. 11:3). For John knew the one whom he had preached, whom he had baptized; but he sent his disciples so that, having seen the signs, they might believe more firmly and hold more securely the proofs of their election. Those, therefore, who are found suitable for the office of preaching recognize, as a sign of their election, that the souls of sinners which they seek have been found. And because almighty God rejoices not only in the preaching but also in the conduct of the chosen teacher, he adds and says: "And your father, having left the donkeys, is anxious about you, and says: What shall I do about my son?

We said that Kish, the father of Saul, who in our language is called "hard," designates those who teach by word and example to despise earthly things and to hasten to the heavenly homeland through a hard and rough manner of life. We have also recognized this hardness of the heavenly life both in the word and in the life of our Redeemer. If, therefore, we look to the summit of our instruction, we are children of the Redeemer. Our father, therefore, having dismissed the donkeys, is anxious about us; because our Redeemer wills that we seek the salvation of others in such a way that we do not neglect our own. He wills that sinners be called to repentance, but he does not will that those who call those very sinners should perish. He wills that the converted sinner should have the righteousness which he did not have; but he does not will that the righteous person should lose the palm of righteousness which he has. Having left the donkeys, therefore, he is anxious about his son, because he wills his preachers to rest for a time from the anxious attention to others, so that they may better provide for themselves through quiet. And because that very solicitude of the holy Church must be taken up again by a good ruler, our rest is interrupted; because a prior solicitude precedes it, and a later one follows. The chosen preacher, therefore, should devote himself to the benefit of his subjects and devote himself to his own;

but let him so have care for his own that he immediately returns to the care of others which he left behind; because then our Creator loves us as sons, when we both love our subjects as brothers and love him as a father, since through the affection of solicitude we are joined to them, and through our rest, which he loves, we hasten to him as to a father. For this love of our rest is expressed in what is said: "What shall I do about my son? This indeed a father says who loves his son tenderly. This therefore is not said about a present son, but an absent one. But because he seeks the lost donkeys of his father, he is greatly beloved by him; because whoever strives by preaching to convert the souls of sinners is already joined to our Redeemer in great love. He who through solicitude for others is, as it were, far from him, is near through the quiet of contemplation and the affection of prayer. Because, therefore, he desires that we be close to him both through contemplation and prayer, like a loving father he says: "What shall I do about my son? As if to say: How shall I make that absent one present to me? But because the great men of holy Church praise the solicitude of our preaching but blame excessive solicitude, those who say the father's donkeys have been found assert that the father is anxious about his son.

The elect, therefore, can recognize the sign of their anointing; because indeed they are then led by God to the summit of the holy Church, when through words and examples they are suitable for the salvation of others, and through quiet they are zealous for their own; and when they seek sinners for heaven, they do not abandon themselves to the world. There follows: (Verses 3, 4. ”When you have departed from there and have gone further, and have come to the oak of Tabor, three men going up to God at Bethel will find you there, one carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread, and another a bottle of wine. And when they have greeted you, they will give you two loaves, and you shall receive them from their hand.”

6. When we wish to make good progress in holy conduct, it is necessary for us to gather for ourselves the examples of very many of the elect; for bees too cannot produce honey if they do not gather it from various flowers. Well therefore does Saul pass from some men to others, because the more abundantly we observe the examples of the saints, the better we are instructed. Indeed the flowers of eternal fruits are the works of the saints, which, when they are drenched with the dew of heavenly love, from them we gather that by which we may be filled for our own instruction and for the benefit of others. For Saul goes from there and passes on beyond, when the untrained preacher advances through the examples of the elect, and from the observed virtue of one, goes to explore the conduct of another. Often it delights him to admire in some the labor of preaching, often in others the strength of good works; he venerates those who speak and strives to imitate those who act. He looks at some to see with what beauty they shine outwardly, while the splendor of others he examines not in their outward conduct but in their innermost being. Hence it is also well said that when he passes on, he is reported to come to the oak of Tabor. For the oak is a shady and strong tree. In this tree indeed the more hidden conduct of the saints is expressed.

For the men of this manner of life, since they do not go out to the exterior works of the active life, are as if in shadow, because they cannot feel the fires of temptations. For since they rest in heavenly desire, the farther removed they are from the love of the world, the more peacefully they remain in the shadow of refreshment. But this shadow is of a strong tree, because the conduct of the saints despises earthly things all the more powerfully as it rises more purely into the love of heavenly things. It is also strong, because those who love only the heavenly things which they see powerfully endure the adversities of the world. And because those who disdain to look upon earthly things through love are in the great light of interior splendor, the oak itself is said to be of Tabor. For Tabor is interpreted as ”coming light. For light comes when the inner brightness of the Creator opens itself to the chosen mind. Therefore it is called the oak of Tabor, because hidden conduct, by despising earthly things, acts so that it may more clearly behold the intimate light of the Creator. For we are hidden when we guard our senses in the fear of God. And then indeed we perceive the coming light, because when the members of the body are well governed, the grace of the Creator is poured back into our mind.

And it should be noted that he who knew that the father was anxious for him on account of those who were leaping into the pits is said to come to the oak of Tabor. For the preachers of the holy Church frequently praise virtues to which they themselves cannot devote themselves. They preach indeed the secret of the contemplative life; but since they are anxious for the care of their subjects, they avoid clinging to the secrets of that life. As if Samuel were to say: Those men praise the pursuit of contemplation to you; but since they cannot hold what they praise, it must be sought in others. Therefore we pass on to the oak of Tabor when from the holy preachers we learn that the pursuit of the contemplative life is praiseworthy; but we seek its perfection in those who devote themselves to it spiritually. The three men, therefore, who find the anointed king at the oak of Tabor designate those who are perfect in the pursuit of the contemplative life. They are rightly said not to be found by the king, but to find the king there. For they are not found, because they are hidden. But they themselves find us, because they open to us the light of their hidden conduct when they deign to do so. They are not found, because they withdraw their life from every testimony of men. But they find us, because through the affection of charity they show us something of their light for imitation.

They likewise do not bring forth their virtues for imitation except to those who desire with great longing to obtain and practice them. Therefore it is necessary for us first to come to the oak of Tabor, so that we may be able to be found by those three men. For we are already as if in the shadow of the coming light when we are inflamed with great desires for the highest contemplation.

7. Then therefore three men appear to us: because those who deign to show themselves to us who desire them are strong in the guard of speech, thought, and deed. For they cannot be persons of a more hidden life if they had kept open the doors of their eyes, heart, and mouth. Because therefore they guard the heart from foolish thought, the mouth from idle talk, and the whole body from wicked action, they are three; but they are men, because they observe that same guard most bravely. Three men therefore appear to us: because when we behold such persons, we perceive in them the strength of virtue. They are certainly in the shadow of the coming light; because they can see the inner light of the Creator all the more clearly, the more zealously they guard a pure heart from the defilement of the world. To such persons indeed the Lord appeared rising from the dead; such persons the Holy Spirit filled. For concerning that secret place it is said: ”When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). And again: ”After eight days his disciples were again within, and Thomas with them; Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you. Concerning another secret place likewise it is written:

”When the days of Pentecost were being fulfilled, all the disciples were together in the same place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts

2:1). Those indeed have closed doors who, against the negligence of human falling, keep the functions of the body restrained under a strong guard. They are also within, because they rest in the inward love of the heavenly life. To these assuredly the risen Lord appears, because they behold his glory all the more clearly, the more strictly they follow the mystery of his passion through contempt of the world. These also can be filled with the Holy Spirit, as though in a house; because those receive abundantly the gifts of his graces who have prepared themselves to receive them by despising visible things.

8. Who are rightly said to ascend to the Lord in Bethel. For Bethel means "house of God. And what is the house of God, if not that house which the inaccessible light inhabits? The inaccessible light is also the revelation of His divinity. It is light, indeed, because it can be seen in some manner by pure hearts. In its fullness it fills all things, yet abundantly filling all things, it is not grasped. It is grasped, indeed, so that it may fill, but in filling it is not grasped, for though it fills all things, it is not exhausted. The revelation of the Creator, therefore, because it is so great an immensity of light that it illumines all things and is confined in nothing — since it is seen and yet not comprehended — is inaccessible light. These three men, then, ascend to the Lord, because those who guard themselves in a more hidden life are raised up to the contemplation of the divine light. But because they cannot yet attain to the very appearance of God Almighty, they are said to ascend in Bethel. For whatever the human mind can think about Almighty God is not God. But when by thinking it transcends all things, when it considers that whatever it can fashion for itself of inmost light, whatever of inner sweetness and delight, whatever of spiritual pleasure, is believed to be less than that reality, it nevertheless arrives at a certain light which is not God but which God inhabits.

And because then the soul of the elect is wonderfully inflamed, wonderfully refreshed, and enjoys ineffable delight, it is compelled to consider how ineffable must be the light, the sweetness, and the delight which is God Himself, if so immense is that light which He inhabits and which is not He Himself. Moses had indeed ascended to the Lord in Bethel when he was speaking with Him on the mountain. But he who had arrived at the light which God inhabits was seeking the light which was God Himself, saying: "Show me Your face" (Exod. 33:13). Of whom it is also written: "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face" (ibid.). What does it mean that Moses speaks with the Lord face to face, and yet entreats the Lord to show him His face? But the face of God is the knowledge of Him. Now God is known through a mirror, and He is known through Himself. Through a mirror here, through Himself in heaven. The mirror is that light which God inhabits; but He Himself is that light which He is (1 Cor. 13:12). And Moses, who is said to see God face to face and yet asks to see His face (Exod. 33:13) — what does he more rightly signify than the perfection of the elect, who already gaze upon the mirror of that supreme light, yet ardently desire to attain to the very truth of that light? This knowledge of the light does not satisfy the desires of the elect but rather arouses them;

that other knowledge, however, both satisfies and arouses. For it is so delightful a thing that it is ineffably desired, and so full that those who have always beheld it with great longing are always satisfied with ineffable fullness. The men, therefore, who ascend to the Lord are said to ascend in Bethel, because however much we advance in this life, we can see the very light of the Creator through a mirror, but we are by no means able to see it in itself.

9. And because only the humble are exalted to this sublime vision, it is well said of these same men: 'That one was carrying three kids, another three cakes of bread.' For he carries three kids who, in penitence, considers that he has sinned by mouth, heart, and deed. For since sinners are signified by kids, those who at the final judgment are to be placed at the left hand of the eternal Judge are expressed by the name of kids. Therefore he carries three kids to the Lord who does not cease to consider in penitence the sins of deed, word, and thought. And he is indeed a man, and yet he carries kids; because he strongly guards against sinning, but does not cease to make satisfaction as though he were a sinner. For he was a man and was carrying kids, who said: 'In many things we all offend' (James 3:2). And because they strive to blot out by penitence the sins they confess, one carries three kids and another carries three cakes of bread. For we referred the cakes of bread above to the affliction of penitence; because if bread sometimes signifies the pleasure of the present life, bread is twisted when we are tormented for the past pleasure of the flesh. Hence King Hezekiah too, when he is pierced with penitence, promises that he will twist the royal pleasures, saying: 'I will recount all my years in the bitterness of my soul' (Isaiah 38:15).

For when the carnal mind dissolves into the pleasures of sin, it has, as it were, its day; because it joyfully beholds what it does. Therefore the days of the reprobate mind are evil pleasures. Therefore the sinner recounts all his days; because when he comes to his senses through divine grace, he does not cease to make satisfaction for all his evils. For first one is said to carry three kids, then another three cakes of bread; so that the virtue of each elect person may appear, who is strong in good work, humble in self-estimation, afflicted through the contrition of penitence. And because they cannot be of such great perfection unless, out of love for eternal goods, they have forgotten temporal things, the third is said to carry a flask of wine. For he carries a flask of wine who has filled his mind with the warmth of the Holy Spirit, by which he both eagerly strives after the things ahead by running forward, and leaves behind the things that are past, as if in the great forgetfulness of intoxication. For he was carrying kids who said: 'Christ came to call sinners, of whom I am the chief' (1 Timothy 1:15). And because he was also carrying a cake of bread, he says: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection' (1 Corinthians 9:27).

But as though drunk with the wine of a flask, he says: 'Forgetting what is behind and stretching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13). Therefore three men ascend to the Lord and bring three kids, three cakes of bread, and a flask of wine: because those devoted to the pursuits of a more secluded life rise to the contemplation of the true light by the merit of humility. But what they are in themselves and what they are to others, he sets forth,

saying: 'And when they have greeted you, they will give you three cakes of bread, and you shall receive them from their hand.' Holy men greet us when they announce to us the eternal goods of salvation. Those who greet us in the body incline their head to show reverence to the one greeted. But for spiritual men to incline the head is to bring down their mind from the highest contemplation. For if they do not incline the head, they cannot greet; because they do not instruct us with salutary teaching if they do not bring down their mind from the highest contemplation of heavenly things. For then they show us great reverence: because they do not consider those to be small for whose sake they deign to descend from their lofty summit.

10. But while the future king is greeted, two loaves of bread are given to him. For two loaves are given to the preacher being ordained, when he is taught to weep for sins not only his own, but those of others. He has, therefore, one twisted loaf when he is afflicted for his own sins; he has the other when he strives to lament the sins of his subjects. But the Psalmist, more clearly suggesting this bread, says: "Rise up after you have sat down, you who eat the bread of sorrow" (Psalm 126:2). Hence he confesses to the Lord, saying: "You will feed us with the bread of tears, and you will give us drink in tears with measure" (Psalm 79:9). The twisted loaf, therefore, is the bread of sorrow and the bread of tears. And perhaps for this reason that one man carried three twisted loaves: because there were three who were going together, so that when they divided them among themselves, each would have one loaf apiece. This can also fittingly be understood of the goats. In this matter, what is to be noted except that men of a more secluded life, while they maintain a solitary way of living, do not have care for others? They therefore have one goat and one loaf, who are pricked with compunction only for their own sins and are not burdened by those of others through pastoral office.

And because those who are of the same perfect way of life emulate in themselves the affliction of the flesh, fittingly one carries three loaves, another three goats, and a third a flask of wine. For it is as though one carries what all are about to offer or eat; and all eat or offer what one carries, when each one, kindled by pious emulation of them, has in himself good examples for others and does not neglect to imitate the good things that others have. And because the twisted loaves of bread are spoken of in the feminine gender, this surely suggests that for him who is pricked with compunction by habit, from some tears still more tears arise. For the affliction of the penitent is, as it were, fruitful as in the feminine sex; because the more often one is pricked with compunction, the more abundant streams of tears are supplied to him. To Saul, therefore, not one loaf but two are given, because it is not enough for the preacher to weep for himself alone. Let him therefore receive two loaves from the hands of the men, so that he may learn to weep by the example of the perfect, but may recognize that weeping is necessary both for himself and for his subjects. And because by the hand power is sometimes understood, the men have three loaves in hand; because those who have advanced to the heights of contemplation possess weeping in the strength of their power.

For because they do not wish to be dissolved in vain joy when they could be, they are rightly able to weep when they wish. We indeed, being weak and negligent of the guard of our mind, even when we wish to be moved to compunction and to weep for our sins, are unable to do so. For since spiritual tears are produced from a great fervor of the spirit, we who are bound by the cold of our negligence are prevented from quickly growing warm unto tears. Rightly, therefore, those who are said to appear to the future king at the oak of Tabor are said to have loaves in their hands; because those who are perfect in the contemplation of the secluded life possess what is profitable for their subjects through the observance of virtues.

11. And it should be noted that Samuel commands the anointed king, saying: "And you shall receive from their hand." What better meaning can be gathered from this phrase than what is plainly seen: namely, that we do not willingly imitate the affliction found in holy men? For those who seek the honor of prelacy and its dignity are innumerable, but those who desire the labor of ministry and the affliction of the flesh that comes with that same prelacy are few. We gladly wish to be exalted above others, but we avoid mourning their sins. For we see the loaves offered to us, but we refuse to receive them from the hands of those offering, because we observe the affliction in chosen men that we do not imitate. Therefore let the prophet command, saying: "You shall receive from their hand." So that whoever desires to be a fit ruler of the Church should by no means refuse to take up what has been spoken. It is also fitting that Saul is first led to men leaping over great ditches, and then to those who carry loaves, young goats, and wine: so that the untrained preacher may learn from some to despise the heights of the world, and from others to offer the affliction of the flesh and the sacrifices of tears to almighty God on behalf of himself and those under his care. But the prophet, further conveying the summit of his progress, adds, saying: (Verses 5, 6.) "After this you shall come to the hill of the Lord, where there is a garrison of the Philistines, and when you have entered the city, you shall meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, and before them a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp, and they themselves prophesying. And the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon you, and you shall prophesy with them, and you shall be changed into another man."

12. A hill is the height of a mountain. What is more rightly understood by this hill than the holy intent of the Scriptures? It is indeed the height of a mountain, because it does not lie on the plain of the letter, but is exceedingly elevated in the sublimity of spiritual meanings. The untrained preacher therefore sets out on the right path of virtues if, after he has seen the public preachers and the secluded anchorites, he sees and recognizes the height of Scripture. In this matter it should be noted that we said Saul, in that he stood out above all the people from his shoulders and upward, signified a learned man of great conduct. Why then does he ascend to the hill of the Lord, so that he may come to the height of the Scriptures, which he already knows? But in a similar way it could have been asked about him why he went to see the men leaping over great ditches, when he was said to be a man of great conduct. To which it must be said: because he was shown to represent great men in conduct, but untrained in the ministry of preaching. He who can advance through the examples of better men both in the purity of contemplation and in the office

of preaching ought to return to the height of the Scriptures, because the higher the life by which he advances, the more keenly he attends to the sublimity of sacred speech. Let the prophet therefore say: ”After these things you will come to the hill of the Lord.” As if to say: When you grasp the perfection of holy men through perfect imitation, you will advance into so great an understanding of Sacred Scripture that what you once thought you perceived in it sublimely will now seem plain.

13. There is the garrison of the Philistines: because those who fell from heaven through the drink of pride mock the Jews and heretics through the Scriptures. They stand therefore on the hill: because the hearts they possess they deceive in the Scriptures by the falseness of understanding. Therefore, as often as the Jews presume to ascend to the hill of the Lord, they are captured by the Philistines standing there. For while they think they understand the meaning of Scripture in a lofty way, demons meet them in their ascent and, deceiving them, slay them. Rightly, therefore, Saul is commanded to go to the hill of the Lord not immediately, but first, after seeing those leaping over pits and carrying bread and wine: because faithful men are fortified by the great protection of the teaching and examples of their betters. Hence it is also said to the same Saul: ”You will meet a company of prophets coming from the high place. As if to say: You will be able to fear the garrison of the Philistines so much less, the more you will have prophets meeting you for your security. And because a company of prophets is mentioned, a great multitude of our defenders is signified. Let the Jew therefore be afraid: because when he ascends alone, he perishes. For what do those same prophets coming to meet us say? ”Woe to him who is alone, for if he falls, there is no one to lift him up” (Eccl. 4:10). For he is alone who is abandoned by God.

Certainly no one lifts up this one when he falls, because no saint takes up one abandoned by God. Therefore every elect person ascends securely: because he is not alone. For He who speaks through us is with us. For He also promises, saying: ”Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28:20). Indeed he was not alone who said: ”I am not alone, but He who sent me is with me” (John 8:16). Likewise he was not alone who demanded, saying: ”Do you seek proof of Christ who speaks in me? (2 Cor. 13:3). This can fittingly be understood not only of the Lord’s spiritual presence, but also of the material teaching of the elect. Holy preachers indeed ascend to the hill of the Lord, where the garrison of the Philistines is: but because they have the company of prophets meeting them, they in no way fear the Philistines themselves. But who are these prophets, if not the great preachers of holy Church? For the ministry of prophets is to reveal hidden things and to predict the future. Moreover, the teachers of holy Church, when they draw the hidden meanings of the Scriptures to common knowledge, open secrets that are unknown: and when they preach eternal joys, they reveal things to come. Prophets therefore come to meet us: because the teachers of holy Church show us the truth of holy Scripture.

For when they tell us what we wish to know from sacred eloquence, they meet those going along the way that leads to the hill of the Lord. There, therefore, through the meeting of the prophets, we are secure where the Philistines are: because through the authority of

holy preachers we recognize the understanding of Scripture, in which the Jews and heretics are slain by demons with the sword of their own errors. Behold, for if we have recourse to the Law of Moses, we certainly find the hill of the Lord. There surely we read of the tabernacle, there of the high priest, there of the blood of goats and calves together, and of the Paschal Lamb. The Jews understand these things according to the letter by their own spirit, and because they have no prophet with them in this, they die. If I wish to ascend to this mountain, I first see the prophets descending, and I ascend securely. And to leave aside the new ones for the moment, Isaiah first meets me as I ascend, saying: "Like a sheep he will be led to slaughter, and like a lamb before his shearer, he will not open his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Hence Paul says: "Christ, appearing as high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, nor through the blood of goats or calves, but through his own blood, entered once into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12).

But if we wish to have more on this hill, we find all the prophets by seeking them: because what the old teachers had promised, the new preachers demonstrate to have been fulfilled in our Redeemer.

14. Wherefore the Redeemer of the human race can also fittingly be designated by the name of a hill. Whence Isaiah, prophesying, says: 'In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains' (Isa. 2:2). He is called a hill on account of the sublimity of His holiness, and of the Lord, because He is the Son of the most high Father. On this hill indeed the garrison of the Philistines is said to be, because He was born as a sign to be contradicted. The garrison of the Philistines is the opposition of heretics. For as though standing on the hill, they lie in ambush against those ascending to the hill; and while they pervert the Holy Scriptures by expounding them wrongly, they destroy those who are carelessly ascending to know the Redeemer. Therefore let the elect not be alarmed; ascending, he meets a company of prophets, because all the preachers of the Old and New Testament announce to him the Redeemer Himself. They come indeed from on high, because what they preach on earth, they see in heaven. Whence also to John, as though truly from the chosen company of prophets, it is said from heaven: 'Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this' (Rev. 4:1). Who, when he had ascended, beheld and recognized the Lamb—whom Moses had prefigured as to be slain, and whom he himself had seen offered on the cross—now reigning; and he learned how great were the thanksgivings rendered to Him by those for whom He had been slain. Therefore the preachers come from on high, because what they preach to those beneath them, they have learned in heavenly contemplation.

15. Well also is the company of prophets said to have met Saul at the entrance of the city; because we can see the great preachers of Holy Church where they descend, not where they are exalted. For the things which they say to us little ones, we hear; but the things which they see in heavenly places, how they see them, or how sweetly they love them, we do not see. For the apostle Paul was caught up into paradise and was taken up to the third heaven,

and he heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to speak (2 Cor. 12:4). Who then could find so great a preacher caught up into paradise, or taken up to the third heaven? But blessed Paul said these things about himself under compulsion. Whence also at the end of the sublimity he had set forth, humbling himself, he says: "I have become a fool; you compelled me" (2 Cor. 12:11). How great then were those things which he was unwilling to tell, if he came to reveal even these under compulsion? For he who heard things which it is not lawful for a man to speak also saw things which it is not lawful for a man to know. You might perhaps say:

Even if he wished, how could he express in human speech the beauty of that third heaven, the light of that innermost brightness, the indescribable splendor of the angels, and the inaccessible glory — how sweetly all those elect and blessed eternal citizens receive from the fullness of that One, how eagerly they partake, how completely they are filled, how pleasantly they taste the sweetness of divine goodness, with what delightful fullness they are satisfied: what the splendors are for each one from that one ineffable light of the Creator, what the beauty of all together is from that one glory: by what excellence of dignity some surpass others, and by what means the good are subject to the better in the ineffable delight of justice?

16. We cannot, therefore, follow the lofty Paul to that height, but we enter the city, in which, as if descending from on high, he comes to meet us. For we who cannot perceive the lofty things that the preachers see must reverently hear the plain things that they teach. But when they descend, they carry before them the psaltery, the timbrel, the flute, and the harp. They have the psaltery because they announce the kingdom of heaven; they have the timbrel because they preach the mortification of the flesh; they have the flute because they command their subjects to weep for the acquisition of eternal joy; and they also have the harp because they teach the devout to rejoice in the certainty of eternal goods. The psaltery indeed, which resonates from the upper part, also signifies the proclamation of eternal joys, because when it urges us to love heavenly things, it sends forth the sound of its sweetness, as it were, from the upper part. The timbrel, because it is stretched over the hide of a dead animal, fittingly represents the mortification of our flesh. That the flute is customarily present at the funeral rites of the dead, we have learned from the Gospel, for when the Lord wished to raise the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, He cast the flute players out of the house and drove away the tumultuous crowd (Matt. 9:25). What then is expressed by the flute, if not the mourning of the saints?

For when they see themselves cast out from that eternal life which they desire, they lament over themselves as though they were dead. The harp, however, is a very joyful musical instrument. By this instrument the word of consolation for the elect is fittingly represented, because just as we are gladdened by the sound of the harp, so the elect preachers console us amid the hardships of our present exile. The psaltery, therefore, is placed first in the procession of the preachers, because above all else the glory of the heavenly kingdom must be proclaimed, so that when we recognize the good that we should love, we may desire to

labor for the attainment of that same good. Hence it is that when Matthew in the Gospel was setting forth the beginnings of the Lord's Incarnation, he said: John began to preach and to say: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17). But because when we know heavenly things, if we wish to reach them, it is necessary that we mortify the passions of the flesh, the preachers of holy Church produce, as it were after the psaltery, the sound of the timbrel. And what is this mortification of the body other than a preparation for eternal blessedness? We learn to love the preparation of heavenly things, and we are commanded to seek them with the most ardent weeping. For we mourn the dead, as it were with a flute, when we grieve vehemently that we do not yet live in that eternal life.

After the timbrel, therefore, our preachers have the flute, because they teach us both to mortify our members and to groan for love of eternal life. They also bring the harp after the flute, because they command us so to bewail the hardships of our present exile that we may rejoice in the promise of our eternal inheritance. For the great prophet sounded the psaltery when he said: My sheep hear my voice, and I give them eternal life (John 10:27). Again striking the psaltery, he says: The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (John 3:14). He sounded the timbrel who said: Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil desire (Col. 3:5). He sounded the flute who said: Be afflicted, mourn; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to sorrow (James 4:9). He sounded the timbrel who said: For your sake we are put to death all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter (Ps. 43:22). He holds the flute before him who likewise speaks to God, saying: You will feed us with the bread of tears, and give us drink in full measure (Ps. 79:6). The Lord held the flute before Him when He said: Amen I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful (John 16:20). But as if adding the sound of the harp, He says:

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy (ibid.). He sounded the harp for us, as it were, who said: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men; the Lord is near (Phil. 4:4). He sounds the harp for us who, announcing the good things of our city, says: Joy and gladness shall be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of praise (Isa. 51:3). Because, therefore, the preachers of holy Church announce the heavenly kingdom, and for the attainment of that same kingdom command us to mortify the flesh, to bewail our captivity, and to exult in hope of future blessedness, the prophets descending from the height are said to carry before them the psaltery, the timbrel, the flute, and the harp. And they are called a company of prophets, because the pastors of holy Church are many, yet they have one pastor, the Lord Jesus Christ.

17. And it should be noted that the prophets are said to have the psaltery, drum, flute, and harp before them, so that the pattern of the elect preachers might be seen. For the reprobate have what they preach behind them, because they say and do not do; they neglect to do the good things that they know. Whence also to King Saul, already despising the Lord's commands, it is said: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has

rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23). Hence the Lord complains through the prophet concerning the Jews, saying: "They have cast me behind their back" (1 Kings 14:9). Therefore the holy teachers, because they maintain the path of heavenly conduct that they preach by the continual course of good works, in their figure it is said that the prophets had the psaltery, drum, flute, and harp before them as they descended. For these instruments can be referred to the preaching of the Redeemer. And because not far above we said that the hill of the Lord is the Redeemer himself, let us consider the fittingness of the instruments. He who names him king of the eternal kingdom surely sounds the psaltery for us. And he who affirms the discipline of our mortification in him strikes, as it were, the drum. He sounds the flute who proclaims the Redeemer dead for the salvation of the world. He strikes the harp who declares that he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

But we are made glad at the delight of such great instruments if we hear the very flock of prophets sounding forth. For David says: "His going forth is from the highest heaven, and his circuit reaches to the highest" (Psalm 18:7). Hence he likewise says: "All kings of the earth shall worship him, all nations shall serve him" (Psalm 71:11). For he held, as it were, the psaltery in praise of the Redeemer, who obtained the higher part of praise and preached the coming of the Redeemer from the highest heaven. Isaiah touched the drum of his mortification, saying: "And we saw him, and there was no beauty, and we desired him, despised and the lowest of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and his face was as it were hidden and despised, whence we did not esteem him" (Isaiah 53:3). Likewise sounding the flute of his death, he says: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb he was silent" (Isaiah 53:7). David, striking the harp of the resurrection, says: "Let the whole earth be moved before his face; say among the nations that the Lord has reigned from the wood; for he has established the world, which shall not be moved" (Psalm 95:10). Also touching the harp of the ascension, he said: "O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, who ascends above the heaven of heavens to the east" (Psalm 67:33–34).

Therefore the prophets descend from on high when the holy preachers announce to us those mysteries which they have learned by lofty contemplation. And they sound the psaltery, flute, and harp, because they declare our Redeemer to be Lord of the eternal kingdom, both humbled through the human condition, and that by his death he redeems the world, and by rising again he restores heavenly things. Which instruments of praise they surely have before them, because they understand what they say. On the contrary, Caiaphas is said to prophesy (John 11) and yet to be ignorant of what he said, since the flute of the Lord's death that he touched he did not have before him as an elect prophet would, but behind him. Well then is it added concerning the elect prophets: "And them prophesying. Because while they see what they say, they have, as it were, the instruments that they play before them; and while they preach, they bring forth what they have known by foreseeing. Therefore Saul comes to the hill of the Lord when the chosen yet unformed preacher advances in spiritual knowledge and recognizes the Redeemer of the human race not on the level plain of his humanity, but in the lofty majesty of his divinity. Then indeed he hears the choirs of the

prophets singing together, because he perfectly understands all the Scriptures that concern him.

He therefore who saw the men leaping over great pits, who beheld those carrying kids, and loaves of bread, and a flask of wine, arrives at the hill of the Lord—when he who is known to have advanced through the examples of the elect is raised to the summit of knowledge, and knowing the Redeemer sublimely, loves him ineffably, from whom, as a familiar friend, he may obtain what he further desires to know about him.

18. It is well added: "And the Spirit of the Lord will leap upon you, and you will prophesy with them. The Spirit of the Lord is said to leap because the hearts of the elect are suddenly filled with His gifts. They immediately begin to prophesy, because those who are full of the divine Spirit cannot remain silent about the mighty works of God. Or he is declared about to prophesy, to whom Samuel promises the grace of the divine word. This is as if he were saying: You who now cannot speak in that abundance of the Spirit coming upon you—when that fullness has poured itself into you, you will abound with a wealth of speech. Indeed, the Lord, promising this leaping Spirit to the disciples, says: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will teach you all truth, and will announce to you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). The Spirit indeed leaps upon those whose hearts He illuminated by coming suddenly (Acts 2:2). And once illuminated, they prophesied, because they proclaimed the Redeemer of the human race in every tongue. This we certainly see happening even now in the holy Church, because often those who desire to speak divine things are suddenly taught by that same Spirit, and they are also able to speak most excellently things they had learned by no prior meditation. For in return for keeping the commandments of God, they receive the grace of the word in the sublime revelation of the Redeemer.

For what wonder is it if those who through purity of life are always the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit can suddenly receive the light of knowledge? But what kind of gift of the Holy Spirit would it be if it gave knowledge and did not give the affection of great charity? For those who are filled with that Spirit preach heavenly things, but they love what they speak. Therefore it is fittingly added: "And you will be changed into another man. What is the love of the elect mind other than a transformation of the old nature? For our nature was so condemned through the fall of the first man that it daily declines by slipping and grows old by declining. But we who fail in ourselves, when that Spirit leaps into us, are renewed, because we are immediately made what we were not. Someone was lukewarm, but suddenly visited by the Spirit, he is made fervent. He begins to burn with devotion, to exercise himself vigorously in good work. He has therefore been changed into another man, because he began to be what, before the Spirit leaped into him, he could not be. Someone is already of good conduct, loves heavenly things, despises earthly things, but he cannot manage to weep for the things he loves above or for the things he hates below. Often indeed he desires to weep and cannot, though he recalls having committed many things for which he ought to weep;

but when that Spirit suddenly leaps in, he bursts forth into fountains of tears. He is therefore changed into another man, who receives the grace of compunction through the coming Spirit, which he did not have before the coming of that same Spirit. Someone desires to obtain purity of heart, to think on heavenly things, to be hindered by no encounters with worldly cares; but he cannot rise up to what he desires through devotion by means of the affection of purity. But suddenly, caught up in the power of the coming Spirit, he ceases to be carnal, powerfully casts aside the cares of the world, and rises to the contemplation of eternal things with wonderful purity. He then marvels that he is what he was not; he then marvels that he was not what he is. For when he sees himself to be such in spiritual things, he who is such marvels that he could not have been such before. He is therefore changed into another man, who sees himself to be what he was not, and not to be what he had been. Well therefore concerning Saul: "You will be changed into another man. Because when the preachers of the holy Church receive the grace of divine preaching, they do not receive only the knowledge of the word, but the power of love—so that through the word they may be able to benefit others, and through love of the word they themselves may become better.

For when they speak, they are changed into another man, because when the Spirit speaks through them, they themselves are joined to that same Spirit by wondrous charity, and they no longer dissent from His will in either word or deed. For sacred Scripture, praising such a man, says: "He who clings to God is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17). For we cling to God when we abundantly receive the grace of the Holy Spirit; and we are made one spirit with Him when we are in harmony with the divine will in mind, mouth, and deed. Well therefore did the prophet Samuel add, saying: (Verse 7) "For when all these signs have come to you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for the Lord is with you."

19. These indeed are the signs by which a preacher may recognize himself, and then let him dare to undertake everything he plans to do, when he has learned by certain experience that he has received the power of the Holy Spirit in great abundance of charity. But the preacher ought to teach those things which he does, just as Luke says of the Lord: "That Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which, commanding the apostles through the Holy Spirit whom He had chosen, He was taken up" (Acts 1:1-2). Hence Paul says: "I dare not speak of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed" (Rom. 15:18). And so Samuel commands the anointed king, saying: "Do whatever your hand finds to do." As if to say: When you see yourself filled with divine grace, teach others whatever you do, because from the divine grace presiding over you, you have the ability both to live excellently and to preach profitably. But nevertheless, he adds what he ought to observe before all these things, saying: (Verse 8.) "And you shall go down before me to Gilgal. For I will surely come down to you, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait for me, until I come and show you what you should do."

20. What does it mean that he first says: "Do whatever your hand finds," and then adds: "You shall wait seven days for me, until I come and show you what you are to do"? But he

who had received the signs by which he would know himself anointed king by the Lord was to be tested as to whether he would recognize those very signs. This indeed suits a spiritual rather than a historical explanation. For we have said that coming to the hill of the Lord pertains to the perfect knowledge and love of the Redeemer, and being filled with the gift of prophecy pertains to the power of the Holy Spirit. He says therefore: ”When all these signs have come upon you, do whatever your hand finds. Because whoever is certain of the intimate inspiration of the Holy Spirit can be confident both in the purpose of good work and in the ordering of preaching. He likewise said: ”You shall wait seven days for me, until I come; and I will show you what you are to do. Because the chief pastors of the holy Church, while they are uncertain about the progress of those beneath them, are very anxious to recognize it in them by sure indications. But what are the indications of the Spirit, if not the surpassing gifts of humility? For the Holy Spirit, the greater the light of virtues with which He illuminates the hearts of the elect, the more abundantly He enriches them with the gift of humility.

For the loftier they are in merits, the lowlier they are through the virtue of humility. He therefore who is commanded to go down to Gilgal before the prophet and to wait, is clearly given the burden of obedience for the purpose of testing his humility. It is also the right order of a chosen way of life that one should not impose obedience on others which he himself has not taken care to render to others. He is therefore commanded to wait, so that it may be recognized whether he is truly humble. If, then, the sign of a perfect preacher is the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the virtue of humility is the sign of that fullness, what is said in praise of humility except that its gifts are the signs of signs?

21. But because the king who is about to sacrifice is commanded to be preceded by the prophet, we discern better the things that are said if they are examined in order. Gilgal is indeed interpreted as ”wheel. But what does the wheel signify in this place, if not the life of the obedient? A wheel indeed advances by turning, and now seeks the heights, now the depths. So indeed is the life of the obedient, because it does below what draws it upward, and sees above what it performs below, as if it is raised to the heights and set down to the depths. For what the obedient do below, they lift upward; because when they obey the commands of their superiors, the things they perform are earthly, but from the earthly things they do, they await heavenly rewards. Likewise, what they hold above, they bend toward the earth, because in order to perform earthly things well, they contemplate heavenly things, and they do only that which they perceive to be fitting to that supreme happiness. Indeed, commanding Moses to turn this wheel, the Lord said: ”Make all things according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain” (Exod. 25:40). For he who saw on the heights what he made in the depths surely bent the upper part of the wheel toward the earth. He had also raised the lower part to the heights, who said: ”The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand” (3 Kings 17:1).

He stood indeed in the lowest place through the humility of obedience, while he rebuked the faithless king; but he raised the level ground of his work to the height of divine contem-

plation, so that he might turn the running wheel most excellently, while in his earthly work he looked to what heavenly reward he might merit. This indeed is the pattern of chosen obedience: that in everything we do outwardly, we look to the power of the Creator present everywhere. Thus indeed in the submission of our obedience we can have both uprightness of work and growth in devotion. We are indeed upright in work then, because we exert ourselves in the labor of obedience for him whom we behold. We are also devout, because we believe we please him whom we regard as the observer of our labors and the bestower of eternal recompense. And because the commands of superiors must be observed with perfect humility, it is well said to Saul: "You shall wait seven days. For the number seven stands for the gifts of the sevenfold Spirit. We wait seven days for the teachers of the Church when, through the power of the sevenfold Spirit, we receive such great clarity of inward devotion that we in no way neglect their precepts. In this place it should be noted that he did not say: "You shall be in Gilgal for seven days," but: "You shall wait for me seven days, after you have gone down before me.

We go down before the preacher when we do what is commanded us by his judgment. Then indeed we are said to descend, because we subject our minds to their authority. But to wait seven days is to fulfill the good of obedience with every light of the heart. Which we certainly do when we pass over neither the hard nor the easy commands of our superiors. For the Lord wanted no day to be devoid of this light, when he said: "Whoever breaks one of these least commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). And because the perfect obedience that we render to men is a gift of the Creator, he who waits seven days is said to offer an oblation and to sacrifice peace offerings. The oblation is indeed the Lord's because it is offered to men for God's sake, but what is offered to men is received by God. The victims are the services of the obedient, because when we submit to men for God's sake, we overcome the proud spirits. By other virtues we indeed assail the demons; through obedience we conquer them. Therefore those who obey are victors, because while they perfectly subject their own will to others, they themselves through obedience exercise dominion over the fallen angels.

22. But it should be noted that Samuel commanded Saul to go down before him to Gilgal, yet did not want him to offer oblation and sacrifices without him. For he said: "I indeed will come down to you so that you may offer oblation and sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait for me, until I come to you, and I will show you what you should do. What is this but that we ought both to be wisely ignorant of our own good deeds, and sometimes to know them usefully? They should indeed be left unknown, lest they furnish occasion for pride to us who are weak; but they should be known by the more perfect, so that they may grow through devotion. Hence it is also fittingly said in the Gospel concerning the pregnant Elizabeth: "And she hid herself for five months" (Luke 1:24). For those who cannot yet be spiritual and strong are designated by the number five. But she who has newly conceived hides herself for five months: because she does good through the bodily senses; but because she is not yet spiritual and strong in this good work, she wisely conceals what she does. He therefore offers sacrifices to God, he offers oblation, who waiting seven days receives

the coming prophet: because then what he offers is worthy of God, when the one offering is righteous by the virtue of obedience and filled with fear by the consideration of divine immensity;

when he does not believe himself to be anything other than what he knows by the approval of his superiors. For it is as if we offer in the presence of the prophet, when we believe only those works of ours to be worthy of divine acceptance which are approved by the judgment of holy preachers. And because he is said to sacrifice in the presence of the prophet, this assuredly signifies that in our works we ought to trust wise and spiritual men. Because likewise Saul waits seven days, the preacher of the holy Church ought to wisely order the virtue of his subject, so that he does not praise his good deeds before him except when he can despise the favor of his own praise. Hence also the same oblation and sacrifices are declared to be offered by Saul to God, and not to himself. For he offers sacrifices to God who is not vainly puffed up about the virtue he possesses, but attributes everything he accomplishes to the grace of the Creator. This also, because we learn by the teaching of doctors, Samuel fittingly says in concluding his speech: ”And I will show you what you should do. He indeed shows the one who waits what he should do: when the one who is known to obey perfectly is taught how he ought to command others. But this is not yet shown to Saul, but is promised. For he is not sent to sacrifice, but to wait.

And because we advance by conversation with the saints, it is fittingly added: (Verse 9. And so, when he had turned his shoulder to go away from Samuel, God changed for him another heart.

23. For the heart is changed to another when it is directed toward desiring better things; the heart is also changed when it is abandoned to evil. But in the case of Saul, who was first good and afterward evil, how this ought rather to be understood literally is not very clear. But if it is said with reference to his advancement, he had a changed heart, because he who had been searching for donkeys was now thinking about the governance of a kingdom. If, however, he is understood to have then received an evil heart, he was humble before the prophet; but as he began to depart, he likewise began also to grow proud. In his mind he was already thinking of himself not as a little one but as a king. He was not yet exalted in rank, but he was exalted in his own estimation. But since throughout this sacred history nothing is yet openly said about his pride, we too act more rightly if for the time being we pass over in silence what might seem unfavorable about him. What can still support his remaining innocence is said in what follows: That Saul was a child of one year when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel (1 Sam. 13:1). For if he was a humble king for two years, the changed heart is asserted of him on account of the vigor of his purpose, not on account of a new swelling of pride.

Therefore, in that Saul is said to have had a changed heart, he is likened to new preachers of the holy Church, who when they receive the office of preaching become better through divine grace. For Samuel anointed Saul as prince, but God changed his heart to another, because we receive the sacraments of holy orders outwardly from the teachers of the Church,

but we are strengthened inwardly by the power of the sacraments from Almighty God. The power of the sacrament, however, is the grace of the sevenfold Spirit. Those who receive this grace are surely changed as if having received another heart, because those whom the Holy Spirit strengthens by his grace, he immediately makes to be what they were not. So indeed the disciples of the Redeemer also formerly were afraid; but when through the coming of the Holy Spirit another heart was changed in them, they preached the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). For God changed their heart to another, to whom he granted knowledge of all languages (Acts 2:6). For he changed their heart to another whom he clothed with wondrous love and illuminated with the splendors of all virtues. And it should be noted that God changed his heart to another at the time when he turned his shoulder to go away from the prophet. For he turns his shoulder, as it were, to go away, when he who receives the office of preaching resolves to carry out what is commanded him concerning the pastoral office.

He resolves indeed, but does not prevail, if God does not change his heart to another, because the highest place is not well governed unless the mind of the ruler is filled with the supreme grace of the divine gift. Moreover, because these things are promised to him for the future, it is added: (Verse 10. And all these signs came to him on that day.

24. For what else is the teaching of a chosen preacher than the day of an instructed disciple? For he who walks in the day sees both the level ground on which to walk and the precipices to avoid. So indeed, while we are illuminated by the teachings of holy preachers, we openly perceive what must be done and what must be avoided. In that day, therefore, in which the prophet preaches, a good hearer perceives the signs of his election—he who beholds in himself those gifts of virtues which his preacher previously showed would come to him. They are indeed signs, because through these those who are advanced to the order of preaching understand themselves to be chosen by God. Therefore, let no one consider himself anointed for the leadership of the Church who has not seen the signs of that day present in the power of perfection. Let him therefore first attentively observe the first sign, namely whether, by the example of men, he already knows how to leap over great pits. Let him also recognize the following sign: whether at the oak of Tabor he met three men whom he saw carrying young goats and loaves of bread to Bethel, to the house of the Lord; whether he received two loaves from their hands. Let him likewise see the third: whether he came to the hill of the Lord, whether he beheld the bands prophesying, whether the Spirit of the Lord leaped upon him and he can already prophesy in their midst.

And indeed he saw men leaping over pits if, by the example of the perfect, he has already learned to despise all things of the world. He came to the oak of Tabor if he already knows how to experience the strength and pleasantness of the contemplative life. There he also beheld those carrying young goats and loaves of bread and wine to the Lord, because from the lovers of the contemplative life he has already learned both to acknowledge himself unceasingly as a sinner, and to afflict the flesh for those same sins, and to offer the pain of his affliction gratefully to almighty God. He came to the hill of the Lord if, by advancing, he has

ascended to the revealed intimate glory of the Redeemer or to the sublime understanding of the Scriptures. He met the band of prophets if he has understood the harmonious knowledge of the preachers of the holy Church. In their midst he felt the Spirit of the Lord leaping upon him; in that ineffable sweetness of inner experience he recognized in himself the gift of divinity coming upon him, and by speaking he poured forth the abundance of the grace he had come to know. As often as holy preachers show these things to us who are imperfect, through the teaching by which they illuminate us, they produce, as it were, a most brilliant day. And indeed all these things preachers who have already been advanced know, as their ordainers have set them forth.

25. Since therefore they have the day of signs, let them profitably consider whether they already see the promised signs. For he who has not yet learned to despise the glory of the world was able to hear the first sign promised, but did not see it displayed. If he does not know the strength and sweetness of the contemplative life, he has not deserved to see the good of the following sign. If he has not ascended to the height of the Scriptures through the knowledge of intimate learning, he has not yet come to the hill of the Lord. If he does not yet have the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon him, he cannot prophesy. For without that Spirit a pastor is carnal, and what he speaks cannot be attributed to the dignity of preaching, but to the boldness of rashness. With what dread, then, can we wretches be terrified? For behold, we have undertaken the leadership of others, we who do not possess the power of the governance we have assumed. We have heard the signs of spiritual prelacy which we do not see in ourselves through the light of experience. We desire earthly things, we are occupied with outward cares, and we are driven the further from heavenly contemplation the more we are weighed down by anxiety over earthly affairs. Pressed down also by this burden of earthly life, when can we attain that splendor of the intimate glory of the Redeemer, when can we arrive at the loftiest meanings of the holy Scriptures?

But neither can we speak of heavenly things, which we do not know, as though they were known. And we who are unwilling to devote ourselves through quiet to the love of the interior life do not feel the Spirit of the Lord leaping upon us. Therefore let the signs that are known but not possessed terrify us, so that when we are pricked with compunction for the immensity of our negligence, we may seek the power of the order we have assumed through weeping and lamentation. Hence the Psalmist laments with the voice of the weak, saying: ”We have not seen our signs, there is no longer a prophet” (Psalm 73:9). For one is a prophet when these aforementioned signs of prophecy are foreseen to be present in him. If therefore he is raised to the summit of prelacy, let him not measure himself by the height of his office, but by the power of his perfection. Let him therefore say: ”We have not seen our signs, there is no longer a prophet. As if to say: I would call myself a prophet now, if I could discern the gifts of the Spirit with which the person of a prophet ought to shine. He therefore who has heard of the perfection of the pastoral order he has assumed, which he has not deserved to obtain in himself by his manner of living, is not a fit teacher of holy Church. In the first king, therefore, the advancement of all pastors of holy Church is shown, when it is said:

”All these signs came to him on that day. And because this same advancement of the chosen preachers is wondrous, there follows: (Verse 11. But those who had known him yesterday and the day before, seeing that he was with the prophets and was prophesying, said to one another: ”What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”

26. What is it that they say, ”What is this thing that has happened,” except to marvel greatly at what could not be comprehended by them? They had known the man, a son of man; they saw him joined to the prophets. They had known him as carnal; they saw him as spiritual. They had known him as simple; they saw him as a prophet. They say therefore: ”What has happened to the son of Kish? They were able to know what he had been; what he now was, and how he could be so, they did not know. This indeed is the spiritual progress of the preacher: that he who was once known in ordinary life should possess something in a higher order that is beyond understanding. Three degrees of perfection are shown, because he says: ”Yesterday and the day before. In two days indeed the preacher is recognized; on the third he possesses something that even those who knew him cannot comprehend. For the first day belongs to hearers, the second to companions, the third is that of preaching. For the pastor had his first day when as a disciple he obeyed his superiors. For he who is devoted in the virtue of obedience is seen as if in a great light. He had his second day when he began to be an assistant to his betters. For this brightness of a great way of life, in the example of the elect, makes the greatest day. The Lord, indicating this day, said:

”So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). But the third day is that of the rushing Spirit and of prophecy. For on the third day the pastor is beheld, when he matches the sublimity of his dignity with the splendor of his conduct, when, clothed with heavenly power, he shines upon his subjects with such life and such teaching that he can be seen by them but cannot be examined and judged. Such indeed was Moses when he descended from the mountain with a most radiant face, whose subjects saw the brightness but could not fix their gaze upon the shining splendor (Exod. 34:35; 2 Cor. 3:7). Such was he who gloried, saying: ”But we, beholding the glory of God with unveiled face, are transformed into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Such indeed were those whom the Holy Spirit had filled. Whence also those who had gathered in Jerusalem say in amazement: ”Are not all these who speak Galileans? (Acts 2:7). For they were asking in order to understand what they were hearing, and they could not understand it. But those who had known Saul ask in wonder about the thing that happened to him;

because we sometimes see those who are humble and despised in a lower order of holy Church, whom, when the Holy Spirit takes them up to the order of preaching, He clothes with the splendors of His graces and shows them to be wondrous in those same splendors. But we rightly admire the virtues of the saints when we ascribe them to the goodness of the Creator. Wherefore Moses also, praising the Lord, said: ”Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, glorious among the saints, wonderful in majesty, working wonders?

(Exod. 15:11). Hence the Psalmist says: ”God is wonderful in His saints; He Himself will give power and strength to His people” (Ps. 67:36). Rightly there follows: (Verse 12) ”One answered another, saying: And who is their father?”

27. What is it that up to this point it was said of Saul alone: ”What has happened to the son of Kish? And now, as if concerning many, the answer is given: ”And who is their father? But if this is understood according to history, it can in no way stand. It remains therefore that the meaning which is taken from the letter must be sought in spiritual signification. When therefore it is said: ”Who is their father? not only Saul prophesying is considered, but that entire company of prophets. For indeed all those prophets, because they were greatly spiritual, were reckoned not from carnal descent but from heavenly origin. The Father of the prophets is He who inquires through Malachi, saying: ”If I am the Lord, where is my fear? And if I am a father, where is my love? (Mal. 1:6). For because they are joined to almighty God in great love, they are called sons of Him whom they love as a father. This applies all the more fittingly to the preachers of the new Church, inasmuch as He raised them higher into heavenly nobility, who revealed to them the glory of so great a lineage in the form of a prayer. ”Thus,” He says, ”you shall pray: Our Father, who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). Which is as if to say: The holy preachers would be worthy of admiration if the wonders they perform they accomplished by their own power;

but now what is seen is not a wonder, because He works this through them for whom nothing seems difficult. Let one therefore say to another: ”And who is their father? As if to say: What wonder is it if they teach marvelously, since it is not they themselves who speak, but the Spirit of their Father who speaks in them? Therefore it is not said: ”Who is his father? (John 6:42), lest what belongs to many sons be attributed to one alone. For only He who is Son by nature dares to say: ”My Father works until now” (John 5:17). And likewise: ”The Lord said to me: You are my Son, today I have begotten you” (Ps. 2:7). For in order to bring forth the difference between each dignity, He speaks to Mary Magdalene, saying: ”I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17). As often therefore as one preacher is seen to be distinguished by a wondrous life or preaching, in his heavenly generation he is seen not alone but with innumerable others; because almighty God, who is shown to be wonderful in one, produces far greater admiration among people when innumerable others are considered who possessed that which they marvel at in one. This, however, can fittingly be referred to the detraction of carnal people: for when they try to diminish the reputation of spiritual men, they search out their carnal circumstances which they may bring forward for disparagement.

And very often in holy Church those have a wondrous reputation for holiness who have no worldly eminence at all. When therefore carnal people find fault with either the fleshly origin or the poverty in those who by divine generation are already great and rich, they inquire about the father of the prophets as if in mockery. And because they consider it a very strange thing that lowly men of the world can appear so great, there is added: (Ibid. ”Therefore it was turned into a proverb: Is Saul also among the prophets?”

28. Which indeed, if they were to examine with the eyes of the heart, they would not regard as a new thing. For the Holy Spirit acts according to His own custom when He raises the poor, the humble, and the simple to the summit of virtues. For of Him it is written: "Who sets the humble on high, and lifts up the mourning to safety" (Job 5:11). Hence the almighty Father says of His same almighty Spirit through the prophet: "Upon whom does my spirit rest, if not upon the humble, and the quiet, and the one who trembles at my words? (Isaiah 66:2). Hence Paul says: "Not many wise according to the flesh, not many noble, but God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the strong; and God chose the ignoble things of the world, to destroy the things that are; so that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Corinthians 1:26, etc.). Which proverb can certainly be ascribed to the elect as well. For no less amazement was held concerning the blessed apostle Paul, when it was heard by the Church that he who used to assault the Church by threatening and slaughtering was now evangelizing and defending it by preaching. Then indeed those who heard could say: "Is Saul among the apostles? Does he who used to persecute Jesus now preach Jesus? But this has now been turned into a proverb of the elect. A proverb indeed is when in what is said, something else is concealed.

But the conversion of the blessed apostle Paul has become a proverb for the sinner. Let every sinner therefore hear of the conversion of blessed Paul, and not despair on account of the multitude of his crimes. For Saul, breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, was afflicting the elect everywhere; he was guarding the garments of those who stoned the protomartyr Stephen, and was as it were stoning with the hands of all, since he made them all free to stone (Acts 9:1 ff.). But he who was such while persecuting Christ, upon being converted to Christ, was made the head of the nations, because he obtained the leadership of the whole Church. While we behold so great a sinner converted and honored by the Lord with so sublime a dignity, let us presume that we too can find forgiveness for our sins. Our proverb therefore is this: that a persecutor is taken up for evangelizing, which contains this mystery—that the converted sinner may not only hope for pardon from the Lord, but that by fighting manfully he may be able to attain to the crown. But this is the usual difference between carnal and spiritual preachers: that carnal preachers, after the lofty words of preaching, descend to the depths of wicked works, while spiritual preachers, after the sublime things they speak, raise themselves up to even higher desires for the heavenly homeland. Whence it is also added: (Verse 13) "But he ceased to prophesy, and came to the high place."

29. He comes to a high place after the ministry of prophecy, who raises his mind to the heavenly joys which he preaches, and lifts himself up by loving those things which he displays by speaking. Teachers indeed preach plain things with those of lesser rank; when they are with those whom they teach, they are, as it were, on level ground. And because after the words of preaching they prepare themselves by good works to merit the things they preach, they are said to come to a high place. Those who are certainly sublime in word and deed are not so in thoughts of pride. They always do great things, but never desire to appear great. Therefore it is well added: (Verses 14, 15, and 16.) And Saul's uncle said to him and to his

servant: Where did you go? He answered: To seek the donkeys, and when we had not found them, we came to Samuel. And his uncle said to him: Tell me, what did Samuel say to you. And Saul said to his uncle: He told us that the donkeys had been found. But the matter of the kingship, which Samuel had spoken to him, he did not reveal to him.

30. The word of the kingdom is the honorable dignity of the pastor. For by its very display it speaks: because he is no mere uncle who is elevated by so great an order. Therefore the king does not reveal the word of the kingdom: because the pastor of the Church speaks with the great splendor of divinity, but does not speak with pride. He who indeed does not reveal the word conceals what he speaks. For the word always speaks to him for whom it is a word; otherwise it is not a word. Therefore he possesses the word of the kingdom who shines with that manner of life which, as if by speaking, provides to others examples of the heavenly journey. Therefore he does not reveal the word who does not disclose the greatness of his holiness through vainglory. He indeed has what he might reveal, but what is shown through itself he does not wish to proclaim. For he who shines with great dignity and great holiness shows many things by living which he does not say by speaking. The Lord surely wished the preacher to have this word of the kingdom when He commanded that bells be placed on the garment of the high priest (Exod. 28:34). The garment of the high priest is the display of a good manner of life. It is furnished, as it were, with many bells when it multiplies the good works that cry out as an example to the lesser ones.

But the king does not dare to reveal the word of the kingdom: because it is commanded of priests that they bear the beauty of their garment before the Lord. He bears the beauty of his garment before the Lord who both shows forth good things and, from the display of good works, seeks to please not men outwardly through vanity, but God inwardly through love. Then certainly the priest is silent, but as he walks, what he wears cries out; because the chosen preacher does not proclaim himself by boasting, but never ceases to speak by living well. Let it therefore be said of Saul that he did not reveal to his uncle the word of the kingdom: because chosen men, when they receive the splendor of dignity or the growth of a good life, put themselves forward by examples, but conceal themselves in silence. And because they believe themselves to be lesser in merits than other chosen ones, he to whom he does not reveal the word is called his uncle. For an uncle is called the brother of the father. Moreover, the Redeemer of the human race makes as many sons unto the unfading glory of the eternal inheritance as He instructs in the sacraments of His faith and doctrine. For those who are instructed in the Church are, as it were, still little children. But he who now meets Him as a perfect man through great merits is a brother of the Redeemer. The blessed Apostle Paul, praising such men indeed, says:

Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Because therefore perfect preachers regard other chosen and perfect ones as such and themselves as imperfect, the one who is reported to have questioned him about the word of the kingdom is called the uncle of Saul. Moreover, Samuel had spoken to Saul this same word of the kingdom: because chosen men have learned the spiritual manner of life which they possess from the speech of their elders. But

the king who had been initiated through anointing had not yet been chosen by the people. Whence it also follows: (Verse 17. Samuel called the people to the Lord at Mizpah.

31. Mizpah, as I said, is interpreted as "watchtower." In the ordination of the king, the people are called to Mizpah, because those who come together to ordain a pastor of holy Church are taught to attend to his spiritual qualities, not his carnal ones. To watch, indeed, is to recognize the preacher to be ordained through the standard of sacred Scripture. For sacred Scripture is the mirror of the elect. A pastor is known as if through a mirror, when he is shown by his conduct to be such as is proclaimed in sacred eloquence. Rightly, therefore, Samuel convokes the people at Mizpah, so that the election of a good bishop may not rest on human judgment, but on divine: since there is elected not such a one as can be determined by the will of men, but such as is declared in sacred eloquence. Because this is a gift of God, it is necessary that the people, who are known to expect such great things from God, be purged of their guilt through the satisfaction of penance. Moreover, the very recognition of sin is a preparation for the divine gift, because often when we believe ourselves unworthy of the divine gift, we merit it through humility. Hence Samuel also strives to turn those who had gathered to receive the king first to the consideration of their sins, because it is added: (Verses 18, 19.) And Samuel said to the children of Israel: Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of all the kings who were afflicting you. But today you have rejected the Lord your God, who alone saved you from all your evils and tribulations, and you said: By no means, but a king shall be over us.

32. Indeed, he carefully showed them both the good things which the Lord had bestowed upon them and the evil things which they themselves had done against the Lord, so that they might recognize that they had sinned all the more gravely, inasmuch as they had dared by sinning to offend him from whom they had received such great blessings. But what it means to reject the Lord, and how it ought to be understood according to the literal and the spiritual sense, has been explained at length above (Above in the exposition of verse 7, chapter VIII), where the Lord says to Samuel: "They have not rejected you, but me, according to all their works which they have done from the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." But because holy preachers instruct by teaching those whom they pierce by rebuking, he added, saying: (Verse 19) "Now therefore, stand before the Lord by your tribes and by your families."

33. We are indeed commanded to stand before the Lord when we prepare our hearts to know His commandments at the instruction of our elders. Or the elect stand before the Lord when they are considered by great men with respect to their spiritual virtues, so that whoever is seen to be better among them may be preferred over the rest through pastoral care. And because there are many orders of the faithful, they are commanded to stand before the Lord by tribes and families. Pursuing this indeed more broadly, he adds saying: (Verses 20, 21.) And Samuel brought near all the tribes of Israel, and the lot fell upon the tribe of Benjamin, and he brought near the tribe of Benjamin and its families, and the family of Matri was taken, and it came down to the son of Kish.

34. He made them all stand by tribes and families, so that he might consider them all, and having considered all, might choose the more suitable one. But since he himself had already known the king by the Lord's revelation, and had anointed him as ruler at His command, why is it that he is still sought out as one to be chosen through tribes and families? But the king had been found by the prophet alone. Therefore, the one already found is sought, so that he who had not been found by the people might be found by them. He is also sought by lot, so that the people could not doubt that the one whom the prophet chose had been provided by divine dispensation. What then is signified in this event, if not that the rulers of the holy Church must be chosen with great deliberation? For the highest preachers, from the interior grace of the Holy Spirit which they possess, are full of the great light of providence. And because they are deeply humble, they do not presume upon the greatness of their inner illumination. Therefore, what they rightly determine within themselves, they also test before others. For the prophet alone knows the future king, when the supreme ruler of the holy Church perceives the character and merits of the one to be ordained as ruler. He also anoints him as ruler when he declares him to be full of spiritual gifts.

Nevertheless, he still convenes the people, divides them by tribes and kindreds, casts lots, and finds, as if by a method, the one whom he already knows. The tribes and families stand, as it were, divided, when in the state of virtues the diverse orders of the holy Church are examined. For when we behold the many perfections of the elect—when we see the purity of virgins, the strength of the continent, the honorable ministries of clerics, the devotion of monks—we observe, as it were, tribes standing before us. And because there is great variety among these in the service of God, when we likewise observe the varieties that exist within each order, we see standing before us not only tribes, as it were, but also kindreds. And the lot falls upon a tribe, because better men are often found in one order than in another. For a tribe receives, as it were, the lot, when those who are more perfect than others are seen to be suited for the ministry of preaching. But the lot does not yet fall upon a person, but upon a tribe, when there are many among whom a worthy person lies hidden. Thus there still remains something for the highest men to investigate.

Rightly, therefore, the lot is said to have fallen upon the tribe of Benjamin, and Samuel is said to have brought forward that tribe and its kindreds and to have arrived at the son of Kish, because the elect and highest men of the holy Church do not cease to consider the virtues of each individual until they arrive at the one who is found worthy of the lot of pastoral ministry. But those who are worthy are vehemently terrified to take up the burden of so great an office. Whence it also follows: (Verse 21, 22. They sought him therefore, and he was not found; and they inquired of the Lord further, whether the man would come there. And the Lord answered: Behold, he has hidden himself at home.

35. For they hide themselves so as not to be found, because they flee from undertaking a dignity whose burden they judge themselves unequal to bear. For spiritual leadership has the outward glory of dignity, and it also has the greatness of its inward labor. For a ruler is both honored by his subjects and bears those by whom he is honored. When therefore from

the beginning of honor a cause of burden arises, because from the very source whence honor is received by the ruler, he takes on that by which he is weighed down. Although honor of dignity is in itself a great burden upon the mind, because it ought to be despised, and yet it pleases. It ought indeed to be despised lest it lift up the mind through pride; and it ought to be accepted, so that subjects may reverence the heavenly things which the teacher speaks. A heavier burden therefore arises from honor, because the chosen pastor can bear it only by great strength of soul—namely, to despise in himself what he receives in himself for God's sake, so that he may be such a one for God yet not be such for himself, and may deny himself yet not deny himself; so that what he is, he may be for God, and what he is for himself, he may not be. And so the honor offered by a subject is accepted, so that preaching may be commended.

The preacher also despises the honor offered, because he is not puffed up by being honored, but rejoices that the ministry of the word of God is commended. But how difficult this is to accomplish is better grasped by thinking than by speaking. For it is impossible for weak minds to bear bravely the burden of others and to manage by strength of mind the reverence of honor offered to them—so that amid the attentions of that same honor, one may know how to rejoice in the progress of subjects and not know how to swell with pride on account of the reverence shown to oneself. Because therefore chosen men do not wish to displease God, when called they flee from undertaking the office of leadership. But they hold that very flight from ministry as a virtue of humility, not as a boast of dignity. For they flee as much as they can; but if they have been appointed by the Lord, they can by no means remain hidden. For the same reason Saul is hidden at home, but at the Lord's revealing he is shown forth, because chosen men withdraw themselves from the outward ministries of holy Church, yet by the Lord's dispensation they are brought forward to administer outward ministries. But because now in holy Church those who withdraw themselves from such great honors are few, while those who thrust themselves forward are many, those who thrust themselves forward ought to note this:

that he who is said by the prophet to have been hidden at home was being sought not for the spiritual dignity of the Church, but for the secular glory of a kingdom. For they were not seeking to make him a pontiff, but they wanted to make him king. Let the priest therefore see with what disposition the summit of holy Church ought to be fled from, if kings so cautiously flee from ascending the summit of the world. But because holy men, the more earnestly they refuse to accept the rank of leadership, are the more devoutly sought after by devoted peoples, there follows: (Verse 23.) 'They ran and brought him from there.' After this it is also added: (Ibid.) 'And he stood in the midst of the people.'

36. The prelate stands in the midst of the people when his strength is observed by all his subjects. For to stand is a mark of virtue. He who does good works steadfastly, therefore, stands. And because good works provide an example to those of lesser rank, he is seen to stand in the midst of the people, not in solitude. This is also fittingly understood as referring to the uprightness of intention. For he who stands with uprightness of body raises his head

on high. But he who does good publicly does not stand with the strength of his work if he does not possess uprightness of intention. The king is therefore said to stand in the midst of the people so that the model of the holy prelates of the Church may be shown; because they ought to display good works as an example to their subjects, yet they should avoid receiving the glory of the world for that same good work. But he adds how great he ought to appear, and says: (Ibid.) And he was taller than all the people from his shoulder and upward.

37. We have shown at length above (Book IV, chapter 4, number 20) that the outstanding greatness of body in holy preachers signifies the increase of perfection. Therefore he is seen as exalted in the midst of the people, who, placed at the summit of virtues, is not unknown by his subjects. Indeed the right order for a chosen preacher is that before the loftiness of ecclesiastical eminence, he ascend the summit of virtue, that for the honor of God he obtain the summit of glory, but shine with greater loftiness through the revealed perfection of virtues. Such a Pastor indeed is greatly to be proclaimed by perfect men, and to be desired and loved by the lesser ones. Well therefore is it added: 'And he said to all the people: Surely you see whom the Lord has chosen, that there is none like him among all the people.' (Verse 23.) 'And all the people cried out: Long live the king.' There follows: (Verse 24.) 'Samuel spoke to the people the law of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and placed it before the Lord.'

38. Concerning the law of kingship, because we spoke at length about it above (Book IV, ch. 4, no. 4 ff.), we recall only this about it: that in the historical narrative it is not prescribed but rather shown what wicked kings will do and what good kings should avoid. Kings are indeed to defend their subjects, not to strip them of their own goods. They ought to provide help to those under them, not to seize their fields, vineyards, and olive groves. But if anyone should wish to argue that these things were written not as things to be avoided but as things to be done, then the law of tyrants is written on behalf of that king who is demanded after the Lord has been rejected. The cruel law of the kingdom, therefore, is the punishment of a people that rejects the Lord. For it was not unjust that he should lose his fields and vineyards who willingly cast off the Lord reigning over him. Therefore we perceive that all the things contained in this law of kingship that seem contrary to equity are in fact equitable, if we consider what the people had sinned in asking for a king. For what great burden of law is it in the judgment of divine equity, if they should unwillingly place their sons and daughters in the service of the king, when they had willingly removed them from the liberty of God?

And what is seen to be unfitting if, as the final consequence, those who rejected God reigning over them should themselves become the servants of men? Therefore, when the law of the kingdom is written, a punishment is handed down to perpetual memory by which the presumptuous may be chastised; and because it had been issued through the justice of the Lord, it is said to have been deposited before the Lord. But perhaps that right was something other than this law that is written. If that is true, then Samuel speaks this law before the king to the people, so that the king may know what to require from the people, and

the people may know what they ought to render to their kings. This law is written in a book so that it may be preserved for the memory of those to come. It is placed before the Lord so that it may be held in reverence. We, however, have said that the kings of the Churches are the holy preachers, and we have shown that all the things contained in the law of kingship plainly apply to them. Samuel therefore speaks this law to the people when a chosen teacher instructs the faithful of holy Church with what humility they ought to submit to their superiors. It is also written in a book when he firmly implants these things in their minds.

For he who speaks in such a way that his hearers forget what they have heard tells the law to the people but does not write it in a book. Therefore, for a teacher to write in a book the words he speaks is to commend them attentively to the minds of his hearers. The Lord was, as it were, wishing to write what He had said when He declared: ”Remember the word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his lord” (John 15:20). Hence Paul, inscribing the spoken law of the kingdom in a book, says: ”Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7). But if anyone here wishes to understand that another law is prefigured, let him look to the one that blessed Paul sets forth, saying: ”Let him who preaches the gospel live by the gospel, and let him who serves the altar live by the altar” (1 Cor. 9:14). For the Lord was speaking this law of the kingdom to the people when He said: ”He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward” (Matt. 10:41). And so that He might inscribe this more firmly in the book, strengthening His word from the lesser case, He said:

”Whoever gives one of these least of mine only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward” (Mark 9:40). There follows: (Verses 25, 26, 27. Samuel dismissed all the people, each one to his own house. But Saul went to his house in Gibeah, and there went with him a portion of the army whose hearts God had touched. But the sons of Belial said: ”Can this man possibly save us? And they despised him.

39. If a plain historical narrative is sought, what could ever have been stated more clearly? But if we attend to the force of each individual word, great things are enclosed within this simplicity of words. For the people are said to have been dismissed to their home, but the king is reported not to have been dismissed to his home, but to have gone away. Separately also it speaks of the homes of the people and of the home of the king: because the people are reported as dismissed to their home, and the king as having gone away to his own. Yet the people were dismissed before the king went away. Concerning the departing people it is also carefully indicated that they did not go all at once, but each one is reported to have gone away to his own home. But concerning those who followed the king it does not say: ”A part of the army went away, each one after the king,” but: ”A part of the army went with him. Finally, those who follow the king are reported to have had their hearts touched by God; those who despise the king are called sons of Belial. This manner of speaking is certainly

not simple, but is very subtle for one who knows how to consider not what merely sounds on the surface, but what is wisely intimated within. What does it mean, then, that the king is said to go away to his home, but the people to be dismissed?

We have shown that the king designates the pastor of the Church, and the people designate his subjects. Now to go is the act of one who is free; to be dismissed belongs to one who can be held back. The king is therefore said to go away so that in the person of the preacher, freedom of spirit may be proclaimed. Teachers can indeed go when they wish and return, because they are strong in good work and wise in their inner disposition. They come, indeed, when they go out to their subjects either by the example of good work or by the word of preaching. They go away when they return to the secret place of the mind and inwardly arrange what they are about to do outwardly. Inasmuch as they remain daily in this contemplation, they are, as it were, hidden within their home. The king is therefore said to go away to his home because the preacher, proven by the work of eternal life and secure in the teaching of wisdom, is free to go out to his labors and to enter into the counsels of the mind.

40. But the people is sent to its own house, because faithful subjects are not free to arrange what they wish, but only what is commanded. They are sent away as if held under constraint, while they are directed to do what is ordered and to avoid presuming what is not ordered. And because they are sent to diverse works, each one of them is sent to his own house. For in order that we may well accomplish those things which they command us, before we appear in the work, we are hidden within in internal consideration. Therefore our kings send each of us to our own house, because they command us to go to those things which they enjoin upon us through the secret disposition of the mind. They indeed command well, but if we neglect to foresee the manner of our action, we scatter with an inconsiderate mind what has been well commanded. Therefore each one returns to his own house, when every faithful subject anticipates by arranging through the counsel of the mind the work of obedience that he sets before himself. But because after the king was chosen the people was sent to its own house before the king is said to have departed, something else can be signified in this. For those who receive the king go to their own house when each subject prepares himself by considering, so that he may render faithful obedience to him whom he has asked to be set over him.

In this place, therefore, the point is not to consider things already commanded, but to subject oneself with the lowest disposition to things about to be commanded. And for the king to go to his own house is to consider how he may command with discretion those who are prepared. Therefore the house of the king is one thing, and that of the subject people another; because the former consider with a lofty mind the journeys of subjects that must be arranged, while the latter prepare to carry out the commands of their superiors through the strength of their inmost purpose. Whence also the house of the king is reported to be situated in Gibeah. For Gibeah means ”lofty. Therefore the house of the king is shown to be in Gibeah, because the chosen teacher strives not to dwell by thinking on low and earthly things, but to meditate on high and heavenly things. Whence also it is well said that a part of the army goes with

him to Gibeah, because those who are strong against the devil follow their chosen pastor to the heights of virtues. Therefore a part of the army is said to go with the king, because in the holy Church very many are faithful who know how to humbly obey their superiors but do not know how to think lofty thoughts. They know indeed how to carry out what is commanded, but they do not know how to foresee what should be commanded to others.

For Paul was, as it were, commemorating the soldiers of this part when he wrote to the Colossians, saying: "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas, and John who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these alone are my helpers in the kingdom of God" (Col. 4:10). Likewise, addressing the Romans, he says: "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my helpers" (Rom. 16:5). And a little later: "Timothy my helper greets you, and Lucas, and Jason" (ibid. 21). He called his disciples helpers, because they were lesser in rank but sharers of the labor; they were subject to the Apostle by the humility of obedience, but while they preached with him the glory of the eternal kingdom, equally defended the truth with him, resisted the unbelievers, and bravely endured the persecutions inflicted upon them, they were, as it were, soldiers of the king in the war of God. A part of the army is said to go with the king to Gibeah, because perfect disciples are co-helpers of their teachers in the lofty governance of the holy Church; they bring what aid they can through the height of virtue, but they serve through humility those whom they help.

41. And because only those can do this who have been prevented by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when part of the army is said to go with the king, it is added: 'Whose hearts God had touched.' For since we are accustomed to touch with a finger, God touches the hearts of the Saints when He bestows upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit. And they feel His touch: because, having received the gift of inward virtue, they are stirred from the weakness of their carnality. They immediately become soldiers of the heavenly army, because through the power of the Holy Spirit they abandon what is weak and are prepared for undertaking mighty deeds in the warfare of Christ. But because within the holy Church certain persons do not fear to despise their prelates, let them hear that those who despise the king are called sons of Belial. Through the vice of pride, indeed, they are begotten in imitation of him of whom it is written: 'He beholds every high thing, and he himself is king over all the children of pride' (Job 41:25). They aptly reveal the ways of the proud, because they say: 'Can this man save us?' For holy men, because they despise present things and seek eternal things, bring forth even in their outward conduct the contempt for the world which they hold in their mind; inwardly they are venerable, outwardly they appear contemptible.

The proud, therefore, because they look only at what can be despised outwardly in the Saints, and do not deserve to perceive what is truly worthy of great veneration, say: 'Can this man save us?' As if they were asking scornfully: Are such great things to be hoped for from one so small? Are we to believe that one so lowly can save us who are so great, one so weak can save us who are so strong? For what else is the meaning of what they say — 'this man' and 'us' — except that the proud and arrogant, looking upon others, always believe them to be small and weak, but themselves to be great, strong, and wise? Rightly, therefore, they

are called sons of Belial, because while they exalt themselves through pride, they conform themselves to him who is said to have fallen from heaven in the same manner. Of these same despisers of the king it is also said: ('Ibid.') 'And they brought him no gifts.'

42. If we examine these things according to the letter, they surely suggest that both lords of the lands and spiritual prelates of holy Church are to be honored with outward services. Hence the blessed Apostle Paul also addresses the proud Romans, saying: "Render to all what is owed; to whom tribute, tribute; to whom tax, tax" (Rom. 13:7). Hence the prince of the Apostles, exhorting, says: "Be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as preeminent, or to governors as sent by him" (1 Pet. 2:13). We offer spiritual gifts to our rulers when we present to them the due reverence of honor and keep what they command with great devotion. For reverence of honor and humility of subjection are great gifts; because when we are both inwardly subject to our rulers through humility and outwardly display the reverence of honor through external services, we offer them one gift from the body, another from the heart. Therefore, to suggest the arrogance of the proud, the prophet does not say: "They did not bring him a gift," but "they did not bring him gifts"; because when they despise the chosen preachers, they disdain to offer them both honor from the body and humility from the heart. But when the chosen preachers recognize the fault of their subjects, sometimes they eagerly hasten to correct it at once by rebuking, and sometimes they pretend not to know of it, so that they may seek a fitting time to remove it. Hence concerning that same despised king it is immediately added: (Ibid.) "But he pretended not to hear."

43. He who knows indeed hears the wickedness of his subjects; but he hears and does not respond, nay rather he pretends not to hear: because very often, when the situation demands it, the known pride of subjects is left uncorrected, so that at a more opportune time it may be struck as though just discovered. We rightly recognize this discretion of ecclesiastical censure in this very king of Israel, if we consider the different times and deeds of his reign. For while still inexperienced and newly appointed, he is said to have pretended not to hear the words of those who despised him, but once his kingdom over Israel was established, he is reported to have fought to the right and to the left, and to have prevailed wherever he turned. Therefore a fault which cannot be struck with fitting severity must be overlooked, not exposed, because subjects sin more boldly if the weakness of their superiors is recognized. Let these things discussed in the fourth book of this work suffice, so that through a fresh beginning of discourse we may renew our zeal for expounding what remains.

Book 5

Commentaries on the Book of 1 Kings BOOK FIVE. CHAPTER I. 1. When I wished to assert the profundity of this sacred history in the preface of this work, I maintained that it could be seen especially in the fact that it was written by prophets. They indeed were accustomed to speak mystical things not only in words but also in deeds — to set forth plain things, yet to signify deep things. For since the Holy Spirit spoke through them, what they themselves said, as mere men, was plain, but it was profound and mystical, because the supreme and uncircumscribed Spirit was supplying the speech to men. Since, therefore, we are expounding the prophet Samuel as he speaks, we need all the greater diligence, inasmuch as he himself, sublimely taken up in the grace of the Holy Spirit, spoke outward things but saw inward things. He generally set forth carnal matters, but signified the innermost and spiritual realities. But since it is impossible by human effort to arrive at divine things, we must not trust in our own powers, but in the condescension of the Holy Spirit who, sent by the Redeemer, "has filled the whole world, and that which contains all things already has knowledge of every voice" (Wisdom 1:7). Let us hear, then, what the same prophet now relates concerning the undertakings of the Israelites. (1 Kings chapter 11, verses 1–2.) "And it came to pass," he says, "about a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and began to fight against Jabesh-gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash: 'Accept us as allies, and we will serve you.' And Nahash the Ammonite answered them: 'On this condition I will make a covenant with you: that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you, and make you a reproach in all Israel.'"

2. If one seeks the historical sense, nothing can be stated more plainly, nothing understood more easily. But if we wish to follow the spiritual sense, let us first hear Paul speaking, who, looking upon the old things, says: "All these things happened to them in figure, but they were written for our sake, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). He also indicates that there are spiritual wars, saying: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, when Nahash is said to go up and fight against Jabesh-Gilead, the inner battles against vices are signified. By these words the course of sacred history is shown, so that new wars would be waged against the new king; and by bringing these to a successful conclusion, he would demonstrate the glory of his valor. Who then is this Nahash the Ammonite? What is Jabesh-Gilead? Now, Nahash is

interpreted as ”serpent,” and Jabesh as ”dried out. Concerning the serpent it is said in Genesis: ”Because he was more cunning than all living creatures” (Gen. 3:1). If we seek the likeness of this serpent among the vices, what do we find more similar than the violent impulse of gastrimargia, that is, the movement of gluttony?

Indeed, the movement of lust, the crime of theft, the appetite for base gain, the assault of anger, the bitterness of worldly sorrow, the sluggishness of sloth, the desire for vainglory, and the swelling of pride are openly detestable; but the vice of gluttony is all the more deceitful the more hidden it is, because it suggests food to the body as though it were necessary, yet while it abundantly nourishes the flesh, it plunges the sword of lust into the mind. It persuades that what is not a sin, but from the very fact that eating is accepted as though it were no sin, the soul is thereby subjected to the sin of lust. Hence in paradise the serpent is shown to have come to the woman to deceive her through the vice of gluttony—one who would suggest one thing but obtain another, so that while he displayed what should be eaten, he would administer an unforeseen death. This serpent therefore designates the greed of gluttony, because it both creeps under the guise of just necessity and spreads the poison of unholy pleasure. Rightly too is he called an Ammonite, which people is interpreted as ”of sorrow,” because what he urges seems pleasant, but it will be deeply mournful in eternal damnation. He is called a ”people” because all gluttons, on account of their concern for the belly, are weighed down by a throng of innumerable cares.

He goes up against Jabesh-Gilead because he strives to cast down to the craving for food the bodies of the just, which are established in the lofty virtue of abstinence. Rightly indeed is flesh called ”dried out” that is not weighed down by the moisture of fatness. Nahash goes up against those whom he sees are dried out, because the spirit of gluttony wages more grievous wars against those whom he recognizes as worn thin by fasting. Rightly too is Nahash said to have begun to fight, because holy men do not hold the suggestion of gluttony in a pact of friendship but in the opposition of battle. For those who practice abstinence fight, as it were, against the serpent when they suppress the appetite of gluttony with great virtue, so that they may not be infected by the poison of lust. Indeed, the warfare of gluttony is to provoke the hungry bodies of the abstinent to a disordered filling of the belly.

3. But the appetite of gluttony can tempt perfect men, though it cannot overcome them. Rightly, therefore, he is said to have begun to fight against the dried-up woman, not to have conquered her, because chosen men feel the assault of carnal desires, but they know how to resist those same desires by the strength of the mind; they know how to provide for necessities through discretion. They know indeed how to suppress the fiercely rising assault of gluttony; they know how to furnish just nourishment for the body’s need. For hence the outstanding Doctor says: ”I know how to eat and to hunger” (Phil. 4:12). He indeed knows how to eat and to hunger who both moderately refreshes his body and does not consent to the vice of gluttony urging immoderate intake of food. Wherefore also, responding to Nahash, they say: ”Have us as allies, and we will serve you. For they seek a treaty from gluttony who would wish to refresh the flesh according to their desire, if they could feel no incitements to

lust in the flesh. As if they were saying: We will give you what is just for you, so that you do not inflict upon us what is not just. It is indeed just that the body be refreshed, but it is very unjust that the refreshed flesh be aroused through the burning of lust to the disgrace of the spirit.

We therefore seek a treaty when we wish to so favor the flesh for the intake of food that we feel no evils of lust from the flesh. But this we can indeed wish for, yet we cannot obtain it, because surely we offer just refreshment as a kind of tribute to the flesh, but no goods of peace are promised to us by the flesh. For when we rightly direct the hearing of the mind to the responses of the vices, we recognize this indeed in the voice of gluttony: that if we fatten the flesh, we are struck with blindness of heart through growing concupiscence. Wherefore the same Nahash also says: ”On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes. Our right eye is the gaze upon eternal brightness, but the left eye is carnal concupiscence. The right eye is therefore gouged out when the mind is struck with such blindness that it is no longer opened to see heavenly things. Indeed the eye is gouged out when the light is so torn away from the reprobate mind that no root remains from which a revived light might break forth. Nahash therefore gouges out the right eyes of his treaty-partners, when gluttony so prevails over the conquered abstinent that they desire only carnal things and no longer attend to what they used to love. And because whoever is cast down in this life is condemned in the future before the angels and the elect, there is added:

”And I will make you a reproach in all Israel. For then the reprobate are made a reproach in all Israel, when at the final judgment they blush before all the elect for the iniquities they have committed. Or they are made a reproach in this life, because while they themselves with blinded heart boldly perpetrate evils, holy men blush for their faults. But let those who disdain to appear shameful, with their right eyes torn out, attend to what follows: (Verse 3) ”And the inhabitants of Jabesh said to him: Grant us seven days, that we may send messengers to the borders of Israel; and if there is no one to defend us, we will come out to you.”

4. Who are the inhabitants of Jabesh, that is, of ”the dried,” except those who maintain the discipline of an emaciated flesh through long practice of virtue? For many begin to resist gluttony, but when they start to grow weary from the labor of abstinence, they incline themselves back to the habit of their accustomed greediness. They desire, as it were, to enter the city of Jabesh and become its citizens, but since they cannot endure the torment of dried and hungering flesh, they can by no means become its inhabitants. Therefore those inhabit Jabesh who hold the attenuation of the body through strength of mind as a right of possession, and are surrounded, as it were, by the walls of dryness, since through the very fact that they emaciate the body they are protected from the fiery darts of lust. When they are wearied by the most powerful rising stings of gluttony, they seek a truce of seven days, during which, if help does not come, they will go out to Nahash. But we explain this war of the Ammonites better if we observe in it the weakness of the flesh caught out and the

sagacity of the trained mind. We see this more clearly too if we attend more closely to the opposite case in the foolish and weak. For certain people within holy Church are devout in desire, but slack through their habitual weakness of vices.

They can indeed propose good things, but because they are unable to carry out what they propose, they are both overcome by present concupiscence and trust that they can recover in the near future the good which they abandon in the present. Often indeed they resolve to fast, but when they are conquered by habitual gluttony, they judge that they must eat on that day and fast on days to come. And since the ferocity of gluttony is always present to them, and present too is the desire for future goodness, it is brought about by the serpent's deceit that the good which is proposed is never found. For "tomorrow," which is always promised, is never reached. But since this is done by those whose mind is weak and flesh strong, let us see how those whose mind is strong but flesh weak make a mockery of the serpent. For concerning this same serpent the Psalmist says to the Lord: "This dragon, which you formed, to make sport of him" (Ps. 103:27). For he is never more fittingly conquered than when his cunning is overcome by a holy deception. Hence also the Redeemer, reproaching blessed Job with the cleverness of His own wisdom, says: "In his eyes, as with a hook, you shall catch him" (Job 40:10). For He caught the serpent, as it were with a hook before his eyes, who displayed to him flesh but concealed divinity; and while the serpent seized what he desired, he was caught and destroyed by what he did not see.

5. Holy men, therefore, in order to mock the enemy, maintain the rigor of their way of life in present virtue; as a deception of weakness, they promise the flesh a certain comfort in the future. For the things they do are often enormous, but on account of the weakness of the flesh, they do not presume to always do hard things and to promise austere things. Indeed they endure these same hardships all the more easily, inasmuch as they do not see the burdens of them as binding upon themselves in a perpetual commitment. But while they live most excellently, and strive daily to advance and not to fall back, that permitted indulgence of the flesh, which they cannot despair of, they always promise to the flesh in a future reckoning; yet they by no means cease to inflict upon it the pain of the affliction already begun. Therefore, through the fact that hope is left to the flesh in its desire, the spirit, as it were, promises the presence of its coming for the future good of that same flesh. But because it does not abandon by failing the accustomed rigor of self-restraint, the flesh has the promise of pleasure in the future, and the chosen mind has the strength of virtue in the present. Here it should be noted that they promise to go out to Nahash under a condition, but they are fortified by the walls of the city without condition:

because those who practice abstinence, even in that in which they are weak according to the flesh, trust to be strengthened through divine mercy. And because they are eager to overthrow the vice of gluttony by deceiving it, they say: "Grant us seven days. For it is as if time is granted by gluttony, when it is restrained with the expectation that its desires will at some point be served. During which space of days, Nahash indeed awaits the coming out to him of the besieged citizens, but the citizens of Jabesh await reinforcements: because

indeed the appetite of gluttony desires to be refreshed from the weak flesh, but the chosen mind desires to be strengthened in the virtue of abstinence. In seven days reinforcements are sought, when against the darkness of temptations we are raised up by every light of the heart, when against wicked counsels we find whatever we can by our own reason, and we are fortified by the rays of light which we do not perceive in ourselves from the instruction of others. For while we look to the ways of life of the perfect for the strengthening of our virtue, we find, as it were, through seven days the aids of defense. We indeed seek a truce, because we fight with Nahash, that is, the serpent, whose poisons are so hidden that we must seek all the more subtle counsels. Hence they also promise that they will send messengers into all the borders of Israel:

because chosen men, for the benefit of their own edification, are aided by the examples of all who see God. But in what is said, "If there is no one who defends, we will come out to you," in the voice of the elect, not doubt of reinforcements but certainty is shown. As if mocking the adversary who persuades with cunning words, they bring forth words by which they grant him hope and by no means take away their own confidence. For those who say, "If there is no one who defends, we will come out to you," grant a certain hope of their coming out. But because those who say this are certain of help, they deceive their enemies by promising. But where these same reinforcements are now to be found, he explains saying: (Verses 4 and 5. Therefore the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, and they spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voice and wept. And behold, Saul was coming in the morning, following the oxen from the field, and he saw the people weeping, and said: "What is the matter with the people, that they weep?"

6. Gibeah, as we have already said above, is interpreted as "lofty. And because the height of merits is not equal among all the elect, messengers are said to have come to Saul at Gibeah, so that we may be taught by spiritual meaning that when we are driven by powerful temptations, we should have recourse to the counsels of our preachers. But we are also instructed by the affliction of the weeping people, so that we may be joined to the needs of our brothers by inward compassion of mind. Now Saul saw the people weeping and asked for what reason they wept, because the chosen teacher makes the need of his subjects his own through compassion, and desires to relieve it. Indeed, he came from the field, because he goes forth from the secret place of his fertile heart. He came from the field in the morning, because in the rising splendor of the true light he inquires into the concerns of his subjects. And he follows the oxen, because strong affections of charity go before him. For he has, as it were, two oxen before him, because he is both joined to his neighbors through love and inflamed with divine charity, and therefore loves his neighbor in right order, because the love of God powerfully kindles him. Wherefore the Lord also says through Moses: "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together" (Deut. 22:10). For the donkey is carnal love, because he who carries those he loves is like a strong animal;

and because he loves the same ones inordinately, not for God's sake, it is a wanton one. Therefore one cannot plow with an ox and a donkey, because the soul is not cultivated with

the fruit of eternal reward if the purity of love by which it is joined to God is defiled by disordered love of neighbor. Saul, then, coming from the field, follows the oxen, because the chosen teacher retains both affections of charity whole in his fruitful heart, from which he can prepare for himself abundant fruits of eternal recompense. And he comes in the morning, because when he goes out to his subjects, he opens the day of his virtue. But now, having learned the needs of the people, let us hear what he did. For the text continues: (Ibid., and verses 6, 7. And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was kindled exceedingly. And taking both oxen, he cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the borders of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying: Whoever does not come out and follow Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen.

7. What do we say in these words, except that the weaknesses of the saints, and those things which seem carnal, are not weak and carnal, but spiritual and mighty? For we are accustomed to rebuke excessive anger in religious men, but behold, before Saul could become exceedingly angry, the Spirit of the Lord first rushed upon him. How fearful, then, the anger of the saints must be, we perceive, if we consider the Spirit of the Lord rushing upon them—if, while we observe them outwardly angry, we equally attend to the Spirit stirring them within. Therefore, as often as we are corrected by the zeal of our superiors, we may rightly tremble greatly under their indignation, if we believe their impulse to be a movement of the Holy Spirit. And because Saul cut both oxen into pieces, sent them throughout all the borders of Israel, and put forth threats that thus it would be done to the oxen of all who refused to follow him and Samuel—what else does this suggest, except that those who are more sluggish in providing aid to their neighbors must not only be invited, but compelled? Whence it is also immediately added: (Verse 7.) 'Therefore the fear of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.'

8. For since we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, we offer them assistance in right order when we are not compelled by fear to render these services, but are prompted by love. But when we lose the effect of this owed love, it pertains to the zeal of our preachers that we rise up to help our brothers out of fear. Therefore it is well said: "The fear of the Lord fell upon the people, and they went out as one man," because we are often lukewarm in love of our neighbors; but we are raised up to a state of devotion by the threats of our prelates, and we undertake a good work out of fear, yet from the beginning of fear we are led to the bond of great charity. Hence it is well said that fear fell upon the people, yet all are reported to have gone out as one man. For many cannot go out as one man unless they ascend to an equal unity of love. For hence it is also said of the perfect disciples of the Redeemer: "They were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). There follows: (Verse 8.) And he numbered them in Bezek; and the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

9. First the children of Israel are said to have gone out, then to have been mustered by Saul, because the chosen preacher, when he attempts to move the soldiery of his subjects

against hidden enemies, first observes their brave resolve, then places them in the number of warriors. For we are, as it were, inside and cannot be mustered, as long as the virtue of our mind is hidden from our pastors. And when we go out we are mustered, because when we reveal to them the fortitude of our minds, they trust that they now have companions in the spiritual fight. But when they desire to raise weak minds to the resolve of good work, they strive not only to instruct us with the teachings of the greater ones, but also to kindle us with the examples of the lesser elect. Rightly therefore it is reported that three hundred thousand of the children of Israel, but thirty thousand of the men of Judah, were mustered. For the number thirty pertains to the rectitude of faith and the zeal of good works, because the precepts of the law are nothing if they do not tend toward the contemplation of the supreme Trinity. Fittingly therefore they are called men of Judah who are contained in thirty thousand, because they have the confession of right faith and the strength of good works.

Our fathers, however, were of the same faith and works, but in the contemplation of divinity, inasmuch as they had advanced far higher than we, they also displayed stronger works of faith. Wherefore also three hundred thousand of the children of Israel are mustered. Thirty indeed comes from three and ten, and ten goes into thirty, but in the number thirty both the ten and the three are simple; but in order to count up to three hundred, we multiply ten by thirty and thirty by ten, because even if the contemplation is great and the works of the subject people are great, nevertheless those which preceded in our fathers were incomparable. For it is as if our number ten is gathered tenfold in their perfection, since our achievements are greatly subordinated to their perfection. Therefore thirty thousand men of Judah and three hundred thousand children of Israel, mustered with us, lead preachers to fight against Nahash — if, when they wish to help tempted and abstinent subjects, they set before them both the outstanding deeds of the strongest fathers and those of the lesser ones. Israel indeed is interpreted as ”Seeing God,” or ”in whom God is”; which name certainly does not suit one who is still weak or unskilled. As many perfect men as we bring forth in the affliction of the flesh and the contemplation of the mind, with that many armed men we strike down the serpent Nahash. But let us now hear with what words the army of the king encourages the besieged. (Verse 9.

And they said to those who had come: ”Thus shall you say to the men who are in Jabesh-Gilead: Tomorrow there shall be deliverance for you, when the sun grows hot.”

10. Such perhaps is what is said to us by the counsel of that wise man: ”If the spirit of one having power rises up against you, do not quickly abandon your place” (Eccles. 10:4). The place of each elect person is the position of a good way of life. But when it is permitted, the attacking spirit can have power, because he could in no way assault the hearts of the elect unless the divine dispensation permitted it. He therefore commands that we not abandon our place, because if we are strong amid the brief darkness of temptations, the divine light will quickly be present, at whose coming the power of darkness vanishes. Well therefore is it said: ”For tomorrow, when the sun has grown hot, there will be salvation for you. The

exhortation of holy preachers is day, because when it touches the tempted hearts of the lesser ones, it raises them to the hope of victory. But night follows this, because even if divine aids are withdrawn, still the rushing darkness of carnal desires does not depart. What then is the morrow but the coming of divine visitation? For it is called the morrow because the splendor of divine help is very near to the tempted elect. Whence also through the prophet the Lord says: "I am a God nearby, and not a God from afar" (Jer. 23:23). Hence the Psalmist says: "The Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth" (Ps. 144:18). Hence likewise the Lord himself promises, saying:

"Before you call upon me, I will say: Behold, I am here" (Isa. 58:9). The first day, then, is the light of preaching; the morrow is that of divine grace. But it should be noted that he said: "When the sun has grown hot," so that the brightness of day might illuminate the obscurity of understanding, and the heat of the sun might kindle the love of the heart; so that the mind might see through light the good that it desires, and might long through the heat of the mind for what it sees. For this twofold remedy of the mind is presented against the double warfare of the devil. For the malign spirit, in order to overcome the minds of the elect by tempting them, first casts before them the darkness of evil thoughts, then kindles the flames of concupiscences, because unless he has first blinded the mind, he does not drive it to the depravity of concupiscence. But when the elect mind is permitted to be tempted, its state is disturbed in both respects, because it can feel the troubles of concupiscences to the extent that, with God permitting, it cannot cast away from itself the darkness of evil thoughts. But because it is permitted by God to be tempted, at the coming of his grace it is relieved from both evils: since against the darkness it receives light, and through the heat of the arriving Spirit, it casts off the coldness of mind.

For the one who was unable to raise the mind from carnal things begins to see heavenly things, and what he looks upon lovingly he desires ardently. Well therefore is it said: "Tomorrow there will be salvation for you, when the sun has grown hot," because if we manfully bear the powerful assaults of the ancient enemy, we are raised up by the swiftness of divine grace to the light of the heart and the power of great charity. And because the elect hearts of subjects gratefully receive this counsel of the holy preachers, there follows: (Verse 9. "Therefore the messengers came and announced to the men of Jabesh. And they rejoiced. But let us also hear what they reply to the Ammonites, even though help has been promised to them. For there follows: (Verse 10. "And they said: Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you shall do to us whatever pleases you."

11. This indeed is because those who are already secure from nearby help grant a certain hope to the enemies whom they deceive by promising. In voice indeed they simulate weakness, but inwardly they preserve the strength of the promised help. Therefore they promise one thing, but believe another. For those who said: "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you shall do to us all that pleases you," were giving the enemies to believe that they would so deliver themselves into their hands that they could do to them whatever they wished. But those who knew that the king was coming the following day to their aid were thinking

of going out with him not to the enemies' hands, but to their slaughter. According to the spiritual sense, however, to the serpent Nahash, that is, to the concupiscence of gluttony, we promise our going out on his day, but on our day we defeat his battle lines. His day indeed is the delight of bodily satiety. For he who proposes to fill his belly according to his desire, as it were, dedicates the first day to concupiscence, and yet is still inside, because he has set before himself a certain light of delight which he has not yet seen by carrying it out. Tomorrow, therefore, he went out, who both by carrying out and by delighting exhibited that pleasant thing which he promised to the flesh. But holy men, as I said above, mock gluttony;

because since they cannot despair of its appetite in perpetuity, what they promise and do not take, they as it were defer to a future light of delight. They are indeed compelled outwardly by the excessive frailty of the flesh, and inwardly clothed with the strength of great charity. By the former indeed, since they cannot renounce their appetites, they as it were promise with an outward voice what they do not hold in their intention. By the latter, because they are secure concerning divine aid, they propose to do something other than what they speak with the voice of weakness. On his day, therefore, they go out to Nahash, because they advance to combat the concupiscence of gluttony through the light of heavenly help, and visited by heavenly grace, they are now strong against every assault of the flesh, who, abandoned for a little while, had feared its attacks. And because this splendor of divine grace is sometimes poured into the lesser members of holy Church through the mouths of preachers, there follows: (Verse 11. And it came to pass, when the next day had come, Saul arranged the people in three companies, and entered the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and struck Ammon until the sun grew hot.

12. The people are indeed divided into parts, so that we may strike the serpent Nahash not with a single battle line. And indeed they are divided into three parts, so that the fruit and dignity of sacred abstinence may be shown: because through fasting we are called back to that contemplation of the Holy Trinity which we lose by eating. For hence it is that the fasts of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are commended. For Moses, that he might deserve to receive the Law, fasted twice for a period of forty days (Exod. 34:28). Elijah, that he might escape the hands of Jezebel, in forty days by the strength of a single meal arrived at Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kings 19:8). Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, fasting for forty days in the wilderness, took no food whatsoever (Matt. 4:2). Therefore Saul divides the people into three parts: because as an example for those who practice abstinence, the fasts of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are set forth. And when the next day comes, the teacher enters the midst of the camp: because divine grace, which illuminates the hearts of preachers for teaching, also irradiates the minds of the hearers and powerfully raises them to the hope of victory. On the next day, therefore, the teacher, about to triumph, enters the camp of the enemies and lays it open, and in it powerfully strikes the battle lines of concupiscence.

And because the minds of the subjects themselves advance by hearing, the king is said to enter the camp of the Ammonites in the morning watch and to continue in their slaughter until the day grew hot. The morning watch is indeed in God's inspiration; the heat of the sun is in its fullness. For as it were the morning light rises for us when, weighed down by the darkness of temptations, we begin to see from the mouth of preachers the light of virtue, that we may follow it. And the sun grows hot for us when through their words our mind is kindled and, as if refined by the heat of a burning sun, is inflamed with holy desires. Then indeed Ammon is violently struck down: because the people of vices is driven from our senses. Therefore the ruler who enters the camp of the Ammonites in the morning watch should not sheathe his sword from slaughter until the day grows hot, because he ought to persist in the instruction of his subjects for so long as it takes until he sees them inflamed with the great heats of the inner light. In this place it should be noted that Nahash, that is, "serpent," is said to be king of the Ammonites; but the people Ammon itself is interpreted as "sorrow. And because we have said that the vice of gluttony is signified by this serpent, when Nahash is struck, the people of sorrow is conquered:

because from the one vice of gluttony, innumerable hosts of vices are brought forth to wage war against the soul. And when that same vice of gluttony is cut away, we subjugate many other vices to ourselves. The vice of gluttony is indeed one, but the stings of lust are innumerable, which follow that one going before them as if he were their king. They indeed suggest pleasant things, but lead to the laments of eternal weeping. When Nahash therefore is fought against, the people of sorrow is slain: because when we tame gluttony, the incitements of lust are destroyed. Whence it is rightly asserted that not Nahash himself, but Ammon subject to him—that is, the people—is slain: because the appetite for eating is to be restrained, not extinguished. But it is never well restrained if the people of sorrow that follows—that is, the shameful motions of lust—are not put to death. Against Nahash, therefore, our principal struggle lies: because when he is overcome, Ammon is slain; because lust is then well struck down if its principal origin is subjugated. But how far the progress of chastity advances is secretly shown through what follows. For it says: (Verse 11) "But the rest were scattered, so that not even two were left together."

13. The proof of true abstinence is not in the weakening of the body, but in the perfection of chastity. For the serpent is well worn down if gluttony is so restrained that all the violence of lustful bodily movements is diminished. For the illicit movement of the flesh, as long as the flesh itself exists, cannot be removed, but the violence of its movement can be removed. Indeed, it cannot be taken from the flesh that the law of the flesh should not move its members; yet the violence of the movement can be taken from the flesh, so that the movement remains, but all the obscenity of pleasure is taken away from that same movement, and that movement becomes simple, in which no remaining baseness of lust exists. Well, therefore, are others said to have been turned to flight, because when divine grace perfectly rewards those who are abstinent, it removes from their bodily movements all the stings of obscenities; but it leaves them their natural movements, so that they may always be tempted but never be conquered; since it leaves behind what greatly displeases them, yet so weakens

what it leaves behind that it does not permit it to prevail over the victors. He had indeed struck the Ammonites who said: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest while preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Yet even after others were slain, he could not slay the fugitives, because he laments, saying:

"I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7:23). Likewise, because he saw that those who remained were weakened, he says: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). What then does it mean that he laments that a law dwells in his members warring against the law of his mind, if after some were destroyed, others were turned to flight—unless it is because perfect men grieve vehemently over this very thing, that they endure simple movements of the flesh against their will? For they would wish so to remain in the flesh that they would endure nothing from the flesh against the will of the mind. And because this is impossible, he said beforehand: "To will is present with me, but to accomplish I find not. For the good that I will, I do not; but the evil that I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:18–19). As if he were saying: I would wish to be in the flesh, not with that perfection by which one perfected in the flesh is perfect, but as the angels of God in heaven. But this power I find not, because as long as the death of sin has not been swallowed up in the future resurrection, that which is sin dwelling in me moves me against myself. But what cannot be extinguished can be put to flight. For the movement of the flesh is, as it were, turned to flight when it is well chastised by fasting.

For it rises against the spirit all the more rarely and with greater difficulty, the more the presiding spirit subjects it to itself through mortification, since it so tames it that it is slow to rebel and quick to be stilled.

14. But it must be subtly observed what is said: "So that two were not left together. Two indeed remain, but they do not remain together. For there are two things: impure thought and the natural movement of the flesh. In the struggle of the saints, sometimes an impure thought comes first, and sometimes they feel the law of the flesh rising against the law of the mind; but those who are already victors do not fear enemies turned to flight if they return again to battle, because they cannot fight against them simultaneously. For when a wicked thought presents itself, they cast it away before the flesh is moved by its suggestion. And when the law of the flesh stirs the members, the law of the mind in no way nourishes the shameful movement by thinking shameful things; and while it casts away the one, it by no means feels the attack of the other. Rightly, therefore, it is said of the perfect victory of the elect that "the others were scattered, so that two of them were not left together": because through the mortification of the body they advance to such a height of perfection that whatever is brought against them from the flesh or from the mind is easily overcome, since these are not permitted to join together in battle. And indeed the elect attain this victory over all the senses of the body, those who can subject the besieging Nahash to themselves through the power of abstinence.

For the flesh, when nourished and fattened, is prone to the fall of the tongue, the eyes, the hearing, smell, and touch. Therefore, when the illicit movements of the bodily senses are

drawn from the vice of gluttony into warfare against the mind, it is as if the Ammonite people accompany King Nahash to the siege of the Israelites. But when Nahash is perfectly conquered, Ammon is both partly destroyed and partly put to flight in such a way that two of them are not found together; because when we wear down the body through abstinence, we weaken the countless illicit movements of our senses; and those we cannot entirely uproot, we put to flight as though enfeebled. Of these, two do not remain together against us in battle, because in the pleasure of any bodily sense, we do not join the sense of the mind to it. For often we see with our eyes, often we hear with our ears, often we perceive by touch, often by smell, things that can draw the carnal soul to illicit love; but by perfectly mortifying our flesh we are victors, because we do not see two of the conquered adversaries together. We may indeed behold desirable things, but we avoid joining the appetite of the soul to the movements of the eyes. Often too an illicit thought presents itself to the heart, but the victor over the serpent finds only its fleeting movement, which he observes, alone.

For regarding those things which the heart thinks about accidentally, he by no means raises any of the bodily senses toward them through illicit movement. Such indeed are those whom the prophet marvels at, saying: "Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows? (Isaiah 60:8). For they are like doves at their windows who receive desirable things but do not lose the simplicity of a pure heart by desiring them; because they see things they might crave, but they avoid illicitly craving what they behold. Because we advance toward this victory through the exhortation of our preachers, it is fittingly recorded that the Ammonite people were defeated and slain by Saul. Their wars, indeed, are not uniform but diverse. For sometimes they powerfully crush hidden adversaries, and sometimes they wisely endure false brethren. The former they subdue within by great virtue; the latter they tolerate without by wondrous patience. Within, through immense struggles, they are distinguished by the glory of great triumphs; but without, they are adorned with the incomparable honors of such great meekness. We who have learned the account of their inner victory, let us now hear how they also conquer outwardly. For it follows: "And the people said to Samuel: 'Who is it that said: Shall Saul reign over us? Give us the men, and we will kill them.' And Saul said: 'No one shall be killed on this day, because the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel.'"

15. For the Lord had said above to Samuel: They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them (1 Kings VIII, 7). But of Saul it was said a little before: Because they despised him, and did not bring him gifts (Ibid., X, 27). But he who was rejected, and he who was despised, after the enemies had been slain and victory obtained, heard the people crying out: Give us the men, and we will kill them. Indeed, each of them could have taken vengeance on their enemies, not by killing, but by consenting; but even because the prophet had been rejected, he speaks, and the king who had been despised supports the one who says: No one shall be killed on this day, because our holy preachers are crowned with a greater victory when they endure the adversities of their neighbors than when they overcome enemies abroad. Whence also true wisdom speaks in Solomon, saying: The patient man is better than the mighty (Prov. XVI, 32). But it should be noted what is said: On this

day. On the day of his victory, he seeks to kill who inflames those whom he draws to the love of God by the brightness of his virtues to harm others. Or he kills on the day of victory, because by that light of glory by which one is brought to veneration of the preacher, one is stirred up to hatred against those who detract from that same teacher.

For whoever hates his brother is a murderer (1 John III, 15). For since through the teaching of a good pastor the good are to be helped in such a way that the wicked are tolerated, the reason why no one should be killed is well added: Because, he says, today the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel. There follows: And Samuel said to the people: Come, let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord.

16. If therefore we apply all things in the manner in which they occur above in the ordaining of the king to the custom of the holy Church, her rulers are ordained with great subtlety. For first the king to be chosen was shown to the prophet, then he was sought as though unknown; afterward he was even found by lot, hidden at home, revealed by the Lord, raised up by the people, and received by all into royal dignity. What then is it that they still proceed to Gilgal, so that there the kingdom might be renewed? But with great discernment the king is sought and found, because the affairs of the Churches are most lofty, which if the weak and unskilled undertake, they are crushed by the very magnitude of the matters. Therefore with attention and most subtle investigation one is sought out who may be placed over so great an eminence. He who is truly to be greatly commended is not established by the judgment of those seeking, but when he is found vigorous in the very exercise of the highest ministry. Well therefore, with the king now triumphant and established, it is said: 'They went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord': because when the preacher's strength is recognized, he is honored in the minds of his hearers. Indeed we go to Gilgal, that is "the wheel," when through sacred eloquence we examine the work of our teacher, and there we make him king before the Lord:

because him whom we perceive to be worthy of approval, we judge to be worthy of so great an eminence. Therefore Saul is said first to have been chosen by the people, and at last established as king in Gilgal before the Lord: because although a pastor may be chosen in the holy Church with much gravity of counsel, whether he is by merit what he is by rank is not known unless it is made manifest by the strength of his works. Let it therefore be said not of another, but of that one [perhaps "another" is superfluous] who shone forth with a great victory: 'All the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord', so that the dignity of the supreme pontiff may not consist in the ambition of high office, but in the summit of virtue. And indeed they go to Gilgal, so that he may not dare to judge from the highest place, to whom the hidden precepts of Sacred Scripture are unknown. And the king is established before the Lord: because then the teacher is honored by the devotion of his subjects, when they themselves acknowledge his acceptable life to the almighty Lord. Moreover, concerning this knowledge of the life and teaching of their pastor:

because often one trusts not oneself but those who are better, it is well said that the people established a king in Gilgal before the Lord, but that the same people went to Gilgal at Samuel's urging. 'Let us go', he said, 'to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there.' For the kingdom is renewed: because while the chosen preacher is seen in great virtue, the hearts of his hearers are submitted to him with new and fresh devotion. Whence, as though by the king's displayed victory the kingdom is renewed, when the great manner of life of the teacher becomes known, the very hearts of his subjects receive the splendor of a new devotion, and are stirred by his example to the pursuit of great virtue. But now, we who have beheld triumphs in one battle of inward struggles, let us now behold in another the times of peace run through with wondrous fairness.

CHAPTER II. (1 Kings XII, 1-3.) And Samuel said to all Israel: Behold, I have listened to your voice according to all that you spoke to me, and I have appointed a king over you: and now the king walks before you. But I have grown old and turned gray. Moreover, my sons are with you. And so, having conducted myself before you from my youth even to this day, behold, I am present. Speak concerning me before the Lord and before His anointed, whether I have taken anyone's ox, or donkey. If I have falsely accused anyone, if I have oppressed anyone, if I have received a gift from anyone's hand, I will despise it today and will restore it to you.

1. When wicked pastors are in charge, their principal aim is the plundering of their subjects. For because they know not how to look upon the abundance of eternal goods, the more ardently they desire present things, the more greedily they receive what is offered, and what is not offered they seize by violence. They lay snares for the innocent, oppress the weak, accept bribes, and pervert justice. Concerning these pastors, the Lord reproaches Judea through the prophet, saying: "Your pastors are evening wolves, leaving nothing for the morning" (Zeph. 3:3). He likewise strikes the slanderers of the innocent and the oppressors of the weak, saying: "If anyone does not put something into their mouths, they declare holy war against him. Therefore night shall be to them instead of vision, and darkness instead of divination" (Mic. 3:5–6). For while they recognize the iniquity they commit, through the audacity of their most wicked work they fall into blindness of heart, so that through love of present things they no longer see the light of truth, by which they might recover from their wickedness. Likewise Isaiah rebukes the acceptance of bribes, saying: "They all love bribes, they pursue rewards" (Isa. 1:23). The holy man therefore, while he shows the simplicity of his innocence, appeared exalted by the height of his merits. This commendation of virtue is indeed shown in him alone, so that the same conformity of goodness may be shown to all chosen teachers.

2. We have innocence of life for ourselves, but we ascend the height of prelacy for others, not for ourselves. Through the good of innocence we press toward the eternal homeland; through the height of prelacy we keep watch in the guardianship of others. In that virtue we are secure, but this eminence we hold with great fear: because we who greatly tremble to render an account of our own works must render an account to God for that over which

we preside over others. If therefore chosen men, by God's will, ascend even the height of prelacy unwillingly, by God's will they also leave that same height with devotion. The holy man therefore says: 'Behold, I have heard your voice, and I have set a king over you; and now the king walks before you. But I have grown old and gray-haired. Moreover, my sons are with you.' As if he were saying in other words: Because I presided not for myself but for you, the dignity which I held I gladly gave to another. I have already grown old in that same dignity, and yet the long habit of preeminence which I held did not keep me bound in ambition for it. What then does it mean that he says: 'My sons are with you', except that in holy men there is a great power of spiritual love, by which, when sons are born to the height of office, they take away from them the right of succession?

But he who so peacefully leaves the summit of office shows what kind of man he was while he remained at that same height. For because he did not practice the violence of plunder, he says: 'Speak concerning me before the Lord and before His Christ, whether I have taken anyone's ox or donkey.' Likewise, because he sought no occasion of harming anyone, he added, saying: 'If I have falsely accused anyone.' Likewise, because he was not burdensome to the weak, he says: 'If I have oppressed anyone.' Likewise, because from his prelacy he sought not earthly things but heavenly, he says: 'If I have received a gift from anyone's hand, I will despise it today and restore it to you.' Because indeed he had been known by all for such great contempt of worldly things, there follows: (Verses 4–6.) 'And they said: You have not falsely accused us, nor oppressed us, nor taken anything from anyone's hand. And he said to them: The Lord is witness against you, and His Christ is witness on this day, that you will not find anything in my hand. And they said: He is witness.' But he himself further adds, saying: 'The Lord, who made Moses and Aaron, and who brought our fathers out of the land of Egypt, He Himself is witness.'

3. In this passage it should be noted that the holy man did not speak of the good things he had done, but rather set forth the evil things he had not done; so that by keeping silent he might preserve his good deeds for eternal rewards, and by speaking he might not lose the fragrance of his good reputation. Paul indeed speaks, saying: "We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place" (II Cor. 2:15). He also, rebuking certain people, says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom. 2:24). Likewise he admonishes his disciple, saying: "A bishop must also have a good testimony from those who are outside" (I Tim. 3:7). Therefore, when he so carefully affirmed that he had avoided evil, and kept silent about the great good deeds he had performed, the blessed man openly showed on what a summit of virtues he stood, since by condemning evil he preserved the fragrance of good reputation as an example for the elect, and by concealing his works of virtue, he safeguarded the rewards of eternal recompense. But it should be noted that when he called the Lord as witness of his innocence, he said that the Lord himself had made Moses and Aaron. What else does this mean, except that he both displayed the height of his virtue, yet did not wish to appear alone at so great a height? As if saying with hidden meaning:

"I am not to be admired for such great virtue of soul, because I am not alone in it. I possess contempt for worldly things as a gift of virtue, but I do not hold this with any intention of vain praise; in this regard I perceive others far better and more exalted than myself. And because he affirmed that the Lord himself had made Moses and Aaron, it is as if he were saying: "That I was able to guard so strongly against evil ought to be ascribed to the grace of him who made Moses and Aaron what they were. But the holy man shows why he said these things first, for he added, saying: (Verse 7. "Now therefore stand still, and I will contend with you in judgment before the Lord concerning all the mercies which he has done for you and for your fathers."

4. It is the order of the highest reason that he who does not take care to do good things should by no means reprove evils in others. The holy man therefore first carefully asserted that he had avoided evils himself, and then proceeded to the reproof of others; so as to suggest the character of a chosen preacher, who cannot effectively bear the fruit of preaching unless he also demonstrates by the splendor of his conduct what he preaches as luminous concerning eternity. He says therefore: "Now stand, and I will plead with you in judgment before the Lord concerning all the mercies of the Lord." For the hearers to stand is to raise the attention of the mind to the word of the preacher. Rightly therefore they are commanded to stand, because a teacher accomplishes nothing by exhortation if the hearer does not direct his mind to the things he speaks. Enumerating these same mercies, he says: (Verses 8–11.) "How Jacob entered into Egypt, and our fathers cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and He brought our fathers out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. And because they forgot the Lord their God, He delivered them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Asshur, and into the hands of the Philistines, and of the king of Moab, and they fought against you. Afterward they cried out to the Lord and said: 'We have sinned, because we forsook the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtaroth. Now therefore deliver us from the hand of the Philistines, and we will serve You.' And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Barak, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and He delivered you from the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelt in safety."

5. He commemorates these acts of mercy performed according to history for this reason: so that, in the matter of having asked for a king, the people might recognize themselves as guilty before the Lord. For he who had the Lord present to remove all dangers had no need of a human king over himself. Moreover, he shows the very presence of the Lord through the mercies bestowed, since he declared that they were delivered from the hand of the Egyptians through Moses and Aaron, and from the hand of Sisera and the Philistines, and from the hand of the king of Moab through Jerubbaal, Barak, and Jephthah, and by Samuel. In this passage it must be carefully inquired why the petition by which a king is requested is so strictly reproved, and yet the very aids of divine mercy are taught to have been bestowed upon the people of God through human leaders set over them. To this matter, what must be answered except that the governance of kings is vastly different from the governance of judges? The latter preside as equals, while the former display the arrogance of domination in their power of preeminence. The latter commend the testimony of their

innocence before the Lord and all the people, because they neither oppress anyone nor take anything belonging to another for their own use; the former, however, not only take away from their subjects what belongs to them, but even press down the very persons of their subjects under the burden of servitude. Therefore, he adds and says: (Verse 12.) "But when you saw that Nahash was coming up and would fight against you, you said: 'By no means,' but rather, 'A king shall reign over us'—even though the Lord was reigning over you."

6. As if he were saying: For this purpose you have chosen a man for yourselves, for which you used to have God. If we wish to examine this passage spiritually, the following is gathered from it: that those who desire a carnal ruler to be set over them drive away divine grace from themselves. For while they live by the example of humble teachers, they are, as it were, freed from Egypt, because they flee the darkness of worldly love with all their desire. Because they also escape the tyranny of all vices through the teaching of those men, they are freed, as it were, from the hand of Sisera, the Philistines, and the king of Moab, by leaders sent to them. In these God alone, the Almighty, now reigns, because while they outwardly imitate humble pastors, they gratefully receive the love of the divinity reigning among them. Let the prophet therefore say: "You said to me: 'By no means, but a king shall be over us,' when the Lord was reigning over you" — to show that those who subject themselves by imitating carnal men lose the dignity of divine grace. It should also be noted that the prophet Samuel, through the virtue of humility, everywhere presented himself to the elect as a model of uprightness. For when he was recounting the liberation of the Israelite people, he did not say, "The Lord sent Jephthah and me," but "Jephthah and Samuel, and He delivered you from the hand of your enemies.

He named himself as though speaking of another, so that the power of liberation would not be ascribed to the person sent, but to the grace of God who sent him. "The Lord sent Samuel," he says, "and delivered you. As if to say: He sent whom He willed, and through whom He willed, He acted. And perhaps he speaks of himself as of another because it is not he himself who speaks through himself, but the Holy Spirit. And because, by God's permission, with a king now established, the man of God was saying these things, he was saying them for this purpose: to direct the king and the people toward the worship of God, not to abolish the royal dignity itself. Hence, adding further, he says: (Verses 13–15. "Now therefore, your king is here, whom you have chosen and requested. Behold, your God has given you a king. If you will fear God and serve Him and hear His voice and not provoke the mouth of the Lord, then both you and the king who rules over you will continue following the Lord your God. But if you will not hear the voice of the Lord, but provoke His words, the hand of the Lord will be against you and against your fathers."

7. These things are certainly not mystical but historical in every respect. For where both prelates and subjects lead a reprobate life, they equally undergo the punishment of divine vengeance. But because good things are spoken of separately and evil things separately, those things for which the hand of the Lord is foretold as coming upon them must be considered more carefully. What then does it mean when he says: "If you will fear the Lord and

serve Him," unless that many dread the judgments of divine severity and yet do not cease to do wicked things? With a trembling heart indeed they think upon future judgments, but conquered by present pleasure, they by no means avoid committing evil. Rightly therefore after the fear of the Lord, service to Him is mentioned: because that fear alone is worthy of approval which, while it shakes the mind, draws it to the pursuit of good works. Likewise, because there are some who through the fear of the Lord reject certain evils and do some good things, and yet neither fully abandon evil nor sufficiently perform good, it is added: "And you will hear His voice. He who hears the voice of the Lord both fully does good and utterly abandons evil. But these same good works must be held in the delight of sweetness, not in the estimation of harshness. For those to whom the things commanded by the Lord always seem hard and harsh gradually fall away and fail. For this reason Truth says through Himself:

"For My yoke is sweet and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). For this reason John says: "His commandments are not heavy" (1 John 5:3). They are indeed not heavy for the elect: because while they seek the glory of eternal life with great desire, they gladly bear the precepts of the Gospel. The mouth of the Lord can also be understood as the preaching of perfect charity. For He wished, as it were, to show the endearments of His mouth when He said: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). This indeed is the Lord's commandment, this is the yoke of divine sweetness. For what is borne more lightly, or ever more gladly, than love? What heavy thing, moreover, does one who loves not bear lightly? For whatever is loved is carried with great devotion. Therefore, because the bond of perfection is the charity of God and neighbor, rightly in the last place the prophet declares, saying: "If you will not provoke the mouth of the Lord, both you and the king who rules over you will be followers of the Lord your God. As if to say: Then you rightly fulfill the divine will, if you ground both the contempt of wickedness and the pursuit of good works in divine charity. Then you rightly run after the Redeemer toward the highest blessedness of eternal life, if you carry out with joy to the end of life those precepts of charity which are harsh to the carnal.

8. But because he was speaking to the weak and carnal, he continued by declaring: If you will not hear the voice of the Lord, but will provoke His word, the hand of the Lord will be upon you and upon your fathers. The hand of the Lord is the severity of divine vengeance. This hand is indeed stretched out over sons and fathers when, by the merit of divine contempt, both reprobate prelates and subjects are punished. This same hand is also stretched out for vengeance when the voice of the Lord is not heard, when His words are provoked: because those who reject the divine commandments as harsh and unbearable are weighed down by an intolerable burden of punishment in the future. For it is the foolish audacity of man that, where he refuses to undergo for a short time those things that seem harsh to him, he thereby subjects himself to harsher things for eternity. For if he were wisely wise, he would persuade himself of this very thing that displeases him: that through the hard and harsh things of this very brief time, he might escape the hard and harsh things of future damnation. Indeed, the hardened hearts of the carnal hear these things quickly,

but they cannot easily be softened by salutary counsel. Therefore it is well added: (Verses 16, 17.) But now also stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that you have done a great evil for yourselves in the sight of the Lord, in asking for a king over you.

9. Because the petition of the king is reproved so attentively and so many times, this suggests to the elect that those who advance carnal men to the height of the holy Church are held by a most grave obligation of sin. For other sins obtain the merit of a single punishment, but he who appoints a carnal leader incurs as many merits of punishment as that man provides examples of depravity to the faithful subjects. But the heavy weight of crime cannot be set down except by the severity of great compunction. Yet the grace of compunction is not poured into the mind unless the magnitude of the sin is first shown to it. Therefore the prophet of the Lord, in order to provoke the sinning people to the fruit of fitting penance, suggests to them the great sin of transgression through a wondrous disturbance of the air. Now in that region, rains and thunders do not occur during the wheat harvest. And it is well added subsequently: (Verses 18, 19.) Samuel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain on that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel: Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die. For we have added to all our sins this evil, that we should ask for ourselves a king.

10. If we bring this down to our own times, in order that the people may come to the knowledge of their sins, preachers cry out to God on their behalf, because they seek the salvation of the faithful with great desires. For preachers to cry out is to petition for the salvation of the elect with great devotion. At their cry the Lord gives His voice, because He stirs the hearts of sinners so that they may recognize the wickedness of their depravity. He gives rains, because He aids their stirred hearts through the infusion of heavenly grace, so that each one may not only abandon the evil deeds he has committed, but also courageously perform the good works he desires. But this is said to happen on the day of the wheat harvest, so that the power of the miracle may be indicated. The transformation of the heart is indeed no less a miracle than the disturbance of the air. It is no less a miracle for parched hearts to come back to life than for rains to flood down in an unusual manner during the heat of summer. It is surely a greater miracle to shake an insensible mind with an inward thunder than for thunder to resound when clouds collide in the wind. But the right order of conversion is shown in the ordered arrangement of the words.

For he says: 'The Lord gave thunder and rain, and all the people feared the Lord and Samuel exceedingly.' In the most orderly conversion, when evil is abandoned, good is propagated in the mind; when the converted mind nourishes good seed as if through rain, it submits itself to God and to men through the virtue of obedience. Rightly, therefore, it is said: 'All the people feared the Lord and Samuel,' because whoever receives the coming of the Supreme Spirit both abandons evil and lays hold of good, and is so subjected to God that for God's sake he also submits himself to men. And because they have no presumption in this very

virtue of obedience, they say: 'Pray for your servants to the Lord, that we may not die.' When the spirit of life pours itself into the mind, it immediately raises it to the dread of death, because the teaching of that same spirit is that the mind should act in fear so as not to encounter what it fears. But holy men praying for them can be heard, who also reveal the hidden sins of the heart through the humility of confession. Hence it is also added: 'For we have added to all our sins this evil, that we should ask for ourselves a king.' But since these matters have already been sufficiently discussed in our exposition, let us look at what follows. (Verse 20.) 'And Samuel said: Do not fear. You have done all this evil. Nevertheless, do not turn aside from following the Lord.'

11. The mind of the penitent is then rightly directed if it fears the divine judgments and trusts in the mercy of almighty God. Fear without hope indeed casts one headlong into despair, but when it is joined with hope, it works the salvation of the mind. Therefore the excellent teacher must watch with the utmost zeal to terrify the one who sins, and to lead the one who has been terrified back to the hope of pardon: so that through fear he may cease to sin, and through hope of obtaining forgiveness, he may seek the harbor of divine mercy. Samuel, therefore, raising his terrified subjects to the virtue of hope, says: "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord. As if to say: If you cease to sin, you can more quickly arrive at obtaining pardon for what you have committed. Do not therefore turn aside from following the Lord. Concerning the praise of the just, it is promised: "For you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76). Hence Elijah says: "The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand" (1 Kings 17:1). Hence the Psalmist says: "Let the just exult in the sight of God" (Psalm 68:4). To stand in the sight of the Lord, or before the Lord, is to presume upon the love of the Creator by the testimony of a good conscience.

Those indeed stand in His sight who, by the merit of great action, are secure in the heavenly grace of their Creator. But sinners, when they commit evil, flee from the face of the Lord; yet when they resolve to return through penance, they are, as it were, behind the Lord's back: because they neither wish to depart further, and yet cannot presume upon God as friends. Hence it is that the sinful woman is said to have stood behind Him, so that she might deserve to kiss the Lord's feet (Luke 7:38). Behind Him also stood that woman who touched the hem of His garment and deserved to be healed of her flow of blood (Matthew 9:20). She stands behind indeed out of shame for her sin, but she touches through the power of hope. Because, therefore, we must always blush for the iniquities we have committed, and avoid those things in which we are confounded, Samuel commands sinners not to turn aside from following the Lord. But because it is not sufficient for the conversion of a sinner that he merely not commit sins, he subsequently added: (Verse 20. "And serve the Lord with all your heart."

12. For we can merit pardon when we cease to sin and devote ourselves to good works. To serve the Lord with the whole heart is to retain no intention of sinning in the heart. The whole heart is bent to the service of the Creator when we so perform good deeds that we hold fast to no evil by deliberate purpose. This the prophet of the Lord, Samuel, also openly

suggests when he adds: (Verse 21.) ”And do not turn aside after vain things, which will not profit you, nor deliver you, because they are vain.”

13. Literally, he calls vain things the images of demons. But for us, those vain things are to be understood here as what the preacher shows, saying: Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. For in comparison with eternal goods, all things are vain, even temporal goods. For whatever in this age is seen as joyful, delightful, exalted, or prosperous is assuredly vain, because it is held with difficulty and quickly lost. Indeed, the lofty things of the age suddenly collapse, beautiful things pass away, joyful and prosperous things vanish. For when the flattering world is seen to stand in its flowers, it is disturbed by sudden fortune, or is concluded by hasty death that overturns all things. Therefore the joys of the age are vain, which flatter as though they were lasting, but deceive their lovers by quickly passing away. Therefore let the prophet Samuel say: Do not turn aside after vain things, which will not profit you. As if to say: The goods of the age are foolishly desired, since they cannot be held for long by those who desire them. And it should be noted that it is said in the future tense: They will not profit you — because indeed they are now seen to profit; but when in the future people begin to be punished on account of them, they profit nothing at all. Whence it is also fittingly added: Nor will they rescue you, because they are vain. As if to say:

They do not help you then, because they fail with the world and are not possessed after this age. The goods of the age last a long time indeed if they accompany their lover all the way to the end of life. Therefore after this age those things do not profit which cannot pass beyond the end of life. In this life indeed they bind their lovers with sins; but then they will not rescue them, where they are present by merit but not by assistance. In this matter it must be carefully noted that temporal goods will not profit those who are said to turn aside after them. For to turn aside after temporal goods is to flow down into desire for them, to prefer love of them to divine love. Rightly, therefore, vain things will not profit them, because they were unwilling to possess them in the order in which they were created. But the fruit by which vain things are despised is suggested when it is added: (Verse 22. And the Lord will not forsake his people for the sake of his great name, because the Lord has sworn to make them a people for himself.

14. These vain things inflict a great evil upon those who turn aside after them: because while they pursue earthly things in a disordered way, they are abandoned by the supreme and omnipotent God to endure future torments. Therefore, to those who are forbidden to turn aside after vain things, the prophet rightly makes a promise, saying: The Lord will not forsake His people for the sake of His great name. Because those who despise vain things for the love of Him are rescued from true evils, and by faith in the promise they receive the reward of an eternal inheritance. Indeed, the Lord makes them His people whom He raises up to the joys of eternal blessedness. For there, with the glory of His majesty revealed, He presides over those whom in the world He holds, taken up from the love of vanity by His hidden grace. To swear to the Lord is to make a promise and to make Him one’s people; the Lord swears to the one who does not turn aside after vain things: because earthly things

must be despised so that we may deserve to obtain the goods of an eternal inheritance. Yet let no one believe that he can be brought to those things by his own merits; because here it is strictly expressed: For the sake of His great name. For it is not by our goodness, but by God's, that an earthly man enjoys heavenly goods. For it is the gift of God, not from ourselves. There follows: (Verse 23.) But as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.

15. He speaks these things, to whom the Lord said above concerning those to whom he speaks: "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them." Behold, the prophet is rejected, and he speaks to those who reject him, saying: "Far be it from me that I should commit this sin against the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you." Indeed, if this is examined according to the precept of the Law, it would not be a sin if he did not pray for those who rejected him. For the Law of Moses commands, saying: "You shall love your neighbor, and you shall hate your enemy" (Lev. 19:18). But those who were rejecting the prophet had proven themselves not friends, but enemies. What then does it mean that he says: "Far be from me this sin," unless that the holy man, raised to the summit of charity, not only loved his friends, but also embraced his very enemies? Instructed indeed by the commandment of the old Law, but illuminated by the splendors of the new grace, he reproved the license of the old dispensation with evangelical perfection. By which deed, indeed, we are compelled to reckon with ourselves. For hence it is commanded through the Gospel: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44). How much then must enemies now be loved, when we are commanded to do so, if they could be loved even then when they were commanded to be hated? And because he strove not only to pray for them, but also to instruct them, he adds, saying: "And I will teach you the good and right way."

16. For why does he call the way of divine service good, and right: since it is not good if it is not right, nor right if it is not good? But the way was good, because the people went up from Egypt to the promised land, and yet while they wandered through the wilderness, it was not right. Therefore the way is good by which one strives toward the heavenly homeland; right, by which one easily arrives. The way, therefore, is both good and right when we are converted to the religious life, and we carry out divine services with the pressing fervor of great devotion. Whence Samuel also well explains this same way, saying: (Verse 24.) Therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth, and with your whole heart.

17. This way is indeed good and right: because it leads to eternal life and arrives there swiftly. Through the fear of the Lord, evils are avoided; by serving him, his commandments are fulfilled. We truly serve him in truth when we carry out his precepts for the sake of heavenly reward alone. For whoever seeks a temporal reward for a good work does not truly serve God, whom he does not love in his work because of a false intention. But those who desire to serve God in truth are commanded to place their whole heart in divine service, so that they may carry out the things of God in such a way that they retain nothing in their mind that is contrary to God. This way is assuredly not only good but right: because it leads to salvation and swiftly brings its follower to perfection. For it is shown as another way to

the promised land — good, because it leads there; right, because it avoids detours. Through this way, each person arrives at the summit of virtues all the better, the less he turns aside through circuits of negligence. This right way is expressed in that way by which the Lord is said to have wished to lead the children of Israel to the promised land. He wished to entrust the labors of the desert to them, so that for us who walk in the footsteps of his Only-Begotten, he might smooth the course of so great a journey. For they could not yet hear:

"If you wish to be perfect, sell what you have and give to the poor, and follow me; and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21). For while the ancient people ran about through various things with license over temporal possessions, they could not, as it were, be led quickly to the promised land through the circuit of toil. Therefore, so that the prophet might introduce to us the way of the new life, he says that the way is good and right: to fear God and to serve him in truth and with the whole heart — because those who do not cease to seek the almighty God both through good works and through fervent desires quickly arrive at the height of divine grace. And because he had made that same people attentive to hearing the words of his preaching through a miracle, he adds: (Verse 24. "For you have seen the magnificent things that the Lord has done among you."

18. As if he were saying: From those things which you have seen, gather how terribly you ought to fear almighty God, and how devoutly you ought always to serve Him. Which words indeed, if we wish to apply them to ourselves, we must fear God all the more reverently and serve Him all the more devoutly, the more wonderful things we have perceived in our Redeemer. But because what the good hear, the wicked boldly despise, he added, saying: But if you persist in wickedness, both you and your king alike shall perish. CHAPTER III. (1 Kings XIII, 1.) Saul was a son of one year when he began to reign: and he reigned over Israel for two years.

1. Above, when the matter of ordaining a king was being discussed, it was said of him who by divine judgment was to be preferred over the rest, that he was chosen and good. Likewise, concerning him already chosen for the kingdom and set in the midst of the people, Samuel said: "Surely you see whom the Lord has chosen, for there is none like him among all the people" (1 Sam. 9:24). Of this same king it is now said: "Saul was a son of one year"; so that while he is attentively praised, it may be understood that he was chosen by the Lord as good. Why then is he said to have been one year old when he began to reign, unless to proclaim his innocence? For taken literally, how could he have been a son of one year, he who stood above the entire people from the shoulder upward? What therefore cannot be understood according to the letter must be understood through the reasoning of interior understanding. The king is thus described as being one year old, so that the gift of childhood in the person of the king might signify the good of innocence. Hence it is also commanded to the children of the eternal kingdom: "Do not become children in understanding, but in malice be little ones" (1 Cor. 14:20). And certainly the Truth itself warns this to the pastors of the churches, saying: "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

Of the king, therefore, who was first good and afterward became wicked, it is said that he was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years. For although he reigned many years, he is said to have reigned only in those years in which he is reported to have been innocent and humble. For afterward, proud and disobedient, he heard: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 15:26). He knew indeed that he had been cast from the kingdom, and yet, cast out, he did not fear to reign. How many things he did boldly afterward! But behold, all those times were not reckoned to him as his reign. Let us therefore rejoice that we have lived only in that time in which we lived innocently and humbly. For those times that we consumed in the vanity of the world and the fleeting life of the flesh are scarcely remembered, as though lost. There are moreover still those who thrust themselves forward to seize the summit of holy Church, about whom the Lord complains through the prophet, saying: "They have reigned, but not from me; they became princes, and I did not know it" (Hos. 8:4). These men, when they do certain things boldly, suppose that the plunder of the summit they have seized is consigned to oblivion by God. They count their own works in their favor, and what they do apart from God they think will be rewarded by God.

Let them, so that they may more rightly reckon the things they do, count up the many bold deeds of rejected Saul, which the divine reckoning by no means holds. Let Saul therefore say: "He reigned two years over Israel," so that concerning all it may be understood that what we live for ourselves is emptied of reward; and to rule wickedly is not the truth of preeminence, but the recklessness of presumption deserving punishment. But now let us hear what the king of one year did. And Saul chose three thousand men from Israel, and two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel; but one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin.

2. The number one thousand, which is produced from one hundred collected ten times, suggests the highest perfection. When indeed it is repeated three times, the various perfections of the elect are designated by it. Saul therefore chose three thousand men from Israel: because the preacher of truth leads to the defense of the holy Church not the weak and feeble, but strong and valiant warriors. They are said to be three thousand: because at the height of perfection, they bring forth virgins; alongside whom they place both the continent and the defenders of truth. For while by the example of virgins they kindle others to the highest incorruption, while by the life of the continent they draw others away from the corruptions of the world, while they defend the weakness of the humble through the aid of the powerful, good teachers come against the enemies of the holy Church as if with three thousand chosen men. They are called men on account of their fortitude, and are said to be from Israel on account of divine contemplation. For he cannot be contained in the highest number of perfection who lacks either the virtue of great work or the knowledge of inward vision. What does it mean that some of the chosen men are said to be with Saul, and others with Jonathan? But even the very names of the places in which they are said to be should not be believed to be devoid of mysteries.

Jonathan, who is described as the son of the king and has a portion of the warriors, clearly signifies those who are helpers of teachers in the ministry of preaching. For they are their sons: because they ardently love those by whose ministry they are begotten for God. But they preside over a portion of the warriors: because they bear the care of the holy Church, and advance some by example and others by exhortations to the love of virtues. For as a great king had sent his son into the army, he who was speaking to the Corinthians said: "Therefore I have sent to you Timothy, who is my most dear and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ Jesus, as I teach in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 4:17). Hence he likewise says: "When Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear: for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1 Cor. 16:10).

3. Now Jonathan is said to be with a thousand men in Gibeah of Benjamin, while Saul is with two thousand in Michmash and on the mountain of Bethel. Gibeah, as we have often already said, is interpreted as "lofty"; Michmash, "humility"; Bethel, "house of God"; Saul, "petition"; Jonathan is said to mean "gift of the dove. The three thousand chosen men of Israel we have referred to virgins, the continent, and defenders of truth. Therefore, since Jonathan is called "gift of the dove," and a thousand men are said to be with him in Gibeah, that is, on the height — what else does this suggest but those who, by the most radiant example of virginity, provide to others a standard of the same modesty? Rightly is the instructor of virgins called "gift of the dove," because it is by the incomparable grace of the Holy Spirit that corruption of the flesh remains unknown to those who dwell in the flesh. Rightly too are virgins said to be on the height, because what surpasses human nature is situated at the loftiest summit of virtues. Hence also that virgin beloved of Jesus, indicating the place of virgins, says: "I saw upon Mount Zion a Lamb standing, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). He also indicates them from the light of their own manner of life, saying:

"These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (ibid., 4). They are said indeed to be on the mountain with the Lamb, because through the merit of incorruption, by which they separate themselves from earthly and carnal pleasures, they are exalted in the heavenly glory of the Redeemer. With Saul, however, two thousand are said to be in Michmash and on the mountain of Bethel. Michmash, which is interpreted as "humility" — what else does it signify but the blush of the continent? For when they recall the past pleasures of the flesh, they blush with shame. But because they are strong men, they are reported to be with Saul; and while they despise the experienced enticements of the world, by the example of their virtue they draw countless others to contempt of that same world. Yet they dwell in Michmash, because while they recall what they were in the world, they cannot grow proud over the fact that they see themselves to be great in God. Rightly are they reported to be with Saul, who is called "petition. For a preacher of truth ought to be of such great charity that through urgent desire he is felt to be not merely a petitioner, but the very petition itself. He ought

to seek the salvation of the faithful so urgently that, from the habitual exercise of inward taste, he directs every movement of the heart into the disposition of supplication.

With him are a thousand men, because the more perfect hearers join with chosen teachers in charity and together beseech the almighty Lord for the salvation of the faithful. They are therefore with the king in Michmash, because they cultivate humility on their own behalf so that they may deserve to be heard on behalf of others. But while the chosen teacher profitably presides over all his subjects, he advances the virtues of all toward the crowns of victory. For with the humble he supplicates, with the strong he fights, with those set apart he perseveres in prayers, and with those placed as defenders of the Church he protects the weak and the infirm. Rightly therefore they are said to be not only in Michmash but also on the mountain of Bethel with Saul among thousands of warriors, because just as the preacher of the Church stands above the diverse orders of the elect, so he ought to be their cooperator. For they guard Bethel, that is, the house of God, who by the authority of the word defend the holy Church. When they confront any tyrants with the voice of free authority, when they rise up against the powers of this world, when they oppose the powers of this world in defense of the humble — they guard Bethel, the house of God, like warriors of the king. They are certainly reported to be with Saul, because in the defense of the Church they are coadjutors of the great teachers. Rightly moreover it is said of the rest:

(Verse 2. ”But the remaining people he sent away, each one to his own tents.”

4. Moreover, he calls the people whom the number of a thousand does not encompass. Each one is sent back to his own tent, because the weak and imperfect are not to be brought forth for the highest and most demanding works. For neither the continent, nor virgins, nor martyrs can the feeble become. For the former, lest the past pleasures of the flesh return to them; for the latter, lest they despise the untried enticements of the flesh; for the others, lest they fear the adversities of the world—the greatest fortitude is necessary. The rest of the common people, therefore, are sent back to their tents, lest they be condemned for the rashness of a higher life, and perish in battle as weak and infirm, while pledging faith to a lofty way of life for which they do not have the strength of lofty virtue. For the blessed apostle Paul was, as it were, sending each one back to his own tent when he said: ”Because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). For like a skilled master of the interior warfare, considering both the crowns of victory and the gravity of the struggle, he was weighing the soldiers’ strength against the burden of war, judging it best for the weak to live in the cities lest they perish in bitter combat. Therefore, likewise separating them from the camp of the strong, he says: ”Return together again, lest Satan tempt you because of your incontinence” (ibid., 5). But with the weak removed, what is accomplished in the most valiant battle line of virgins is set forth, when it is added: (Verse 3.) ”And Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines that was in Gibeah.”

5. Just as the battle line of the bridegroom excels in rank, so also it was the first to receive the titles of victory. For Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines: because chosen

virginity, exalted by the citadel of continence over the flesh, extinguishes shameful impulses. And rightly it is called the garrison of the Philistines: because in the virginal body, carnal impulses do not have the rest of delight, but the standing of battle. They stand indeed: because they attack, but they cannot rest: because they do not in the least delight the holy mind. The garrison of the Philistines in Gibeah is therefore struck, when the desires of the flesh are thoroughly weakened by chosen virgins, and they obtain the peace of triumph, while they no longer have the accustomed wars. Toward which victory indeed, because they often advance by the exhortation of their elders, a thousand men are in Gibeah with Jonathan: but Jonathan is reported to have struck the camp of the Philistines. And because by the example of others, others are often stirred to the emulation of virtue, there follows: (Verses 3, 4.) And Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines, which was in Gibeah. When the Philistines had heard this, Saul sounded the trumpet throughout all the land, saying: Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard this report: Saul has struck the garrison of the Philistines, and Israel rose up against the Philistines. Therefore the people cried out after Saul in Gilgal.

6. When the garrison of the Philistines was struck, Saul sounds the trumpet, and after Saul the people shout: because holy preachers proclaim the heard virtues of the elect, and inflame the hearts of their subjects to the example of good work. To sound the trumpet is both to announce victory and to rouse the minds of others by the example of the victors to the purpose of spiritual warfare. For the people to shout after Saul is to undertake the daring of great devotion from having heard the preaching. At this point it should be noted that Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines, but Saul, sounding the trumpet, claimed that he himself had struck that same garrison. Because indeed the triumphs of the elect preachers are credited with the fact that hidden adversaries are overcome by their subjects. But as often as we conquer some enemies, it is necessary that we prepare ourselves for the struggles of overcoming others. For Almighty God, because He rewards His elect more abundantly, always wills them to stand in battle, so that they themselves may always be able to prepare for themselves the goods of an eternal reward. For this reason also, when the people are said to have shouted after Saul, it is added: (Verse 5.) And the Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and the rest of the common people like the sand which is on the seashore in great multitude.

7. Above, King Saul is described as having chosen three thousand men for himself. If, therefore, we wish to compare the forces of each army, against each one of Saul's men, ten chariots and two horsemen of the Philistines are assigned. For ten times three thousand is thirty thousand. In the number six as well, three is doubled. By this battle, indeed, both the multitude and the ferocity of hidden enemies is signified. They come against us in chariots and on horses, because they strive to present now evil thoughts to the hearts of the elect, now harmful enticements of visible things to their bodily senses. For horses are swift in running and strong in assault. To these, indeed, evil thoughts are fittingly compared, which come swiftly to the heart and pierce it forcefully. Horsemen come against us in battle when malign spirits both quickly arouse evil thoughts in us and powerfully assail us through them.

But two horsemen come against each one of the faithful, because if we gather up the hidden ambushes of reprobate spirits into a general consideration, their special aim is this: namely, to strike at our principal virtue and to utterly extinguish the love of God and of neighbor. One horse is seen to rage when, by a reprobate thought, the malign spirit suggests to us that our neighbor should be held in hatred. But the horse that appears alone is not alone, because no one who hates his brother loves God (1 John 4:20).

Likewise, since divine charity agrees with no principal vice in the mind, whenever a spiritual vice is suggested to us by the fraud of demons, we must beware the excessive speed and violent ferocity of raging horsemen. In comparison with a horseman, the blow of an archer or foot soldier is altogether feeble. But the charge of a horseman is violent with the strength of the horse, because indeed the power of the malign spirit is nothing in the contest of the elect if he is not permitted to sit upon an evil thought. Because, therefore, our enemies are exceedingly strong in battle when they are permitted to mount upon interior thoughts, a throng of horsemen is counted in the Philistine army. Ten chariots, moreover, are assigned against each elect one in battle. For we have five bodily senses through which we receive the experience of pleasure. But malign spirits, when they eagerly seek to deceive the mind through the enticements of the flesh, display to the bodily senses the appearances of things that the flesh craves, and through the appearances of those same things suggest that the mind should desire what is presented. For the adversary, as it were, raises his chariot upon its wheels when on one side he offers the enticements of things and on the other holds back the thoughts;

he extends the former, he sends in the latter, and as if rolling forward he lifts himself high to assault the soul, when the malign spirit raises himself against the elect both through the enticements of things and through the craft of suggestions. There are ten chariots, therefore, because against each of our bodily senses they have the appearances of visible enticements, and against just as many senses of the soul they have the deceptive arts of persuasion.

8. But what does it mean that the remaining common crowd is said to be as numerous as the sand on the seashore, except that under the leadership of evil spirits, an innumerable throng of vices rages against us? For like a subject crowd, it follows the chariots and horsemen, when the snares of demons assail the mind by striking first: so that it may be devastated by the vices that follow, as if by the multitude of an irrational mob. And rightly in the spiritual battle of the saints, first the chariots and horsemen are described, then the multitude of the common crowd: because indeed there is no multitude, no strength of vices, if the throng of evil spirits does not precede them by arousing and sending them forth. By these words it is also suggested how cautious and circumspect the life of the saints must always be. For if the remaining crowd is compared to the abundant sand of the sea, the multitude of darts is innumerable and nearly unavoidable. For although all vices are known to the experienced faithful, yet by how many impulses they strike the heart, in what ways, or for what reasons they always come to the heart, they cannot fully know. Indeed they powerfully cast off the

open darkness of temptations; but often in lighter matters they do not escape the fog of ignorance, like the fine grains of sand. They always display the strength of good works, but those who overcome great armies of horsemen with great virtue do not entirely restrain their tongue from all superfluous speech. With continual practice they direct their body in the service of almighty God; but their mind, which outwardly orders the members perfectly, sometimes by no means avoids superfluous thoughts. For what else do they then experience but the troublesome multitude of the common crowd — they who have laid low the chariots and horsemen with great virtue?

9. But the excellent doctor says: 'For those who love God, all things work together for good' (Rom. 8:28). God indeed permits His elect to be assailed by great temptations, so that they may be crowned most magnificently in the heavenly kingdom; but He permits great battles, which they may win, and stirs up light ones, in which they may fall—so that the victory of the strong may be great, and the fall harmless; so that those who fall may easily raise themselves up, and the great battles in which they stood as victors may not puff them up. For if we conquer chariots and horsemen, we ought not to be puffed up by the victory, because innumerable are the sins we commit by thinking, speaking, living, tasting, hearing, and doing. For even he could not avoid the weapons of this innumerable crowd, who said: 'In many things we all offend' (James 3:2). Hence likewise the beloved of Jesus speaks, saying: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 John 1:8). Who then would dare to be puffed up as a victor, if such great men reveal that they cannot altogether escape the weapons of sins? But since these things are described in spiritual warfare, we ought not now to consider what we suffer, but how we may weaken the assault of our enemies.

The multitude of the Philistines is compared to the sand, which is most abundant on the seashore, because all the power and number of vices is increased by the disturbances of the world. For the sea signifies this present age, because while it is driven by the great variety of things and times, it is disturbed as if by raging winds. But on the shore, when the driven water of the sea is poured back, innumerable tiny grains of sand are gathered together. What then is the seashore, if not the heart of each person who is negligent in spiritual life? For through the order of religious life, he is seen to stand as if on solid ground; but while he does not restrain worldly thoughts, he receives, as it were, the breaking waves of the sea upon himself, and heaps of sand; and from the very place where he does not fear to draw near to the sea, he can be driven by waves and buried in sand—because if he were to restrain worldly thoughts by the contemplation of spiritual things, he would not feel the vices of mind and body which worldly preoccupation brings in like sand and waves. Why then is the multitude of enemies said to be like sand, except because evil spirits attack the chosen athletes of Christ with the same vices by which they overcome the negligent? They come with a crowd of worldly clamor against those who have learned with their whole mind to despise the world in its pleasures.

They fashion the pomp of visible things; by feigning attraction, they renew the love of the world already held in contempt, so that they may drag hearts burning with heavenly love toward harmful pleasures. But holy men, because they consider that this innumerable crowd of wicked thoughts comes forth from the deep of the world, by fleeing the world with their whole mind, avoid becoming the shores of the sea, and no longer fear so great a multitude of enemies—because while they keep themselves in inward contemplation, the crowd of vices cannot gain access to them. There follows: (Verse 5.) 'And going up, they encamped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven.'

10. For malign spirits to ascend is to strive for lofty things through heavenly desire in order to deceive the hearts of the saints. And it is well said: "They encamped at Magmas," because they dwell in those hearts which, elevated in the lofty love of heavenly things, do not see them. For Magmas is interpreted as "humility. But to be humbled in sacred speech is often taken as a failing of virtue. Whence also in this same history of the Kings, Tamar, daughter of King David, whom her brother Amnon is recorded to have violated, is said to have been humbled. She was indeed humbled by being corrupted, because she had stood sublime as a virgin, and when she lost the lofty summit of virginal honor, she came as it were from a high place to a flat and lowly place (2 Kings 13). Concerning the future abasement of the proud it is also said: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled" (Luke 14:11), because at the examination of the heavenly Judge, those fall who vainly glory in the eminence of this world. Rightly therefore are the Philistines said to pitch camp at Magmas, because through wicked counsels demons dwell in those who do not care to hold the lofty summits of virtue. For while they seek earthly things, they inhabit, as it were, flat and lowly places, where invisible enemies can easily pitch their camps. Of these enemies, indeed, it is said through the prophet: "They say to your soul:

Bow down, that we may pass over" (Isaiah 51:23). For the soul standing upright is sublime, bowed down it is lowly, because through the height of virtues and through heavenly desire it is raised to lofty things; but when it falls away to vices or to love of the world, it falls to that place where the enemy, rushing in, easily tramples it. They say therefore to your soul, "Bow down, that we may pass over," because if they do not humble it to doing or thinking earthly things, they neither penetrate it with malign persuasions nor disturb it with the warfare of vices.

11. From this, therefore, we can gather how far we ought to distance ourselves from the world in deed, word, and thought. For our words, thoughts, and works are level and lowly when they are worldly. Through these indeed we are where the camps of hidden enemies are freely pitched, where we can be captured all the more easily as we are raised up by no citadel of fortification. For what faithful person is now unaware that they collect the faults of our words, thoughts, and works, and preserve them for our accusation at the coming of the future Judge? Whence also the Lord, suggesting that this lowly and despised place of Machmas must be fled by us, says: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). The place of the enemies is therefore

called lowly, so that it may indeed suggest to us that we ought always to be exalted in word, thought, and deed. And because while the reprobate are captured in the lowly place of their more lax life, they display examples of depravity that are set forth for others to imitate, Machmas is said to be east of Beth-aven. From the east indeed we see the light of the sun rise. But the life of the reprobate, although it possesses the reality of darkness—those who nevertheless always pursue it for the vain delight of the world are indeed deceived as if by the splendor of a false light.

Whence also it is said through blessed Job: "Their light shall be taken from the wicked" (Job 38:15). For now indeed the flattery of the world pleases them as something bright; but when they depart from the world, they will enter into perpetual darkness, which they believed to be light. Then they will see that it was not light, when prosperity is changed into adversity, light into darkness, laughter into grief, sweetness into the worm, beauty into deformity, honor into disgrace, flatteries into punishments and eternal torments. Because the hearts of the wicked do not now feel these things, they refuse to imitate the ways of the good; and by the example of the lost, they in no way fear to take up whatever pleases them from the world, because they imitate those who through a reprobate life have become dwelling-places of demons. Whence also they are rightly called a useless house, because they often receive the preaching of the saints, but they in no way allow the word which they hear from their mouth to dwell in them through love. They are therefore a useless house, because they do not make in themselves a fitting dwelling for God. Truth itself designates this useless house in the Gospel, saying: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Hence again it is written: "The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, and will not dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wis. 1:5).

Well therefore is the useless house said to have Machmas on its eastern side, because those who spurn the preaching of the saints rejoice in the example of the reprobate who seek the lowest and earthly things, as if in the rising of a great light. But while the conduct of the wicked is demonstrated through the mysteries of sacred history speaking, how cautious the life of the saints is, is subsequently shown. For there follows: (Verse 6) "When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, the people were afflicted, and they hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, in rocks also, and in dens, and in cisterns."

12. We are indeed in a narrow place when we are tempted inwardly by unclean spirits and outwardly behold the examples of evil men. Against the internal temptation of evil spirits, therefore, it is well said: "The people were afflicted," and against the outward examples of ungodly men: "They hid themselves. Because the cunning adversary suggests to us pleasant and joyful things to be desired, and he is never better conquered than if, when tempted, we run to the laments of devout prayer. And we can more quickly avoid the examples of the wicked if we judge that they are not even to be looked upon. Therefore, for the saints to hide is to disdain to look upon reprobate things. And because they guard the five senses of the body from the imitation of the reprobate, five kinds of hiding places are also described: namely caves, hidden places, rocks, caverns, and cisterns. Caves are indeed the hidden

recesses of mountains: because the hearts of the saints are truly lofty in heavenly desire, and are closed and inaccessible to malignant spirits. We enter caves, therefore, when we retreat to the secrets of our minds, lest with wandering eyes we see things to be desired outside. We are hidden in secret places when we keep the hidden silence of a closed mouth. We ascend rocks when we place the activity of the body in vigorous work. Whence also concerning these hiding places, it is said through the prophet under one designation:

"He who closes his eyes lest he see evil, and stops his ears lest he hear of blood, and shakes his hands free from every bribe: he shall dwell on high, the fortifications of rocks shall be his lofty refuge" (Isa. 33:15). We enter caverns and cisterns when we guard both our sense of smell from the obscenities of the world and our ears from hearing vain talk. For cisterns of water are the words of the Holy Scriptures. We are therefore hidden in cisterns when we enter into the waters of sacred speech, so that through the service of our ears we may water the meadows of our minds. And rightly are hiding places mentioned in the type of Israel as the elect: because whoever does not protect the senses of the body from the defilement of carnal pleasures does not escape the sword of hidden enemies. Let him therefore proclaim the victory of that hidden encounter, let him say: "The people were afflicted. Let him openly proclaim the triumphs of the outward conflict set before them: "They hid themselves. For the affliction of the elect mind is the deadly sword-point against every diabolical temptation. For while it is deeply pierced with compunction, it is raised up to the love of heavenly joy; and the more fervently it already loves the heavenly things to which it ascends through weeping, the more strongly it now rejects the offered pleasures of the world. For the illustrious teacher says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21).

This entrance into the heavenly kingdom is certainly hoped for at the end of time in such a way that it is also experienced in the daily life of the saints. Our tribulation, therefore, is the entrance to heavenly joy. Rightly, therefore, as often as the elect mind is pierced with compunction in the lament of its affliction, by afflicting itself it obtains this: that it enters into the contemplation of that heavenly kingdom, in which it may ineffably rejoice. And while holy men flee from seeing the lovers of the world in the flower of passing joy, while they hide their bodily senses from the imitation of them, what is seen in their case is not flight but glorious victory. They flee indeed from earthly activities, but they attain heavenly ones; they seem to hide from the world, but they are revealed to heavenly glory. Therefore, by fleeing from harmful things, they more powerfully pursue their enemies, and they triumph far more nobly, since they so hasten toward heavenly things that the polluted savagery of their adversaries does not touch them. There follows: (Verse 7. "But the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead."

13. If indeed we first wish to understand this according to the letter, these Hebrews are understood to have been both terrified with fear and to have fled to their enemies. For not long after, in Jonathan's open victory, it is written: 'The Hebrews who had been with the Philistines yesterday and the day before and had gone up with them into the camp turned back to be with Israel, who were with Saul and Jonathan' (1 Sam. 14:21). But what is

signified by this event, except what we observe happening daily in the holy Church: that the life of the good is safe and most cautious, while that of the negligent is reckless impatience? They are indeed weak yet bold, eager for the affairs of the world, but feeble for enduring the war of temptation. And if we examine our own affairs in this regard, very many such people are found in monasteries. They dwell indeed in the calm of the harbor, but they by no means consider the storms of the open sea and the whirlwinds of tempests. And when they esteem themselves to be acting as mighty men outside, they go out readily to the most grievous battles of temptations—powerless against strong adversaries. Improvident indeed in reason, weak in strength: just as they do not understand the deceits of cunning temptation, so also they do not escape the open snares of enticements. They therefore cross the Jordan, because they are bent toward committing the shameful deeds of the flesh. Jordan is indeed interpreted as ”their descent.

Those therefore who abandon justice fall from the high mountain of virtues. Because therefore each of the weak willingly desires the enticements of the world which they see, in their type the Hebrews are said not to have been carried across the Jordan, but to cross the Jordan. To cross over is indeed the act of one who wills it. Therefore those cross the Jordan who are turned toward carnal pleasures by voluntary and hasty deliberation. Moreover, those can be understood to cross the Jordan who newly begin to sin, but by sinning surpass the wickedness of other sinful men. For they would reach the level of their descent by stopping there, not by crossing beyond, if they committed evils equal to others and did not surpass them by daring. And because they find their equals even in a more wicked life, they are rightly said to arrive at the land of Gad and Gilead, across the Jordan. For they dwell as it were across the Jordan who through the habit of sinning become worse than the wicked. To raise up sinners from this descent of guilt, he had come of whom it is written: ’He came into all the region of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins’ (Luke 3:3). He who had come to preach repentance for all sins is declared to have come into all the regions of descent. There follows: (Verses 7–9.) ’And while Saul was still in Gilgal, all the people who followed him were terrified.

He waited seven days according to the appointment with Samuel, and Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people slipped away from him. Therefore Saul said: Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.’

14. Up to this point, because the divine word has spoken about Saul as chosen and good, as was said above, it seemed reasonable that what was said about him should be taken in a good sense, both historically and morally. But now, because we have come to the place of his transgression, it is certainly necessary that we also see in him the things that are to be avoided. But what ought ever to have seemed more carefully to be avoided by all the elect than the evil of pride and disobedience? For this cast down the sublimity of the first angel; this laid low the glory of the lost spirits. This took away happiness from the first man; this brought on the perpetual miseries of human captivity. And behold, to the first angel and the first man, the first king of the chosen people is joined through disobedience, so that while

the great fall, the least may be raised up. For we are rightly raised up if we both observe their falls and avoid them. Therefore, where Saul fell must be carefully considered. For Samuel had said to him above: "You shall go down before me to Gilgal. I indeed will come down to you, so that you may offer a holocaust and an oblation, and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you, and I will show you what you are to do" (1 Kings 10:20). He fell through disobedience, therefore, because he did not wait the full seven days, as he had been commanded. For in the same place it is immediately added: (Verse 10.) "And when he had finished offering the holocaust, behold, Samuel was arriving."

15. In this passage it must be considered with a trembling heart how, by neglecting to wait for the briefest time, he was rejected. "When he had completed the burnt offering," it says, "behold, Samuel was coming. If therefore he had waited for him only for the very briefest interval of time during which he offered the burnt offering, he could have securely obtained the strength of his kingdom. And so if the punishment is so great when a prophet is despised, what do we think is incurred from that ocean of divine judgment when the divine precepts themselves are disregarded? And because the delight of the flesh passes in a moment, and every commission of sins, and indeed the hour of transgression is brief, yet the punishment for the crime is not brief; because while we raise up the kingdom of sin in ourselves for a moment, we lose those kingdoms of all ages. For immediately after sin the prophetic word comes to rebuke — which would have been present, had we not sinned, to strengthen us in good. Indeed a polluted conscience now has the divine word against it; which, if it had avoided being polluted, aided by it and upheld, would have stood firm by its own strength. For what else does it spiritually signify to us when it is said: "And when he had completed offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel was coming"? Even if he had not offered the burnt offering, Samuel would have come nonetheless.

So indeed when we are tempted, divine grace is near to help those who endure; near also is divine justice to condemn those who fail. Whence Sacred Scripture, exhorting us to wait, says: "If the spirit of one having power rises against you, do not quickly abandon your place" (Eccles. 10:4). Hence the prophet, testifying, says: "The Lord is my helper, and therefore I am not confounded" (Isa. 50:7). Hence the Psalmist, looking to those same nearby aids, says: "I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be moved" (Ps. 15:8). But let us now hear what the prophet says to the one who did not wait, and what he who was unwilling to wait answers: (Verse 11. And Samuel spoke to him: "What have you done?"

16. The prophet indeed knew what he had done, but by asking, he was reproving the act of disobedience. Hence also to Adam sinning in paradise, the Lord says: "Adam, where are you? (Gen. 3:9). The magnitude of the guilt can also be conveyed through this question — as if he were saying openly: Does it seem a small thing to you that you sinned by disobeying? Rather, by sinning you fell from the lofty summit of your glory. Now therefore, many within the holy Church bury themselves in shameful deeds, and are unconcerned, as though they were losing nothing or only trifles. Let it therefore be said to the one who has fallen, let

it be said: ”What have you done? Does it seem a small thing to you that you have defiled yourself with the filth of sin, since you pay no attention to the glory of eternity you have lost or the punishment of hell you have deserved? The sinner is indeed asked what he has done, so that he may be led back to his heart through lamentation, so that he may know he has brought great things upon himself and may not grieve too little. But because the very fault of disobedience is born from the root of pride, the disobedient are accustomed to hear the magnitude of their guilt from rebuking teachers, but not to make satisfaction by humbly confessing. For since they desire to appear exalted, they disdain to reveal their falls;

and therefore they bring forth excuses and put forward claims of righteousness, because they are ashamed to appear as sinners. Therefore what follows is fittingly added: (Verses 11–12. Saul answered: ”Because I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and you had not come within the appointed days, and moreover the Philistines had gathered at Michmash, I said: Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the face of the Lord. Compelled by necessity, I offered the burnt offering.”

17. Behold, he who is accused of the recklessness of a great transgression is not afraid to assert great reasons of justice. ”I saw,” he says, ”that the people were slipping away from me.” Here he asserts that he was abandoned by the people. ”Furthermore, you had not come within the appointed days.” Here he shows himself cheated of the prophet’s promise. ”Furthermore, the Philistines had gathered at Michmash.” Here he likewise brings up the imminent danger of battle. Therefore, drawing a conclusion from his own action, he says: ”Compelled by necessity, I offered the burnt offering.” As if to say: You accuse me of a great offense, when the offense is so much lighter inasmuch as it was committed not from recklessness but from necessity. But what the prophet recognizes him to be—he who was unwilling to recognize himself—he adds, saying: (Verse 13.) ”You have acted foolishly, and you have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God.”

18. All the proud, because through their swelling they consider themselves to be above other men, are fittingly rebuked when the divine will is set before them, which they offend. Saul therefore is rebuked in the manner of the proud, who is said to have despised the commandments of the Lord his God. This is as if one should frighten the proud and contemptuous man, saying: Even if you despise men, now it is not the counsel of men, but the commandments of the Lord your God that you have scattered. Rightly therefore do you weigh your guilt, if you consider with a trembling heart Him whom you despise. And it should be noted that he does not say: ”You have not kept the commandments of your God,” or ”the commandments of your Lord,” but: ”You have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God.” As if he were openly saying: It would be a daring of great transgression if He whose commandments you despise were only your Lord and not also your God. How great then is what is committed when the commandments of God and Lord are neglected? Because likewise he did not say ”of the Lord my God” or ”of the Lord our God,” he convicts him of having offended the grace of divine intimacy. As if he were saying: You have despised the precepts of Him who, when He raised you up from the lowest place, when He set you over

others, when He made you king, through the bestowal of such great gifts, was, as it were, specially yours. Still further it is added, from which his audacity of transgression is shown to be even greater: (Verse 13.) "Which," he says, "He commanded to you."

19. Finally, certain commandments of God are common to all, not special to some. Therefore, in order to convict the bold defendant of his recklessness by an open accusation, he demonstrates that he despised not the common commandments, but his own and particular ones. "Which," he says, "he commanded to you." As if to say: You despised those commandments of your God and Lord which you ought to have observed not as common to all, but as your own, and entrusted singularly to you alone. But he sets forth what he deserves, saying: (Verses 13, 14.) "For if you had not done this, the Lord would have already established your kingdom over Israel forever, but it shall by no means rise again."

20. Behold how great were the things he lost, who, as he supposed, despised nothing. Behold, for seven days he waited for the prophet; but when he ceased to await him at the end of the day, he lost the glory of so great a dignity. Whence it is also said through the prophet: 'Woe to those who have lost patience' (Sirach 2:16). Indeed, those lose patience who do not bring to completion the good things they have begun. To whom assuredly woe is pronounced: because they not only lose the reward of the labor they began, but are also struck with the punishment of their apostasy. Moreover, the punishment of the proud and disobedient king is declared when it is said: 'If you had not done this, the Lord would already have prepared your kingdom over Israel from now and forever; but it shall not stand.' From now and forever the kingdom is prepared for the elect: because those who rightly order temporal things prepare for themselves the height of eternal glory. Indeed, the kingdom of the elect is prepared now, when through divine grace their ministries are rightly administered. Which advances from now and forever: because from the lofty action of this present time, they merit that still loftier glory of eternity in heaven. And so finally it is said to the reprobate king: 'Your kingdom shall by no means stand any longer.' As if to say: Since he falls short of temporal righteousness, he does not attain to the height of eternity.

Or for this reason it is said literally that it shall not stand: because it fell with him, and after him it did not remain in his sons. But, so that he may be struck with the punishment of envy, he is compelled to hear not only his own rejection, but also the election of another. For the prophet, continuing, says: (Verse 14) 'The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and has commanded him to be leader over His people Israel.'

21. By all these words the proud man is struck down: "He sought," it says, "a man after His own heart." As if to say: He sought him for that reason, because you were unwilling to be according to His heart. As if to say: He appointed such a man as leader of His people, one who would carry out the command of divine counsel with the virtue of devotion. For since we are accustomed to deliberate in our heart about the things we wish to do, when by the usage of our speech the heart of God is spoken of in sacred Scripture, His inmost will is signified by it, which is then recognized by us outwardly when the commands of disobedience are revealed. But we are close to it when we both recognize it through understanding and guard

it through love. Rightly, therefore, the prophet Samuel says of the Lord: ”He sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and He commanded him to be a leader over His people.” Because he profitably commands others who already knows how to obey God perfectly; who commands only that which proceeds from the counsel of the inmost truth.

22. But what does it mean that it is said as if of the past: ”The Lord sought for Himself a man, and commanded him to be a leader,” when he had not yet been sought, nor had it been enjoined upon him to preside over His people? For after Saul struck Amalek, the Lord said to that same prophet: ”Fill your horn with oil, and come, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite” (1 Sam. 16:1). But this question is easily resolved if the foreknowledge and predestination of Almighty God are considered. For to Him, to predestine is to do, and those things which have been preordained by Him to be done are already done in His sight. Whence it is also written of Him: ”He has done the things that are to come” (Isa. 45:11, according to the LXX). But God is said to have sought a man so that a pattern for choosing bishops might be set before men. For we are accustomed to seek things that we either do not recognize when present or do not see when absent. But God, from whom nothing is absent, nothing hidden, is not said to have sought a man as one absent or concealed; rather, He is said to have sought so that it might be taught that everyone who is chosen for the summit of the holy Church must be examined by men.

But he must be sought according to God’s heart, so that he may not only understand the divine will but also demonstrate it through good works. Because likewise chosen men do not come to the honor of primacy out of ambition but are led to it under compulsion, it is well said: ”And He commanded him to be a leader. As if to say: He did not enter the honor of prelacy through ambition but ascended under compulsion. ”Man” can also be understood as referring to fortitude, and ”according to God’s heart” as referring to interior charity. Therefore, when necessity demands, let a man be sought for the care of the holy Church who is strong in his manner of life; let him be sought according to God’s heart, so that through the effect of great love he may be, as it were, united to the divine will; let him be commanded to be a leader, so that he may not aspire to ascend the rank of high office out of desire but may fear it out of humility — and thus, humble, may fear for himself, so that he may more devoutly recognize that he must submit to the command of God. But because with these words the prophet had rebuked the life of the fallen king, there follows: (Verse 15. ”And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.”

23. As if from a height to level ground, the teacher of holy Church comes when he rebukes the faults of sinners, and bends the loftiness of his station when he humbles himself through the affection of charity to examine the crimes of the wicked. Rightly therefore it is said of him who had reproved the sinner: ’He arose, and went up.’ For the chosen preacher rises when he raises himself by intention to the height of his spiritual way of life; and he ascends when he arrives at the lofty eminence of that same life through habitual practice. Heavenly desires, spiritual virtues, and good works are on high; earthly affections, worldly lusts, vices, and sins are in the depths below. But the teacher, in order to properly correct the fallen,

first discovers their faults by examining them, then strikes those he has found. Therefore, so that he may clearly and openly see what he is to strike, he bends the eyes of his mind to see the deep wounds of sinners. But he does not strike what he has perceived unless he descends to touch those things in the depths. Therefore the prophet is said to rise and ascend, because the chosen teachers so come down to see and amend our lowly state that they never forget to return at once to the heights of their way of life. By these words also the freedom of the priestly spirit is affirmed. For many rebuke others while they disturb themselves with a most violent war of anger.

But after having rebuked faults, they are unable to rise and ascend, because being troubled within themselves, they are by no means permitted to advance to the heights of inner peace. Some hear about the shameful deeds of others that must be restrained; but when they have descended to contemplate the depths, they are defiled by a harmful delight in them. Weak indeed and unequal to so great a ministry, while they eagerly seek to loose the knots of others below, they do not free them but bind themselves. What then does it signify that it is said of Samuel, 'He arose, and went up', except what we observe in more perfect men, who so look upon our defilements that they are in no way soiled by them; who so grow angry with us that they can quickly ascend to the heights of their inner secret peace? For they are strong and powerful, and those who bear their own great and mighty burdens lightly are not weighed down by our weaknesses. And because in our correction they bring forth the testimonies of holy Scripture, they are said to rise from Gilgal and ascend. Gilgal indeed, as I have already said many times, is translated as "wheel. But the testimonies of the Scriptures, because they revolve through various senses in our instruction, are like wheels. And because when holy preachers leave behind the care of their subjects, they are elevated in the contemplation of eternal life, Samuel is said to ascend to Gibeah of Benjamin.

Gibeah of Benjamin is interpreted as "the hill of the son of the right hand. Who then is the son of the right hand, except Him whom the holy Gospels confess ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father? The hill of the son of the right hand, therefore, is the eternal loftiness of the Redeemer. For when holy preachers leave behind our lowly state, they rise by intention to those lofty divine heights of the Redeemer, and ascend by contemplation.

24. This which is said, "He arose and went up," can also be understood more simply according to the historical sense: namely, that he did not find in the king whom he had rebuked the humility of repentance by which he might have been compelled to remain. Nevertheless, the same king is left in his office so that he might be corrected by the prophet's very separation from him; because very often those whom the words of a preacher do not correct are struck with fear at being separated from the fellowship of preachers or from the unity of Holy Church. In the presence of preachers they are hard, but once separated they come to their senses; and those who sinned by disobeying now humbly prepare to obey God. Hence, not long after, King Saul is commanded to destroy the Amalekites, so that if he carried out the Lord's command in the slaughter of that nation, he might untie the knot of his former

disobedience (1 Kings 15). Separated indeed from the prophet, he was seen to have done such things that he might be commanded to do others. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 15.) And the rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the people who were fighting against them, going from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.

25. Some fall into sin in such a way that they are held fast by no good work; but some, when they recall that they have committed evils, strive more earnestly to do good works. For by doing good, they cover the evils they leave behind, lest these be judged when uncovered by the eternal Judge. Indeed, if we interpret this deed of Saul in a favorable sense, we find this: that he who previously in the matter of the sacrifice, out of fear, despised the prophet's commands, afterward hastened to crush the adversaries of God's people, those whom he had feared. In this passage it should also be noted that he whom the prophet abandoned went up from Gilgal to face the wars of the enemies. For the just severity of preachers casts off many sinners, whom nevertheless the divine remembrance does not abandon. They lose the consolations and exhortations of their rulers on account of their faults, but they consult the sacred Scriptures, they resume their purpose; and those who had lain as if fallen through the evil of disobedience, raised up through the fervor of obedience, advance to the wars against hidden enemies. Rightly therefore they are recorded as coming from Gilgal, that is, from "wheels": because from the holy Scriptures they receive that by which they can powerfully crush the warfare of the opposing side. But because they strive by conquering to recover the height of their lost way of life, they are said to ascend to Gibeah of Benjamin.

Because likewise some had shut themselves in hiding places, others had fled to the enemies, the remaining people are those who were terrified by no fear, but hasten with their king to the place of assembly. This we see even now in the Church: because indeed many, as if little ones, propose to advance through the pursuit of the private life, while many who are strong are bold even in the open combats of the malignant enemy, so that they openly see the allurements of the world, which might attract them, but they despise what they have seen and refuse to desire it. These indeed stand not in hiding places, but on the field of open combat, exposed to battle, strong for triumph, who are able to fight and cannot be overcome. Whence they are also designated by a perfect number, when it is added: (Verse 15) "And Saul numbered the people who were found with him, about six hundred men."

26. For the week is completed in seven days, but one of them is forbidden for work, while six are granted for the pursuit of good work. Moreover, the number one hundred contains the sum total of numbers. In six hundred men, therefore, who else are designated but those who are strong in work and in the deliberation of the heart? For some propose mighty things, but because they do not do what they propose, they do not reach the number of six hundred men. In six hundred men, therefore, the strong workers of Holy Church are designated, because they propose great things, and they fulfill the rigor of their resolution with the strength of good action. They are rightly said to have been found with the king, because they agree with the pastors of Holy Church in good will and in pious action. For they are with those from whom they differ neither in will nor disagree in action. They are said to agree in such

a way that the dignity of preachers is felt to excel; because even if subjects will and do the same good as preachers, nevertheless those are preeminent in that same good whose virtue of soul is more ardent and whose effort of action is more robust, just as their rank is higher. For this reason it is said separately of the king and his son: (Verse 16.) And Saul, and Jonathan. For why are the king and his son named separately, unless because the action of a good bishop is clearly singular? And because there is not a uniform equality among all faithful subjects, there follows: (Verse 16.) And the people who were found in Gibeah of Benjamin.

27. It has been sufficiently repeated that Gibeah is interpreted as ”hill. A hill, however, is not the summit itself, but an elevation of the mountains near to the summit. What is understood by this hill, if not the high and perfect life of faithful subjects? This life, although it may not be equal to the loftiness of preachers, is nevertheless clearly seen to be sublime far above the merits of others. Hence also concerning certain chief elect ones it is read in the Apocalypse: ”No one could sing the canticle except those one hundred forty-four thousand” (Rev. 14:3). And demonstrating more clearly who they are, he says: ”These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Therefore, when spiritual battles are described, the people found in Gibeah of Benjamin are specifically recounted, because the choir of virgins is all the more violent against the ferocity of unclean spirits, the more they are wounded by none of their blows and polluted by no filth of their suggestion. Free indeed and whole, they are ready for the encounter, strong for the strike. Are not those on the hill the sons of the right hand, whom the beloved of Jesus regards for the merit of their integrity, saying: ”I saw upon Mount Zion the Lamb standing, and with him one hundred forty-four thousand”? (Rev. 14:1. But unless they were exceedingly strong, they could by no means ascend, wearied, to such a height.

Likewise, unless they were free from all thoughts, they would be unable to run everywhere after the Lamb. Therefore, because every virgin is admirable in the triumph of hidden combat, when the order of battle is described, under the type of the people of Gibeah, the special dignity of virginity is commemorated. There follows: (Verses 16–18. Now the Philistines had gone up to Michmash. And three companies went out from the camp of the Philistines to plunder: one company was heading toward the road of Ephraim, to the land of Shual; another was entering by the road of Beth-horon; and the third turned toward the road of the border in the land of Sheba, overlooking the valley of Zeboim, toward the desert.

28. What does it mean that the Philistines form three companies, except that evil spirits strive to introduce wicked things into our heart, tongue, and deed? For since every sin is committed by thinking, or speaking, or doing, the three companies of the Philistines signify this: that evil spirits are eager to drive souls to sin through negligence of the heart, unbridledness of the mouth, and boldness of perverse deed. Hence the first company is said to advance against the way of Ephraim, because they begin by assaulting innocence from the heart. For the way of Ephraim, that is, of the fruitful heart, is good thought. Against the way of Ephraim, therefore, the first company of the Philistines advances, because the

hidden adversaries, if they do not first remove the practice of good thought from the mind, cannot succeed in uprooting the fruits of its virtues. They come therefore against the way of Ephraim when they lay ambush against good thought, by which way it is said to lead to the land of Saul. For what else is the mind of the chosen disciple but the very fruitful land of the teacher? Hence the Lord also, explaining the parable of the seeds in the Gospel, says: "That which fell on good ground, these are they who receive the word in a good and excellent heart, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

It is said therefore of the first company of the Philistines, "They advanced against the way of Ephraim," so that while we grasp the spiritual sense of the text, we may block the entrance of evil spirits to our thoughts. But while we fortify the heart, we are compelled equally to restrain the tongue from superfluous speech. Hence the second company is said to enter by the way of Beth-horon; for Beth-horon is interpreted as "house of wrath. The house of wrath is the mind that serves the use of a quarrelsome tongue. This house that wise man certainly suggests, who says: "Anger rests in the bosom of a fool" (Ecclesiastes 7:9). Through this indeed enemies enter the heart of the fool, because evil spirits, while they loose the tongue to unbridled words, kindle wrath and strike at the mutual charity of the faithful. He therefore who has learned to guard against harmful thoughts, if he does not know how to keep watch over his mouth, has overcome the assault of one company but has not escaped that of another. The third company turned itself toward the way of the border. What is the end of thought and word, except the completion of good work? For we think and speak good things for this reason, that we may bring them to the completion of good work. But when the ancient enemy cannot prevail in harming through words and thoughts, he stretches his snares toward the end, and seeks to nullify or hinder the good work of the faithful.

What is the way of the border, except the pursuit of good work? Because therefore evil spirits strive with many ambushes so that the pursuit of good work may be abandoned, the third company is said to turn toward the way of the border. In this border the end of our life can also be understood. The company turns toward the way of the border because the enemy strives to interrupt good work, lest it be carried through to the end of life. Hence the Psalmist also, expressing in himself the weeping of those who have fallen, says: "They have spread cords as a snare for my feet; beside the way they have set stumbling blocks for me" (Psalm 139:6). A stumbling block is indeed placed beside the way, so that the good works of the elect may be abandoned before the completion of this life.

29. But what does he mean when he says: "In the land of Sheba, overlooking the valley of Zeboim toward the desert"? These names of places are set down to designate the position of the boundary he had mentioned. Now Sheba in our language means "captive," and Zeboim means "gazelles. But what is this captive, if not human nature, which was placed in paradise and is now bound to this world to endure the hardships of this mortality? And what is the land of this captive, if not the pilgrimage of temporal life? Rightly, therefore, when the wedge is said to turn, the land of the captive is mentioned: because malign spirits can wage

war against us in this land of our pilgrimage, but in that other life of ours they cannot. But although the present manner of life of the elect is placed in this exile of captivity, if it perfectly keeps the path of the boundary, after the straits of this boundary it arrives at the height of immortality. Hence the boundaries of this land are said to overlook the valley of Zeboim, that is, of the gazelles. For the valley of the gazelles is the precious death of the saints: because from where they are laid low by dying, from there they are raised up to eternal joys. Who does not know that gazelles are swift animals and make great leaps?

Rightly, therefore, do gazelles designate the dignity of holy souls, which in death abandon their bodies but, as if making great leaps, ascend through immense merits to the kingdoms above. Let him say, therefore, that the boundary of the land of the captive overlooks the valley of Zeboim: because even though the human condition is condemned, it is nevertheless so exalted in the Son of God that when it is led to the boundary of temporal life, it is given over in death so that it may be raised to the height of eternal life. Let him say, therefore: "The third wedge turned itself toward the path of the boundary in the land of the captive, which overlooks the valley of the gazelles"—so that he may assert that malign spirits strive to pervert these final goods of the elect, so that they may not ascend to the joys above. This valley is also said to be situated opposite the desert. What is understood by the name of desert in this place, if not hell? For it is rightly understood as a desert where none of the elect is found. It is also called a desert because no consolations from hardships are felt there. Therefore the valley of the gazelles is said to be situated opposite the desert: because the death of the saints is entirely different from the deserts of hell, and has nothing fitting or worthy of the punishments of hell. There follows: (Verses 20, 21. Furthermore, no blacksmith was found in all the land of Israel.

For the Philistines had taken precaution lest the Hebrews should make a sword or a lance. Therefore all Israel went down to the Philistines, so that each one might sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe.

30. All these things are indeed described so that the manner of the victory that followed might be made clear. For armed men were conquered by the unarmed, so that everything that is overcome might be attributed to the praises of Almighty God. But if we pursue these things spiritually in our customary manner, we will not find them devoid of mysteries. What then does it mean when it says: "No blacksmith was found in Israel," except that for spiritual battles we are instructed not through secular letters but through divine ones? For no blacksmith is found in Israel because the faithful who see the Lord do not fight against malign spirits by the art of secular knowledge. For they would conquer aided by the blacksmith's art if they prevailed against hidden enemies by the weapons of secular eloquence. And indeed this learning of secular books, even if by itself it does not benefit the spiritual conflict of the saints, when it is joined to divine Scripture, one is more subtly instructed in the knowledge of that same Scripture. Liberal arts are to be learned for this purpose alone: that through instruction in them the divine utterances may be understood more subtly. From the hearts of some, malign spirits remove the desire for learning, so that

they neither know secular things nor reach the heights of spiritual things. Therefore it is rightly said: ”The Philistines had taken care lest the Hebrews should make sword or spear.

The demons clearly know that when we are instructed in secular letters, we are aided in spiritual matters. When therefore they dissuade us from learning these things, what else do they guard against except that we might make a spear or sword? Let the prophet therefore declare the history and make known the zeal of the elect, and let him explain: ”Israel went down to the Philistines so that each might sharpen his plowshare or his hoe. We go down to the Philistines when we incline our mind to learning secular books. And it is called a descent because Christian simplicity is on high. But what does it mean that secular letters are said to be on the plain, yet their manner of teaching is lofty? Because although they narrate nothing heavenly, they unfold what they set forth in a marvelous order of speech, and they are elevated by their narration, yet brought low by speaking of carnal things. Whoever desires to know this manner of speaking or understanding, let him go down to the Philistines, let him sharpen plowshare and hoe, so that he who strives to be thoroughly instructed by their eloquence may be brought low even to hearing the carnal things of the secular writers. Almighty God indeed set this secular knowledge on the plain before us so that it might make for us a step of ascent that ought to lift us to the heights of divine Scripture.

For this reason He willed it to come first, so that in it He might instruct us to pass over to spiritual things. Hence Moses, who gave us the beginnings of the divine utterances, did not first learn divine things, but so that he might be able to grasp or express divine things, he first formed his untrained mind in all the knowledge of the Egyptians. Isaiah also proved more eloquent than the other prophets, because he was not, like Jeremiah, from Anathoth, nor, like Amos, a herdsman, but was nobly educated and urbane. Paul too, the vessel of election, was first instructed at the feet of Gamaliel before he was caught up into paradise or raised to the height of the third heaven (Acts 22). And perhaps for this reason he excelled the other apostles in teaching: because he who was destined for heavenly things first diligently learned earthly ones.

31. But now, as I think, the properties of rural implements must be examined spiritually. What then is indicated by the plowshare, which is drawn by oxen going before, if not the affection of twofold charity? And what is shown by the hoe, with which each person alone labors in the cultivation of a field, if not the pursuit of the private life? For certain wealthy and strong farmers plow with oxen: because they both love the Lord mightily and, through brotherly love, attend more diligently to the gain of souls. They therefore sharpen the plowshare at the smiths of the Philistines: because they compose the pursuit of holy preaching from secular learning. But some, being poor, use the hoe: because those who judge themselves unable to suffice for winning the souls of others do not cease to prepare for themselves alone what they can regarding eternity. Each of them uses, as it were, a hoe: because they do not cease to prepare the field of their mind for divine worship. And because in this pursuit of the private life secular learning is also greatly profitable to them, one sharpens the

hoe while being taught: because a learned person in the pursuit of his own life attends to everything more keenly. With the axe, however, we do not dig the earth but cut off the branches of trees. What then does the axe signify, if not the zeal of good emulation?

For when we are kindled to imitate the examples of better persons, we cut branches for ourselves, as it were, with which to feed a fire for driving away the chills of our negligence. The Apostle Paul commands us to hold this axe, saying: ”Be zealous for good in all things” (Gal. 4:18). This axe is indeed sharpened: because learned believers, just as they better recognize the examples of the faithful, so also they more fervently desire to imitate them. The weeding-fork or trident digs the earth more finely, so that it is understood not so much to dig as to scrape and break up clods. What is expressed by this three-pronged weeding-fork, if not the virtue of discernment? By which, certainly, when we examine things done or to be done with subtle consideration, we level the clods of our land, as it were, into fine dust for sowing. This weeding-fork is indeed declared to be three-pronged, because the power of discernment arranges not only what is to be done, but also what is to be thought and spoken. It clears away all harmful things from the hand, the heart, and the tongue, so that the seed which we commit to the soil of our mind may bear abundant fruit. Fittingly therefore it is said: ”All Israel went down to the Philistines, so that each might sharpen his plowshare, his hoe, his axe, and his weeding-fork”: because the affection of twofold charity, the pursuit of the private life, and the examples of another’s perfection we read in sacred eloquence;

but we who are ignorant of secular knowledge are unable to penetrate the depth of that same sacred eloquence. Whence also, adding reasonably, he says: (Verse 21. ”Therefore the edges of the plowshares, and hoes, and axes, and tridents were blunted, until the goad needed correcting.”

32. The edges are not said to be bent back or worn down, but blunted. For if they were bent back or worn down, they would cut nothing at all. But a blunted edge, even if it does not quickly cut through everything, does cut certain things placed before it with the delay of labor. So indeed are the hearts of the simple, which, if they do not subtly understand spiritual things, yet because they slowly understand certain things, possess a sharpness of mind that is not keen but blunted. For often they wish to examine obscure matters; but while they scarcely arrive, even at those things which are plain, by long thinking, they cut as if with a blunted edge by lingering. This is certainly shown not only in the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures, but also in the concealed suggestions of demons. For they cannot drive the enemy from themselves whom they cannot quickly recognize. Therefore, while with great delay of thought they expel the snares of evil suggestion, they cut as if with a blunted edge what they could have severed more swiftly through keenness of mind. But what does it mean when it says: ”To the sharpening of the goad”? The goad is called the rebuke of prelates. Whence it is also written: ”The words of the wise are as goads” (Eccl. 12:11). The goad is indeed called a rebuke, because while it reproves faults, it pricks the mind.

But the goad is blunted when the understanding of the prelate is weak, so that he neither discovers the faults of his subjects by recognizing them nor rebukes them upon finding them.

Rightly therefore is the rebuke of a ruler declared to be a goad, because it cannot prevail to prick the swellings of vices if his mind, educated through knowledge, does not see what ought to be pricked. Whence also, in the type of learned prelates, it is fittingly added: (Verse 22. ”And when the day of battle had come, there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of all the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, except for Saul and Jonathan his son.”

33. What is understood by the lance, if not the keen foresight of the holy preachers? And what is shown by the sword, if not the subtlety of their understanding? For by the lance we pierce through things set before us at a distance. But by the sword, enemies near and almost joined to us are slain. Rightly therefore in the lance the foresight of the elect is shown, by which they strike hidden enemies before they suffer their nearby assault. For while they anticipate by guarding against the future ambushes of demons, they strike as if with a lance from afar those whose nearby blows they are unwilling to receive. Whence also the blessed apostle Paul, when he discerned the armed spirits of fornication from afar, held conjugal chastity as a lance and did not permit them to approach nearer, saying: ’Because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. Let the husband render to the wife her due, and likewise the wife to the husband’ (1 Cor. 7:2). And again: ’Come together again, lest Satan tempt you because of your incontinence’ (ibid. 5). Hence also concerning himself he says: ’I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway’ (1 Cor. 9:27). For he who had chastised his body lest he become a castaway was surely piercing with a lance his enemies positioned at some distance before him.

The foresight of abstinence for taming the lust of the flesh is therefore taken as a lance, by which approaching enemies are struck. Rightly also understanding is expressed by the sword, because whoever recognizes and rejects the wicked suggestions of the evil spirit in the present time strikes, as it were, an enemy nearby and placed right next to him. He also cuts as if with a sword sharpened on both edges, because he condemns both false goods and true evils. But what does it mean that the sword is said to be in the hand of Saul and Jonathan? They are not in the hand of those who keenly understand things near and present and foresee future things, yet do not exercise their strength to destroy them. They openly know that the ancient enemy casts down the greatest part of the human race through the power of the flesh into fornication, yet they do not take care to chastise the flesh through abstinence. So also some clearly see present evils but make no effort whatsoever to avoid them. These indeed have sword and lance, but do not have them in hand. Rightly therefore on the day of battle the sword and lance are found in the hand of Saul and Jonathan, because only the elect are those who both understand present and future evils and more ardently desire to overcome them with the intention of the heart.

Yet this is said in this place so that the people may be shown to have held nothing in hand, who are shown to hold plowshares, hoes, axes, and weeding hooks. For by these words the

elect are not distinguished from the reprobate, but the dull from the skilled. But since we have now shown the armed men, let us explain the manner of the contest. There follows:

CHAPTER IV. (1 Sam. XIV, 1.) The garrison of the Philistines went out to go up to Machmas, and it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man his armor-bearer: Come, and let us cross over to the garrison of the Philistines, which is beyond that place.

1. The station of the Philistines goes forth when the throng of evil spirits is revealed to the minds of the elect through harmful suggestions. It is indeed called a station for this reason: because the wars of the elect are being described. For to stand, for malignant spirits, is to exert great forces in the battle of the elect. For anyone can strive to accomplish something more powerfully by standing than by sitting. Therefore the station of the Philistines is said to have gone forth, so that the effort of the demons in our war may be openly understood. And because they think of crushing the faithful as though they were inferior and lesser than themselves, going forth they prepare to ascend to Machmas. Or they eagerly desire to ascend to Machmas when they strive by tempting to deceive the hearts of the little ones. But the elect preachers, when they perceive the tempted hearts of their subjects, do not delay in bringing aid. They place some as it were in safety, and lead others with them to endure the dangers of wars. What does it mean that the armor-bearer is led to battle, except that subjects instructed through knowledge are to be advanced to victory in interior conflicts? For some know the art of medicine who lack the experience of healing: so indeed in the holy Church there are some who have learned the art of interior combat, but have not yet been brought to the pressing necessities of actual conflicts.

They hear of great men fighting, but the battles which the great endure magnificently they know by hearing, not by proven strength. Such indeed are those who are invited to imitate the footsteps of the Redeemer. ”Whoever wishes,” he says, ”to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Now the arms of Jonathan are the exhortations of the teacher. The armor-bearer carries arms with which not he himself but another fights. So indeed are those who are newly instructed in the holy Church. For while they hear from the teachers about the virtues with which the teachers themselves fight against the cunning of evil spirits, they indeed have on their lips what they do not yet have in the practice of virtue. Therefore Jonathan said to his armor-bearer: ”Come, let us cross over to the station of the Philistines,” because the elect teachers teach their subjects not only the art by which they may fight, but also draw them to battle so that they may triumph.

2. And because lax pastors do not at all take care to undertake the battles that are urged upon them, he does not say: ”Go, and cross over to the garrison of the Philistines,” but: ”Come, let us cross over. They indeed provoke others to the contest, but they themselves attempt those same contests first. But what does it mean when he says: ”Which is across that place”? There is a certain place in the holy Church which, enclosed by great battles, is not exposed. Indeed, to possess the goods of the world, to take a wife, to beget children,

to offer the pleasures of all lawful things to the body — this is to remain fortified against the enemy in such a way that nothing burdensome is imposed on those placed in that order. But if anyone, kindled by the desire for a better life, strives to cross beyond this place, it is necessary that he be prepared for the gravest battles. For those who despise riches, who embrace the poverty of Christ, who spurn marriage, must always embrace the love of chastity. The former immediately have the most grievous battles of the flesh rising against them, the latter the assault upon the heart: because neither is poverty borne lightly, nor are bodies subjected to chastity without great struggles. Hence it is well said by a certain wise man: ”Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in fear, and prepare your soul for temptation” (Sirach 2:1). As if to say:

Because you wished to go out from the place of protection, it is necessary that you now fortify yourself in open war against the strongest camps of the enemies. Therefore, when he says ”across that place,” not ”this place,” Jonathan signifies the virtue of teachers who, through the singular purpose of their religious life, are always in the open field of combat. And because in all that they bravely fight, in all that they nobly triumph over, they flee the vice of boasting and pride, there follows: (Verse 1. ”But he did not tell his father this same thing.”

3. Indeed, the virtues of the elect should be kept silent, lest they be spoken of through boasting, yet sometimes to manifest them for the glory of God is no fault. Because we have represented great preachers in Saul, this fact—that Jonathan conceals the beginning of battle from his father—suggests this: that the great things we do, we sometimes laudably conceal on account of humility. Indeed, through corruption we have already become such that we can never appear good even to those who are set over us without pride. Therefore, when a hidden evil arises from what is manifest, the good is wisely concealed, lest it be stained by the evil that comes upon it. But amid these things it must be known that those can conceal their virtues from their superiors out of this necessity who know how to rightly recognize the good that they do. For if they are too simple, what they consider to be good is often not good; and while they fail to reveal a vice as though it were a virtue, they carry a hidden enemy within themselves. Hence Jonathan, who concealed the plan of war from his father, is declared to be so great that a portion of the army is reported to have been led forth under his command. There were, it says, two thousand men with Saul in Michmash and on the hill of Bethel, and a thousand with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Kings 13:2). Let it therefore be said of Jonathan:

”But he did not reveal this very thing to his father”—because learned men, when they fear incurring the vice of pride from their great works, hide those works from the very ones by whom they could have been helped. We learn better what these aids of the preacher are if we see them in the place of their perfection. For it follows: (Verse 2. Now Saul was staying in the outermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree, which was in Migron.

4. Gibeah, as we said, is interpreted as ”hill”; Migron is said to mean ”from the throat. Now holy preachers are very exalted, not only in works, but also in contemplation. The outer part

of this loftiness, therefore, is that of works, while the inner part is that of contemplation. Through this outer part of their exaltedness, they are seen by us as an example; but through the inner part, they are joined to the Creator in great love. The prophet shows them to us as worthy of admiration through the outer part of their loftiness, when he says: ”Who are these who fly like clouds, and like doves to their windows? (Isaiah 60:8). They fly indeed like clouds: because they are light from the weight of sin, and swift in good works by the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are like doves at their windows, because through good works they extend themselves to us as an example, as if through openings, yet they are by no means caught by the desire for praise on account of the purity of life they have displayed. But the king also sits under the pomegranate tree; because the preacher has rest in the shadow of the Redeemer. He is indeed wearied by great labor, but he is refreshed by the consolation of the Lord’s words. Hence the same tree is said to remain in that place which is called ”from the throat. For what is more fittingly signified by ”from the throat” in this place than the sweetness of the holy Gospel?

For thus we can now remain in the shadow of the Redeemer, if namely we receive his words for consolation from the meditation of the Gospels. But preachers can rest more quietly in this, who the more deeply and closely they receive that word of the divine mouth, the more sweetly they are nourished. This is also the reason why King Saul is said not to stand, nor to sit, but to remain under the pomegranate tree in Migron; because the perfect teacher is teachable by God: and while he strives to feed others with food, he himself is satisfied with the sweetness of manifold spiritual delights. For while he gazes uniquely upon the delights of the Redeemer, he rises to a wondrous contemplation of virtues: and as if from one rind he gathers very many seeds, while through all those things which he recalls concerning the Redeemer, he gladly leads his mind into delight. In this delight of the Redeemer the bride glories that she has rested, she who says: ”I sat under his shadow, whom I had desired” (Song of Songs 2:3). To sit in his shadow is indeed to rest in contemplation of him. His contemplation is certainly a shadow, because in the vision of him we are protected, lest we be darkened by diabolical temptation as if by the burning heat of the sun. Those therefore who rest so loftily can usefully bring assistance to those who consult them.

But nevertheless some chosen subordinates, while they fear their own weakness, while they seek God alone as the witness of their struggle, flee the judgments of such great men, so that they may be seen by God alone in their good action. Therefore it is well said both that Saul remained in the outermost part of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree, and that Jonathan did not indicate to him his purpose of battle: because as long as we cannot perfectly guard against pride, the good from which it can arise ought to be hidden from all. There follows: (Verse 2) ”The people with him were about six hundred men.”

5. We said above that by this number strong men are designated in good work, who are reported to be with the king: because through their zeal for good work, they are in harmony with the life of their teacher. But the preachers of the Church have under them not only those who do great things, but also fellow ministers of the word who teach the highest truths.

They have leaders who strengthen those burning for battle, they have those who run boldly, they have those who protect powerfully. Therefore it is well added: (Verse 3.) Ahiah the son of Ahitub, brother of Ichabod, the son of Phinehas, who had been born from Eli the priest of the Lord in Shiloh. He was wearing the Ephod.

6. For Achias in our language means ”shade” [umbraculum]. But what is designated by ”shade” in this place, if not protection? Those therefore who in holy Church protect any of the lesser ones from hidden adversaries are rightly designated by the shade. But one who sits under a shade cannot feel the heat of the sun. Why indeed are shades spoken of in sacred eloquence, unless because they also point to a wicked sun, by which the freshness of the mind is scorched? Of this sun indeed the Truth speaks in the division of the seeds: ’When the sun rose, they withered’ (Matt. 13:6). For the burning heat of desire is a sun, which gleams as if with light, but which scorches the mind upon which it shines. Therefore, when by the exhortations of our superiors we reject the enticements of all desires, where else are we sheltered but under a pleasant shade, where we may escape the fires of temptations? But diminutively the minister of the Church is called a shade, so that no one may be compared to the Redeemer. For of His protection the bride glories in the Canticles, saying: ’Under the shadow of him whom I had desired, I sat’ (Song of Sol. 2:3). And the Psalmist entreating says: ’Under the shadow of your wings protect me’ (Ps. 16:9). But whence this great Achias comes forth is explained, because he is recorded as the son of Achitob. Achitob means ”my brother is good. Who then is understood as this good brother, if not our Redeemer?

A brother indeed, because He is a partaker of our nature; but good, because He freed our nature, which He assumed, from eternal death. Or good, because we are all evil, as He Himself says: ’If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children’ (Matt. 7:11). Achias therefore is called the son of Achitob, so that those who are powerful in the Church may be understood to possess their power solely from the imitation of the Redeemer. Moreover, the same Achitob is declared the brother of Ichabod, because he is named after the translation of glory. For our Redeemer according to the flesh was born of the Jewish people. Since from that people all the ornament of the temple, all the rites of sacrifices, all the mysteries of the Scriptures passed over to the Gentile people, the translation of glory is rightly recalled in the brother of Achitob. This same Achitob is also said to have been the son of Phinehas, because the Jewish people, in the perfidy of its error in which it plunged itself, had teachers of its own nation far more wicked than itself. Hence the same Phinehas is interpreted as ”silent mouth” or ”sparing the mouth. He is called a mouth, because through that people the Lord spoke. But his mouth is now known to be silent, because when it rejected the Redeemer, it likewise lost the Spirit who once spoke through it.

He is also rightly called ”sparing the mouth,” because he fell once into the guilt of so great blood that he can in no way be converted to Him through penitence and confession. He is therefore called ”sparing the mouth,” because he disdains to blush in pious confession. Against which blessed Job, in the person of the converted, promises, saying: ’I will not spare my mouth; I will speak in the tribulation of my spirit’ (Job 7:11). But because that

people likewise had the dignity of religion in its patriarchs and prophets, the same Phinehas is declared to have been born of Eli, priest of the Lord. For Eli means "my God," and Shiloh means "sent. But sometimes in holy Scripture the elect preachers are understood as "gods. Whence also the Lord says to Moses: 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1). And in the law He commands, saying: 'You shall not speak ill of the gods' (Exod. 22:28). Therefore the father of Phinehas is called "my God," because indeed the Jewish people imitates according to the letter the Scriptures of those who merited both to perceive the word of God with a revealed mind and to conceal it, as it were, in the container of the letter. Indeed the Truth showed these through Himself, when He expounded the words of the Psalmist, saying: 'He called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken' (John 10:35).

Moreover, he is declared to have been born in Shiloh, because the Jewish people, though carnally, is still nevertheless instructed in the spiritual Scriptures. Since therefore every chosen and wise person in holy Church follows through teaching the Lord born of the Jewish people, Achias, who is called "shade," is said to be the son of Achitob, brother of Ichabod, son of Phinehas, son of Eli. He is also described as wearing the ephod, so that it may be openly shown that one who does not shine with the beauty of a good way of life and with light can in no way protect others. There follows: (Verse 3.) 'But the people did not know where Jonathan had gone.'

7. What does it mean that the people did not know where Jonathan went, except that the chosen teacher strives to conceal through humility the things he intends to do? Hence in the Gospel the Lord also says: "Let not your left hand know what your right hand does" (Matt. 6:3). For if eternal things are figured by the right hand, and the present life by the left, we have men on the left and angels on the right. When, however, through good works we strive toward the fellowship of the citizens above, our right hand is said to be at work. And our left hand does not know the works of the right, if we have our co-workers — namely, the faithful of holy Church — as helpers in the work, yet refuse to have them as praisers leading to pride. Rightly, therefore, it is said: "The people did not know where Jonathan had gone," because we strive to do great things well only when we avoid displaying what we do for the sake of show. But since we bring these things forward as an example of the elect, we ought to examine attentively not only where he goes, but also by what way he goes. There follows: (Verse 4.) "Between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the garrison of the Philistines, there were prominent rocks on either side, and steep crags jutting out on both sides like teeth: the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh."

8. Since the life of the elect is lofty in merits, while the condition of malignant spirits is lowly, what does it mean that there is said to be an ascent by which Jonathan tries to reach the garrison of the Philistines? For concerning these same Philistines as a type of demons, it was said not far above: "Going up, they encamped at Michmash" (1 Kings 13:5). But they are said to be above us insofar as we appear lesser in strength. They are also known to be above us in that which we cannot penetrate through understanding. Therefore, as

often as we resolve to contend with reprobate spirits, we must prepare our strength for the ascent, because as men we strive to fight against angels. Hence also that vigorous athlete, powerfully encouraging his fellow soldiers, says: ”Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). For because he had foreknown that he would fight against the spiritual wickedness of principalities and powers, he was certainly preparing the strength of his mind for the ascent to the heights. When wicked spirits subject the hearts of sinners to themselves, they indeed dominate them through manifold vices. If therefore we strive to overcome them there as well, it is very necessary for us to ascend, so that we may be able to powerfully strike their ranks. For the lustful must be saved in one way, the slothful in another; the vainglorious in one way, the proud in another. But in order that the chosen teacher may be equal to all these things, because he raises his mind through the keen counsels of constant meditation, he strengthens himself as if for the ascent to the Philistines.

9. Well indeed, not one ascent is affirmed, but many ascents are said to exist, because innumerable enemies must be met by many paths. This is done well when fitting and proper remedies are applied to individual vices. For, to touch briefly on some of them, the spirit of fornication is driven away by the virtue of continence; but it is more easily overcome if the flesh diminishes its assault through abstinence, lest, conquered, it submit itself to worldly desire. Gluttony is broken by abstinence; but he who does not fill his mind with spiritual food cannot maintain abstinence from bodily food. For he powerfully weakens the body who inflames his heart with love of heavenly things, because while he strongly loves spiritual things, he forcefully suppresses the desires of the flesh. Against the vice of avarice the good of voluntary poverty is opposed, but he who does not yet know how to love eternal treasures cannot be poor in spirit. Thus indeed anger is conquered if, through love of heavenly things, all earthly things are perfectly despised, because he who does not fear temporal loss no longer has reason to be angry. Thus also the vice of sloth, that is, weariness of heart, is driven away if heavenly goods are always contemplated. Indeed, the mind that joyfully beholds such pleasant goods can in no way grow weary. The distressing evil of sadness is also swallowed up by the broad field of spiritual joy;

but that spiritual joy does not pour itself into the mind that does not know how to transcend the distresses of temporal life through contemplation. Sadness is indeed well conquered if the rewards of temporal labors are seen, because from the very thing by which the chosen mind considers itself afflicted temporally, it hopes to rejoice eternally in the heavenly homeland. Because, therefore, the preacher uses a great diversity of counsel for curing the various diseases of souls, and because that same counsel is grasped by deep consideration of the mind, well are the places where Jonathan desired to cross over to the garrison of the Philistines said to be ascents. And because many difficulties stand in the way of driving out evil spirits from the hearts of sinners, rocks are mentioned as being among the ascents. For what is signified by these two rocks, namely Boses and Seneh, except desire and sin? For Boses is said to mean ”primacy,” and Seneh ”sun” or ”hearing. Well does the name ”pri-

macy" suit desire, because it first occupies the mind before the mind submits itself to sin. By the name "sun" the delight of sin is also rightly figured, because it closes the eyes of the mind from the sight of truth and opens them to vanity. Whence also to the first humans it is said by the seducing spirit through the serpent: "On whatever day you eat from the tree that is in the midst of paradise, your eyes shall be opened" (Genesis 3).

In that eating, indeed, the eyes of the transgressors were opened by sinning, so that they perceived the rays of false light in the experience of transgression, and grew dim from the lofty contemplation of heavenly brightness. Indeed, the Psalmist, fleeing from opening his eyes to this light, beseeches the Lord, saying: "Turn away my eyes, lest they see vanity" (Psalm 118:37). Blessed Job, despising this with a lofty mind, longing to be counted among the merits of the perfect, said: "For now I would be sleeping in silence, and I would rest in my sleep; or, like a hidden miscarriage, I would not exist; or like those who, having been conceived, did not see the light" (Job 3:13). Who are these, except those who strongly guarded themselves from sinning? One crag, therefore, is called Boses, the other Seneh, because if desire claims a place for itself in the mind, it lifts the eyes of that same mind toward the pleasing allurement of sin, as if toward seeing the light of the sun. Well also are they called rocks, because these two things attach themselves to the minds of the wicked, so that they no longer easily allow preachers to lead them back to themselves. But they are also called crags, because on this side and that, namely both in mind and body, they maintain the steep habit of wickedness. For while they are made firm by no integrity of character and no integrity of works, they are, in the manner of a crag, steep on every side.

And because they are said to be in the shape of teeth, what does this give us to understand except what we often see — that those who despise the exhortations of preachers attempt to bite their lives with slander? But concerning the same crags it is added: (Verse 5) "One jutting out to the north, opposite Michmash, and the other to the south, opposite Gibeah."

10. The first rock juts out to the North, the other to the South, because through concupiscence the fervor of charity is extinguished, and through sin the ardor of concupiscence is increased. For the reprobate mind, while it is subjected to concupiscence, is stripped of charity, and while it does not fear to sin, it kindles in itself ever more fierce desires for sinning. For as if placed at the highest altitude and heat of its day, in the flood of sin it both rejoices immoderately and is dissolved ardently. Therefore he badly strives to cure the disease of concupiscence who thinks to fulfill his desires more greedily by sinning so that he might find rest. Indeed, concupiscence after sin will be all the greater, the more the delight of sin begins to be pleasing to itself. But the first rock is said to be situated opposite Magmas, the other to jut out facing Gabaa. Magmas, as we have already sufficiently explained, means humility; Gabaa is interpreted as hill. Concupiscence stands directly opposite to humility, while the enticement of sin stands against heavenly conduct. For everyone who desires what is forbidden, while he despises the one who commands, is proud. Therefore he stands opposite to humility, which he does not retain in the devotion of obedience. But he who is also dissolved in the fervor of sin, as if by the noonday brightness, juts out against

Gabaa, that is, the hill, because while he opposes heavenly things, he is prepared for the punishments of hell. But since such people are also led to eternal life by the preaching of the Saints, let us consider the zeal of those preachers in the deed of Jonathan. For there follows: (Verse 6.) Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf, for it is not difficult for the Lord to save, whether by many or by few.

11. What is the garrison of the Philistines, if not the strength of malignant spirits? For holy men, when they prepare themselves for the correction of sinners, openly know that they fight against angels fallen from heaven. This battle, therefore, since it is between angels and men, is fought by the strong against the weak, by the cunning against the simple. For he had received an assault from these strong ones, who said: "The strong have rushed upon me, though neither my iniquity nor my sin, O Lord" (Psalm 58:4). Paul also, perceiving the cunning of the fallen angel, says: "We are not ignorant of his cunning" (2 Cor. 2:11). Against the cunning, therefore, the way of cautious reasoning must be sought; against the strong, however, divine help must be sought. So that it may be understood that preaching must be carried out with great caution, Jonathan is said to have invited his armor-bearer to cross over with him. And so that in driving out the enemies, confidence may be placed in God's mercy, he speaks saying: "Because it is not difficult for God to save, whether by many or by few." And because the conversion of the wicked is not easy, he says: "Perhaps God will act for us." He says "perhaps" because he does not yet fully presume upon the complete salvation of sinners. But the chosen subordinate shows the pattern of the virtue of humility, because he adds: (Verse 7.) And his armor-bearer said to him: "Do all that pleases your heart. Go where you wish, and I will be with you wherever you desire."

12. Some subjects, while neglecting the measure of their own order, confuse that same measure in such a way that they share in the decision-making of their superiors, yet refuse to obey their commands. They easily dare to correct the words of their superiors, but do not strive to easily fulfill what they command. What then is shown to us in the voice of this armor-bearer, except that free decision-making must be left to those in authority, and the virtue of obedience must be held by subjects without slackening? For, to assign free authority of decision-making to preachers, he says: "Do all things that please your heart." And to show the ready willingness of subjects for every service, he adds: "Go where you desire, and I will be with you wherever you wish." Nor indeed did he say there: "Do some things that are in your heart, and do not do some things, or do them differently"; nor here: "Go there, and I will be with you, but there I will not be with you." "Do all things," he says, because all things are to be arranged by the decision of superiors. "I will likewise be with you," he says, "wherever you wish"; because one who is subject to any command of obedience ought not to be absent from it. There follows: (Verses 8-10.) And Jonathan said: "Behold, we will cross over to those men, and when we have appeared to them, if they speak to us in this manner: 'Wait until we come to you,' let us stand in our place and not go up to them. But if they say: 'Come up to us,' let us go up, because the Lord has delivered them into our hands."

13. It is the certain and undoubted judgment of the holy Church that chosen preachers must consider not only what, how much, and when they speak, but also to whom they speak. Hence the Lord too, concealing the word from the knowledge of certain people, forbids the disciples, saying: "Do not cast your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6). Likewise Scripture forbids the word to be poured out uselessly, and says: "Where there is no hearing, do not pour out speech" (Ecclus. 32:6). What then does it mean that Jonathan says: "If they say: Wait until we come to you, let us stand in our place; but if they say: Come up to us, let us go up, because the Lord has delivered them into our hands" — unless that the chosen preacher must attentively discern to whom he ought to bring forth the word of life? But because this now seems to be shown in the literal sense, let us express it more subtly. Preachers cross over to sinners when they please those to whom they present words not only by word but also by life. Who then are those who say: "Come up to us," unless those who bring forth signs of devotion, because they both reverently hear the word of salvation and earnestly desire to retain it? Therefore one must ascend to these, in whom, even if there is great labor in the work of ministry, there are also great gains of salvation.

On the contrary, sinners eagerly desire to cross over to the teachers when they are plunged into such profound blindness that they strive to convert even the preachers themselves to the example of imitating their own depravity. For they are prone to evil, impenitent in heart, and they do not shrink from staining others with the leprosy of sin which they have put on. Of whom the wise man speaks, saying: "They rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things" (Prov. 2:14). And likewise the Prophet, prophesying about these, says: "They have proclaimed their sin like Sodom" (Isa. 3:9). What then does it mean when he says: "Let us stand in our place"? It is as if he were saying: If we cannot win them over, let us preserve ourselves in good conduct. For our place is good conduct, about which place it is written elsewhere: "If the spirit of one having power rises against you, do not leave your place" (Eccl. 10:4). Indeed this place must be guarded not only from the spirit but also from man, because that spirit not only confronts us by himself but also fights against us through man. But if our place is the Lord, when evil people set themselves against us, let us persist in our place, because when the incorrigible do not receive the warnings of preachers, the preachers themselves must carefully watch that no examples of those people may reach them. There follows: (Verses 11, 12.

And so they appeared to the garrison of the Philistines, and the Philistines said: "Behold, the Hebrews are coming out of the caves in which they had been hidden. And the men of the garrison of the Philistines spoke to Jonathan and to his armor-bearer: "Come up to us, and we will show you something."

14. What is the meaning of Jonathan being said to appear to the Philistines with his armor-bearer, if not that the teacher himself must first display the good that he strives to teach others? For he cannot be received with reverence in preaching if he does not first exhibit the honor of his ministry through the light of a good life. Hence the outstanding preacher confidently declares, saying: "As long as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I will honor my

ministry" (Rom. 11:13). The teacher therefore appears, not so much when he speaks a word as when he is reverently demonstrated through his life and conduct. When the prophet, then, was showing the conduct of preachers through the types of sacred history, he reasonably added, saying: "So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. As if to say: Because he resolved to teach, he first showed his life to those to whom he had arranged to speak. But what does it mean that the Philistines despise those who appear and yet say to them, "Come up to us," unless that very often even those who will run to the laments of repentance through the preachers' preaching despise the preachers' excellent life? And while they criticize them for abandoning the pursuit of a more secluded life, they declare that they have come out of their caves. As if they were saying: Those who seemed to have fled the world with all their intent are now going out into the world under the pretense of preaching.

But many who accuse righteous preachers suspect that the evils they charge against them actually exist in them. Yet by the very fact that they condemn evil, they give hope to the preachers, because they can more easily be drawn to carry out the good that they defend. Therefore, while with good intention they censure false evils in the righteous, they are indeed mad in voice, but even in their madness they pledge to the preachers the fruit of their salvation. And since the ascent was discussed above, it remains to inquire what it means that they say: "We will show you a thing. But this literally signifies threats. It is as if they were saying: If you come up here, you will feel by suffering how strong we are. In the conversion of the wicked, likewise, it is easy to gather how much harm they are accustomed to inflicting when they drive out the righteous. But since, with God as our guide, we have led the carnal sense of the history to a spiritual understanding, when holy teachers observe the conversion of sinners through certain emerging signs, a "thing" is also promised by them, because they promise to return to true being. For a "thing" has some being, but sin has no being at all. Hence Paul also says to the Corinthians: "We know that an idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor. 8:4).

But the sinner, because by sinning he tends toward nothing, when he abandons that nothing to which he clung, returns as it were to being. He can therefore show a "thing" in himself, that is, something that has being, because he now holds works of virtue through divine grace. They say therefore: "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. As if by a certain sign sinners were promising and saying: If you propose to labor so in us by the word, what you labor at will not be without great profit. Therefore concerning the certainty of others it is added: (Verse 12. "And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer: Let us go up, follow me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hands of Israel."

15. Whoever strives to accomplish great things knows how to weigh these matters well, if he has always been zealous to attribute them to divine praises. Rightly therefore Jonathan, trusting in the attainment of victory, declared that the enemies would be delivered not into his own hands, but into the hands of Israel, so that he might show the triumph and at the same time designate what kind of person the triumphant one ought to be. For Israel is

interpreted as "seeing God." He into whose hands the enemies are delivered is therefore called "seeing God," so that he may be taught not to attend to those things which have been given into his hand, but while holding what has been given, to lift up his heart to the bestower of gifts. For he holds one thing in his hands and sees another with his eyes, so that he may firmly hold the palm of triumph, but the retained palm of victory may not puff up the one who sees God. But since he speaks these things in confidence, not yet in possession, let us hear how he comes to possess them. There follows: (Verse 13.) Jonathan climbed up crawling on his hands, and his armor-bearer after him.

16. What is crawling on the hands, if not to curve the whole body, to leave nothing lofty in oneself, to bend the upper limbs to perform the duties of the lower? And what is suggested to us by this action, if not that the conversion of sinners requires great compassion from preachers? For what else did our Redeemer appear to do but crawl on his hands, when he became a friend of tax collectors, and received sinners, and ate with them? Indeed, he was crawling on his hands when he said: "The healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt. 9:12). Hence he says again: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. This bending down of crawling is also designated in sacred Scripture by the term "camel. For the Savior willed to humble himself down to our lowest condition, so that he might raise us up to the heights of his divinity. Paul, indicating that he followed this one who crawled on his hands, says: "I became all things to all people, that I might save all" (1 Cor. 9:22). But also, because hands usually signify works, the pastor crawls on his hands when he sets forth to sinners the way that the converted ought to follow, not by the wisdom of speech, but by the example of his manner of life. Indeed, the Lord was teaching his preachers to crawl on their hands when he said:

"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). And fittingly, the one crawling is said to climb up to the outpost of the Philistines, because that teacher can arrive at the destruction of the vices of sinners who soothes the sinners themselves by a great display of humility and a great affection of charity. For while he extends the agreeableness of grace outwardly, he inwardly sends in the hand to cut away the sickness of the mind. Whence it is also fittingly added: (v. 13) "And when they saw Jonathan's face, some fell before Jonathan, and others his armor-bearer slew."

17. The face of Jonathan is seen when those who hear the word of the preacher recognize also the charity of his mind; when, namely, they hear him both preaching heavenly things and loving with wonderful charity those to whom he opens those heavenly things. And they are rightly said to fall before his face, because while they recognize the good things that are in the mind of the preacher, they abandon the state of wickedness. But also, while many come to the remedy of penance, some take refuge in the examples of the great, others in those of the lesser. Fittingly therefore it was said: "His armor-bearer was killing others." To be deprived of a reprobate life is indeed to be slain; and whoever abandons evil by someone's example or admonitions falls before his feet as if slain. For James, setting forth the victories

of individuals in a general statement, says: ”He who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). There follows: (Verse 14) ”And the first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made was of about twenty men, in half the area of a yoke of land which a pair of oxen was accustomed to plow in a day.”

18. This is called the first plague, because the saints are described as striking the wicked even afterward, at the last judgment. Hence Paul also rouses the Corinthians, saying: ”Do you not know that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3). Hence the Psalmist, prophesying, says: ”The saints shall exult in glory, they shall rejoice upon their beds, the praises of God in their throats, to execute vengeance upon the nations, rebukes among the peoples” (Ps. 149:5–6). This first plague belongs to conversion, the second to damnation, because now the saints ask us to be converted to the Lord, but then they condemn more harshly those who have not been converted. In this event twenty men are reported killed, so that the mystery of the number five may be commended. For five repeated four times, or four times five, make twenty. And because through the vigor of the five senses every period of sin is accomplished, and in the books of the four Evangelists we find the remedies of our salvation, by the figure of the twenty men all sinners who are to be saved are represented. They are said to have been killed in half the area of a field, which a yoke of oxen was accustomed to plow in a day. The oxen are the preachers of the Church, who plow when they preach, who, when they open the hearts of their hearers with heavenly words, scatter seed as it were in good soil. But the oxen plow by day, because the Lord threatens, saying:

”The night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). Likewise two oxen plow, namely Jonathan and his armor-bearer. By these oxen, indeed, either the wise and the simple are to be understood, or priests of lesser and of higher rank. Moreover, in the two oxen all the preachers of the holy Church can generally be understood, because they are filled with the grace of the twofold love, and they do not love themselves with selfish love. Therefore the half of the field is this present life. This part, tempered for cultivation, is softened by the rains of winter; that other part is scorched to barrenness by the heats of summer for the sluggish. The oxen can plow this part of the field, but not that other part, because in this life good works are to be sown, but in that other life works are not to be sown, but rather the reward of works is to be reaped. Rightly, then, twenty men are reported killed in half a field, because sinners can be profitably converted only here, where the magnitude of their guilt is believed to be purged through the laments of conversion. But some marvel at the sudden conversion of sinners, because on account of their habitual preoccupation with outward cares, the daily wonders that God performs have become cheap to them. Hence it is added: (Verse 15. And there was a miracle in the camps throughout the fields.

19. All who are perfect do not cease to marvel at the power and wisdom of almighty God in all things that have been made or are being made. Hence the Psalmist too, pressing on with divine praises, says: ”God is wonderful in His saints; the God of Israel Himself will give power and strength to His people; blessed be God” (Ps. 67:36). Hence Moses

confesses to the same Lord, saying: "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, glorious among the saints, wonderful in majesty, working wonders?" (Exod. 15:11). He is indeed called wonderful in His saints because the more loftily they behold divine things, the more wondrously they are struck with amazement, for assuredly in the highest contemplation they see things at which they marvel, not things they can comprehend by reason. Therefore, whenever certain new things occur beyond ordinary experience that carnal and simple people wonder at, a miracle is said to happen among the fields. For in comparison with the saints, they are like rustic people who do not know how to marvel at so many ancient works of the Creator, so many arrangements of times, and so many orders of creatures. Rightly, then, all are generally included under that same dullness of rusticity, when it is added: (Verse 15.) "But also all the people of their garrison who had gone out to plunder were struck with astonishment."

20. What garrison do they call, if not that of the Philistines? What is it then that the Philistines marvel at, except that sometimes other sinners, astonished, behold the conversion of sinners, and while they recognize the goodness of God in their visitation, they are kindled to a similar resolve of conversion? For the people of the garrison go out to plunder when they do not fear to act perversely. For what anyone dares to do while God forbids it, while the Scriptures threaten, while teachers oppose it, he strives as if by violence to seize for his own uses. If anyone wishes to understand demons by this people, he may, because they go out to plunder when they bring violent temptations and lead captive the souls of sinners. This people is certainly said to be astonished, because they do not understand by what grace converted sinners receive a penitent heart, which demons cannot possess. But while sinners come to their senses, they benefit both themselves and others, because many are corrected by their example. Whence it is also added: (Verse 15.) And the earth was shaken.

21. While common men behold new wonders, the earth is disturbed, because it often happens that while some are converted through outward miracles, the hardness of others is moved by certain incentives toward the purpose of good work. For the earth is badly tranquil when the life of carnal men lies secure in the pleasures of the world, when the perishable things which it ardently desires sweetly delight it. But the earth is truly disturbed when the carnal mind is shaken from its evil firmness, and begins to think in a wavering manner, between the evils which it rejects and the goods which it loves. For to be disturbed is then for the mind to cloud over the serenity of evil pleasure with the purpose of Christian religion. But carnal affection is shaken so that spiritual life may be revealed. Whence it is also added: (Ver. 15.) And it happens as a miracle from God.

22. For when the mind of man is weighed down by carnal delight, its vision is certainly dulled, so that it deserves to remain ignorant of spiritual goods. But when it begins to grow weak in its carnal things, it gradually grows strong in spiritual things, so that by advancing it sees heavenly things, and by forgetting it leaves behind what is weak. Indeed, the progress of a converted mind is shown, because first the earth is said to be disturbed,

then the miracle is recorded as having come about as if from God. A miracle truly from God is what God does without man. For when the Lord rained manna in the desert for the children of Israel (Exod. 16), when He provided birds to those who desired them (Exod. 14), God certainly performed a miracle without man; but when He wished to divide the sea, He commanded Moses to touch it with a rod, so that He might display a miracle which He would demonstrate to the people through a man. So indeed the rock is struck with a rod so that streams of water might be brought forth (Num. 20), because the miracle He wished to display He performed through a man, not by Himself, so that by rendering the man venerable, the Israelite people would have been bound to submit humbly to him and obey devoutly.

What then does it mean that the miracle is asserted to have come about as if from God after the earth is disturbed, unless that when the Holy Spirit moves the mind to conversion, He introduces to the stirred mind the examples of the elect, which it may both regard with reverence and devoutly desire to imitate? This miracle is indeed understood according to the historical sense as meaning that many were slain. But now in the holy Church sinners are converted to the religious life, and others follow them as examples of virtue. The Holy Spirit indeed draws them, and because they are drawn He shows them to others, so that He may draw those who have been drawn, and insert those who see into the company of the drawn, so that through the generosity of His grace He may encompass both. For when He works this in the hearts of the faithful without man, by Himself, the miracle certainly does not come about as if from God, but from God. But when He accomplishes this through the preaching of doctors of eternal life, the miracle is as if from God, because He displays His wondrous ministers so that those who behold them may be able to imitate them devoutly. But because we said above that Saul signifies the chief priests, and Jonathan his son represents the subordinate persons of preachers, if we attend to what follows, we find in the chief pontiffs the apostolic solicitude which they maintain. About which blessed Paul indeed speaks, saying:

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire? Besides those things which are external, my daily urgency, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:29). He who indeed bore the care of all the churches was vigilant not only over the little ones but also in examining the deeds of the greater ones. Hence it is also added here: (Verses 16–17. "And the watchmen of Saul who were in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was overthrown and fleeing this way and that. And Saul said to the people who were with him: Search and see who has gone from us. And it was found that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not present."

23. The watchmen of Saul observe the battle of Jonathan, because the supreme pontiffs not only examine the deeds of their subjects, but also the doctrine of their prelates. The former indeed they investigate, whether they act well; but the latter, whether they teach rightly. Often they hear of the conduct of others, but they fear lest they not be well instructed. For what else is meant by the inquiry into where someone has gone, except that he who is sent

to preach ought to be such that the burden of ministry may be safely imposed upon him; so that the mind of the one sending may waver with no doubt that he teaches rightly, and that he demonstrates the words of doctrine through his works. And because the prelates of the churches are innumerable, Jonathan is observed by the watchmen, because the supreme height of the universal Church so appoints preachers throughout the world that it has ministers around itself, through whom it may examine their doctrine and diligently investigate their works. But those who carry out the ministry and legation of the supreme height are elevated to a lofty seat of life and knowledge. Whence also it is well recorded that those same watchmen were in Gibeah of Benjamin. For Gibeah of Benjamin is called the hill of the son of the right hand. On the hill of the son of the right hand indeed are those who, through their sublime life and through their lofty knowledge, seem already to attain to conformity with the Redeemer.

These indeed behold the deeds of the victors from on high, because they merit, from the loftiness of their life and the perfect learning of the highest knowledge, to approve the life of the good and to examine the wicked. They find that Jonathan is not present, because they consider the gains of preaching to be best when they approve the praiseworthy person of the preacher. There follows: (Verse 18. And Saul said to Ahijah: Bring the ark of God.

24. Why does Saul command Ahijah the priest to bring the ark near, unless because they hear the manner of the battle from the scouts? And indeed this is rightly done in a spiritual sense by the chief priests, when they do not judge the things they hear from reporters until they seek their reasoning in the counsel of inward meditation. And, because they often follow the counsels even of another's mind, Ahijah is commanded to bring the ark near. For the priest has the ark who does not have a mind empty of spiritual knowledge. Therefore Saul commands Ahijah to bring the ark near, when the chief teacher seeks counsel from his lesser and learned ones. For counsel is to be sought there where the grace of spiritual knowledge shines forth. Whence it is also added: (Verse 18.) For the ark of God was on that day with the children of Israel.

25. As if to say: He commanded to apply what he knew to exist. To seek the counsel of religion from the irreligious, or wisdom from fools, is not to receive counsel but to rush headlong. Therefore it is well said: "For the ark of God was there," because in doubtful matters we ought to consult those whom we openly know not to lack spiritual gifts. But there are certain things that are improved through counsel, and certain things that are improved through aid. For where the necessity is open and undoubted, there the delay of counsel is not fitting, but rather the swiftness of assistance. Doubtful and obscure matters we handle better by consulting, but open and known matters we relieve by assisting and hastening. Whence it is added: (Verses 19, 20.) "And while Saul spoke to the priest, a great tumult arose in the camp of the Philistines, and it grew little by little, and resounded more clearly. And Saul said to the priest: Withdraw your hand." Saul cried out, and all the people who were with him, and they came to the place of battle.

26. For what else does it signify that Saul first sought to bring the ark near, then commanded the priest to withdraw his hand, except that we ought to arrange obscure matters by consulting, and fulfill with haste those things that become more clearly known? But for the preacher to hear the tumult gradually increasing is to recognize the devotion of converted sinners. It is said to increase gradually, because while the Spirit directs our mind toward good works, he gently leads it toward better things through daily progress. But what does it mean that Saul and all the people who are with him shout, except that they join themselves to the warriors? And they come even to the place of battle. The place of battle is the heart of the one hearing the word of God. It is called the place of battle because the word that is received wars against one's former way of life. For the heavenly things he hears now please him, but old habit rises up and suggests that he despise what he has heard. The fight becomes still fiercer, because what the preacher praises, the malignant spirits disparage by dissuading, and they raise themselves up as if in battle against the saints, while by warring they destroy what is proclaimed by the voice of the latter. What then is it to come to the place of battle, except to arrive through the approach of inquiry at the secrets of the hearer's heart, where one may swiftly find the enemies and powerfully strike them down?

For those who do not know how to examine interior things cannot reach the place of battle. Or the place of battle is where the frequent fame of great religion exists. For when countless people hasten there—those who desire both to put off the old life and to put on the new—it is rightly called the place of battle, because daily the army of spiritual virtues fights there against the multitude of vices. There indeed, the greater the battles, the more glorious the victories. There, the more frequent the assaults of the enemies, the more praiseworthy the number of triumphs: where not only is the lofty virtue of the great exalted, but the common valor of all is displayed in a wondrous demonstration of fortitude. Whence it also follows: (Verse 20. And behold, the sword of each one had been turned against his neighbor, and the slaughter was very great.

27. What is this sword, if not the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God? For those who in innumerable places have been converted to the service of almighty God, because they cling inseparably to the word of God, each one holds a sword, as it were, close at hand. Therefore the sword of each one is turned against his neighbor, when those who have been converted in monasteries pierce one another in turn with the word of God and utterly slay the carnality within themselves. For they are killed, as it were, by mutual wounds, when one strikes another with the word of God and extinguishes whatever lives carnally within him. Because they had recently been converted and had fallen away from secular life, they were signified by the type of the Philistines. Or the sword of one is turned against his neighbor when, through the exhortation of the converted, sinners not yet converted are turned to the Lord; when not only those who are in authority profit others by the word of preaching, but the multitude of subjects strive to instruct as many as they can by words and examples, and endeavor to draw them away from the desires of the present life as though slain, and to present them alive to eternal life. Indeed, we see these gains from the slain now spread

throughout the whole Church across the entire world, because whoever now lives to God through divine grace appears dead to this world by the blade of mutual charity.

For the sword of each one is turned against his neighbor, because all the elect strengthen one another in turn within the holy Church and inflame one another toward the heavenly homeland by the zeal of mutual preaching. And because an innumerable people is daily won for God, it is rightly added there: 'And the slaughter was exceedingly great.' What is exceedingly great is that which can somehow be recognized in its magnitude, but whose excellence cannot be comprehended. He had raised his eyes to this exceedingly great slaughter who said: 'But to me your friends are exceedingly honored, O God; their rule is exceedingly strengthened; I shall count them, and they shall be multiplied beyond the sand' (Ps. 138:17). The exceedingly great slaughter can also be understood to mean not only that many were slain, but that they were slain well. This is indeed seen to happen in the conversion of sinners, when they so abandon their past that they never come back to life for those same pleasures. For sinners to be slain is merely to be separated from a shameful life for a time. To be slain vehemently, therefore, or exceedingly, is to abandon perfectly the enticements of temporal life and to long eagerly for the joys of the future life. But because there is great diversity among those who are converted, there follows:

(Verse 21.) 'But the Hebrews also who had been with the Philistines yesterday and the day before, and had gone up with them into the camp, turned back to be with Israel and with those who were with Saul and Jonathan.'

28. Who are the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines, if not sinners who have fallen from a religious way of life? Of whom it was said not far above: "The Hebrews crossed the Jordan." They are Hebrews indeed by the order of religion, but they are with the Philistines, and they go up with them, as long as they are deceived by harmful suggestions and advance in wicked conduct. They are with the evil spirits by the intention and will of sin, but they go up with them, because, driven by those spirits, they raise themselves to the boldness of iniquitous action. Or they are with them when they carry out their sins to completion by their deeds; but they go up with them when they do not fear to set forth the examples of their wickedness for others to imitate. What does it mean, then, that they are said to return and be with Israel, except that such people also very often come to their senses? For to return is to take up again the love of the religious life. And to be with Israel is to persist within the holy Church in the unity of charity. One must return to this end: that being with Israel may be proposed as the goal, because there is no conversion of a sinner if, once converted, he lacks perseverance in good works and unity of charity. There follows: (Verse 22.) "Likewise all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim, hearing that the Philistines had fled, joined with their own people in the battle."

29. This indeed happens as often as those devoted to the more remote life deign to turn their zeal toward seeking the profit of souls. For they join themselves with their own in battle when they preach the true joys of eternal life together with the doctors of Holy Church, and equally drive malign spirits from the hearts of sinners. But it must be carefully asked how it

is said: ”Hearing that the Philistines had fled. A glorious victory is certainly not to pursue those who flee, but to put to flight those who resist. What then does it mean when it says: ”Hearing that the Philistines had fled, they joined themselves with their own in battle,” unless that by these words the fitting gains of that same remote life are signified? For it is the custom of those men to offer their word rather to those consulting them than to those opposing them, because unless they recognize a devout heart in the listener, they disdain to send forth their preaching as though it would perish in vain. Therefore, before they join themselves with their own in battle, they hear that the Philistines have fled: because they are not so much intent on converting the wicked as on raising up the converted to the heights of a more perfect life. Moreover, because the very sublimity of the more perfect life is usually urged with the great labors of exhortation, those who hear that the Philistines have fled are rightly said to fight.

And so the enemies flee, but those recently hidden now fight, because men of the remote life do not deign to speak except to devout listeners, yet even when speaking, they can scarcely persuade by the great combat of words and examples the loftiness of the life which they themselves hold. And because the weak and imperfect cannot gather the great gains of preaching, there follows: (Verse 22. ”There were with Saul about ten thousand men. He does not say ten thousand, but ”about ten thousand. The complete perfection of this number is not found on earth, but in heaven. For since there are nine orders of angels, and that multitude of chosen men is raised up to fellowship with them, those ten thousand men are those who rejoice in the holy angels and the elect among men in that seat of eternal glory. Therefore ”about ten thousand men” are those who, still placed in the exile of this present age, have taken on in their conduct the form of that blessed fellowship. Because likewise through love of that heavenly life the darkness of sins is abandoned, there follows: (Verse 23. ”And the Lord saved Israel on that day. The contemplation of the inner light is indeed a splendid and most brilliant day, on which the Lord saves Israel, because those whose hearts he irradiates with the light of inward splendor, he raises to the height of perpetual salvation.

For the Lord is said to save on that day, because no one is kindled to the love of eternal life from whom the splendor of the inner light is hidden. To this grace of salvation not only the chosen things of the world arrive, but even those that seem despised. Whence it is added: (Verse 23. ”And the battle passed beyond Beth-aven.”

30. Bethaven means ”house of uselessness.” Indeed, the Lord, showing this uselessness in the parables, introduces a king commanding a servant at the wedding feast, saying: ”Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). The poor are those who do not at all store up the treasures of God’s word in their heart. The maimed are those who cannot labor sufficiently for eternal life. The blind designate the ignorant and simple, because while they in no way see heavenly things, they lack the light of the mind. The lame are those who have lost the step of good works. But ”the battle reached as far as Bethaven,” because often useless persons, when they are captured by the warfare of God’s word, are reduced into His service

and become useful. Indeed, battle is waged with the blind so that they may see, with the lame so that they may stand firm, with the poor so that they may receive the treasures of good conduct, with the maimed so that they may grow strong for the vigor of good works. Therefore the battle is carried as far as Bethaven, when those are captured by the preaching of the saints who seemed to possess no usefulness necessary to anyone. Whence it is also added: (Verse 24.) "And every man of Israel was joined together on that day."

31. Indeed every man is joined to the preacher when no condition of men is left from which those who are converted are not led to a good way of life. But those who are joined to Saul are called men, because whatever we may be in the world, we are admonished to be strong in the service of almighty God. For unless they are men, they are by no means joined to the preachers, because they do not agree with them unless they themselves do the brave deeds which those preachers praise in their teaching. But now that the enemies have been defeated, now that the strong have been joined to him, what the king does must be carefully considered. There follows: (Verse 24.) And Saul adjured the people, saying: Cursed be the man who eats until evening, until I am avenged of my enemies.

32. The enemies of preachers are those about whom the Psalmist pleads, saying: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God, and free me from those who rise up against me" (Psalm 58:1). The enemies of the saints are rightly called unclean spirits, because the saints detest with great zeal embracing the enticements of the world which those spirits suggest. For whoever still finds something pleasing in the counsels of the evil spirit is certainly not his enemy, because he has not yet learned to hate one whose enticements he does not reject. They are also called enemies of the saints, as is revealed from sacred Scripture. For through everything they suggest, through everything by which they flatter, they strive to destroy those souls whom they pleasingly favor. What then does it mean that he adjures the people not to eat until evening, until he takes vengeance on his enemies? But it should be noted that he was saying these things when the enemies had already been defeated. What indeed is eating for the victors, except to delightfully receive the food of vain praise from a completed work of virtue? "Cursed," he says, "is everyone who eats before evening," because whoever now gladly receives vain praises then loses the eternal praises of the Creator. Therefore the people are adjured not to eat, because they are bound by the precept of the teachers never to glory vainly in a good work.

Let one do mighty deeds by living well, but as long as one lives, let one beware of seeking praises for strength, so as not to lose being praised eternally after death. For he who forbade the people to eat before evening certainly granted that they should eat at evening. And because evening is the end of the day, those who can abstain before evening eat at evening, because whoever now disdains being praised for a great deed, when brought to the end of life, is found worthy of eternal praises. This is what the Lord promises He will give to the elect in the Gospel, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because you were faithful in a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:23). Hence again, coming to judgment, He says: "Come, blessed of my Father, receive

the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Then indeed we take vengeance on our enemies, because all diabolical temptations then vanish. For since the snares of demons no longer harm by tempting, when we die in the flesh we take vengeance on our enemies, whom we no longer fear at all, as though they were slain. Therefore we defer our eating until evening, if we reserve the proclamations of our praise at the end for the coming Judge.

Then indeed we must eat, because He who then comes as Judge now as the leader of our army promises His fellow soldiers, saying: "He will make them recline at table, and passing by He will serve them" (Luke 12:37). Then indeed the victors recline at table, because received in the lofty seat of inner rest, they are delighted by the praises of everlasting life, when while they themselves are silent the proclamations of all their good works resound together, and those things are brought forth to glory which here were borne to battle with great virtue. There follows: (Verses 25, 26) "And all the common people of the land came into a forest, in which there was honey upon the surface of the field. And so the people entered the forest, and flowing honey appeared, and no one put his hand to his mouth."

33. A forest is a wooded and hilly place. By this name, indeed, the hearts of worldly people are fittingly designated, because while they serve external cares with all their attention, like wooded places, they are not cultivated for the fruit of good work by the plowshare of preaching. And who are signified by the name of the common people in this passage, if not religious and simple men? Indeed, they are called the common people of the earth: because they are great in good work, yet they are not great in the loftiest contemplation. Noble indeed in action, but common people in comparison with the highest men. What then does it mean that the common people of the earth came into the forest, except that religious and simple men, through the examples of their good works, are often brought to the notice of worldly people? There honey appears in the field, because from the example of good work among worldly people they find both the breadth of devotion and the fruit of reverence. For what is a field in a forest, if not devotion in the uncultivated and unpurged heart of worldly people? And what is honey upon the surface of the field, if not the sweetness of favor?

This is rightly said to appear after the entrance of the common people, because indeed the rough hearts of worldly people, if they do not first see the examples of religious men, are unable either to stretch themselves out in the breadth of devotion or to proclaim the glory of another's holiness. Before the entrance, there is only a forest, having neither a field nor flowing honey. But after the entrance, it has both the breadth of a field and the sweetness of honey, because often those who love the world receive the examples of the saints with fervent love, so that the good they see not only pleases them, but they also ardently desire to proclaim it. Yet the life of the saints is to be praised, and that praise must in no way be seized by them to whom it belongs through vainglory. It ought only to be seen, not received, so that one may rejoice that God is glorified in his work, but may scorn to be exalted on account of God's grace. Hence it is carefully expressed that flowing honey appeared upon the surface of the field, and yet no one brought his hand with the honey to his mouth. The

honey flows, because the sweet fame of the saints runs sweetly and swiftly. But no one brings his hand to his mouth, because he does not receive the sweetness of praise for his good work. To bring one's hand with honey to the mouth is to receive with pleasure the praise of one's own work.

Let the honey therefore flow, and let no one bring his hand to his mouth, so that the fame of the saints may flow sweetly, and may not exalt those from whom it flows. Let it flow so that it may satisfy others, but let it not be consumed, lest it serve up death. Hence it is added: (Verse 26. For the people feared the oath. The oath of the King is: Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (Luke 18:14). Likewise the oath of the King is what he pronounces against hypocrites, saying: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward (Matthew 6:16). Therefore the people fear the oath, because lest they lose eternal rewards, they take care not to receive temporal praises. There follows: (Verse 27. But Jonathan had not heard when his father adjured the people, and he stretched out the tip of the staff that he had in his hand, and dipped it in the honeycomb, and brought his hand back to his mouth, and his eyes were brightened.

34. Whom does Jonathan represent in this place, if not those who are great in word and deed, yet are not great in the zeal of circumspection? They preach lofty things indeed, they perform mighty works, but they do not manfully hold themselves in the circumspection of humility. For what does it mean that he holds a rod in his hand, except that the discipline by which he forbids others from sinning does not restrain himself? Indeed, the rod by which little ones are accustomed to be corrected can fittingly signify the word of correction. Therefore preaching and good work are the rod and the hand. What then is it to extend the rod and bring back the hand to the mouth with honey, except to receive the taste of vain favor both from the word of preaching and from the zeal of good work? But because he sins in the manner of the elect, he is said to take up honey not with the rod, but with the tip of the rod. For they turn the rod and hand full of honey to their mouth who, according to the voice of Truth: "Do all their works to be seen by men" (Matt. 23:5). For while they are sated with their own praises, they have honey not as a thin taste at the tip of the rod, but either in the whole rod or in the hand for a full meal. Such certainly were those whom the Lord reproaches in the Gospel, saying:

"How can you believe, receiving glory from one another? (John 5:44). What then is this tip of the rod, except that for the most part they both wish to glorify the Lord in their work and do not shrink from appearing praiseworthy themselves? Rightly therefore Jonathan is said not to have heard the voice of the father by which he bound the people under oath, because he does not hear the words of God or of His preacher who neglects to fulfill them. But what does it mean that Jonathan's eyes were enlightened from the taste of honey, except that those who receive the breeze of vain favor are strengthened by the same to perform mighty deeds? In this place indeed the eyes are not said to have been opened, so that they might be understood to have been closed, but so that with the vigor of the body restored, they might be understood as restored both for seeing and for destroying enemies. Which assuredly

entirely befits the proud, who perform greater and mightier deeds in proportion as they see their praiseworthy works being exalted. But often a lesser one, kindled with the zeal of charity, endeavors to bring back great men who are transgressing to the remembrance of the Scriptures. Whence it also follows: (Verse 28) And one of the people answered and said: "Your father bound the people with an oath, saying: Cursed is the man who eats bread today."

35. For he reported that the father had adjured the people and pronounced a curse, because when a lesser person wishes to correct an erring superior, he ought not to rebuke harshly, but sweetly and humbly bring him back to remembering the ordinances of his elders. Whence he says: 'Your father bound the people with an oath.' For in order to gently admonish the one who bound the people with an oath, he declared him to be his father. As if he were saying in other words: You ought to preserve the ordinances of your elders with all the more devotion, the more highly you see yourself holding their place through the dignity of succession. The people are also declared to have been bound by the oath of the father, so that attention may be given not to the lowliness of the person speaking, but to the authority of the one pointed out: so that if the rank of the one making the suggestion is despised, the loftiness of the one who is indicated may be feared. Yet he declares him a father, so that the precepts of elders ought to inspire both fear and love. Let him therefore say: 'Your father bound the people with an oath, saying: Cursed is he who eats bread today.' Which is as if he were saying: I want you to be mindful of those things which are yours, not mine, because while you hold the high position of your elders, you ought to keep their laws as if by hereditary right.

Now by the name of bread, the favor of flatterers is rightly expressed, because it both satisfies and strengthens a mind intent on vanity, while it renders it more vigorous for doing things that ought to be praised. This indeed is seen to apply greatly to the arrogant, who are encouraged to speak by praises offered to them. And because the arrogant preacher has subjects like himself who are desirous of praise, there follows: (Verse 28) 'Now the people had fainted.'

36. What is it literally to fail, except to grow weary? For those who seek passing praises from the preaching of the word fail when they are praised, because they bring forth with no vigor the words which they see are not praised. For as though growing weary, they fail when, being despised, they fall silent. But also when they do not eat, they seem to fail, because if they had the lawful food of favor, as though refreshed and strong, they would attack vices through the preaching of the word. Hence the figure of the arrogant preacher is also shown through what is added next: (Verses 29, 30.) And Jonathan said: My father has troubled the land. You yourselves have seen that my eyes were enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey; how much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies which they found, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater?

37. For what does it mean that he rebukes the father for having troubled the land, except that he reproves the leaders for having confused their own decrees through ignorance? By

the name ”land,” the humility of subjects is designated, which is indeed seen to be troubled when, through the erring judgment of pastors, it seems to abandon the order of tranquil truth. And because while they eagerly seek the favors of arrogant men and try to assert that this is lawful, they bring forward their own accomplishments as testimony. ”For you have seen,” he says, ”that my eyes were enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. As if to say: I grew from the praise of my subjects while I strove not to be less than praises. For it is also the custom of chosen preachers that when they observe themselves being praised, they strive with all their strength to be what they hear about themselves from without. And therefore Jonathan reported that he had eaten a little honey: because the arrogant person thinks he freely receives the favors of the tongue for the advancement of life, not for the pursuit of vanity. But it is one thing entirely to strive to match the proclamations of praise with one’s conduct, and another to seek praises in order to find advancement of life in those same praises. Indeed, those who strive to equal praises with their conduct are those who despise those very praises, who never wish to be praised by men.

Certainly, as far as it lies in them, they vehemently flee from being praised, but because they cannot entirely escape being praised, they strive to be what they hear. But some, having displayed good works, wish to be praised for this reason: that once praised, they may ascend to a greater work of virtue. In this estimation of their presumption they are surely deceived, because whoever seeks praises in small matters, when he has done greater works, seeks praises more ardently and far more eagerly. And perhaps for this reason Jonathan was not able to reign after his father, because he signified those who, while they vainly exalt themselves, truly fail. He also added by way of reasoning, and says: ”How much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater? To taste a little honey on the tip of the rod is to glory in some way in the eloquence of doctrine. But to eat the spoil of enemies is to recall the works of virtue through memory and to rejoice in recollecting them. For one makes, as it were, the spoil of enemies when one brings to memory those things in which one prevailed against hidden foes. And one eats these to satiety who, as if he had done these things by his own virtue, vainly and vehemently exalts himself. Therefore he says:

”How much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater? As if to say: Since from a brief taste of favor there has been so great an advancement, what would chosen warriors do if they had full and lawful and just praises for their works? There follows: (Verse 31. ”Therefore they struck the Philistines on that day from Michmash to Aijalon.”

38. The day of the mind is the splendor of instruction. But those whom the arrogant teach, because they are inflamed by the ambition of temporal glory, receive a semblance of light, not the truth. When therefore that day is spoken of, what else is signified, except that often by the aim of temporal glory, mighty deeds seemed to be accomplished? For in that day, that is, by the teaching or example of the proud, they strike, because they serve in the ministry of preaching for this purpose: to obtain the splendor of temporal glory. And because they

desire to become known to all, it says: From Magmas to Aion. Magmas, as has already been sufficiently stated, is interpreted as ”humility,” while Aion is interpreted as ”my mourning brother. By the humble in this place, the little ones and simple people in the holy Church are designated. And the mourning brother—whom else does he suggest, except those whom the Lord praises in the Gospel, saying: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:5)? For he who has already learned to despise all temporal things and to long for eternal things with great desires, while he dreads being held in the body and groans that he is not yet in that joy of eternal life, is rightly called ”my mourning brother. Brother indeed, because he has already begun to be a co-heir of Christ, for whose most blessed and most joyful inheritance he groans with all his desires.

He is called mourning, so that the unspeakable grief of the perfect may be designated. To mourn, moreover, is not to weep in just any manner, but to weep most deeply. For because they are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they have reached that abundance of tears which the distinguished teacher affirms, saying: The Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings (Rom. 8:26). He is also called mourning brother because the perfect are joined to the Redeemer in great intimacy. For he whom the Redeemer loves singularly, whom he nourishes with singular dignity for the possession of the perpetual inheritance, when he is called his brother, is designated in the singular number. Whence he also says to Moses as to a singular friend: I know you by name (Exod. 33:12). Hence it is that it is said of John in the Gospel: This is that disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20). For he who greatly loved all his disciples, when he is said to love this one, the brother is indicated in the singular number. In that day from Magmas to Aion they strike the arrogant Philistines, because in order to receive the light of worldly glory, they preach not only small things to the little ones, but lofty things that the more perfect may recognize.

And because while they harm themselves through the perversity of their intention and some little ones in Christ, they benefit many who are more perfect by their speaking, they are said not to fight but to strike from Magmas to Aion. To strike the Philistines indeed is to destroy the snares of demons or the tyranny of vices from the heart of the elect. But often proud teachers benefit others through their word, and receive none of the praises for that same word which they desire. Whence it also frequently happens that while they do not see themselves being praised and exalted, they fall silent as if wearied by great labors. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 31) But the people were exceedingly weary. It is also the custom of the proud that when another’s tongue is silent from their praises, their own self-estimation is not silent. While others indeed are silent, they cry out, because they carry the proclamations of their own self-estimation in their heart. Well therefore it is added concerning the same people: (Verse 32) And the people turned to the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground, and the people ate with the blood.

39. He carries off the sheep who recalls the manifold causes of his innocence for the purpose of pride. He carries off the oxen as plunder when he thinks about the labors of his preaching

and, by remembering, heaps together whatever he has accomplished by speaking to others, as if by cultivating the earth. He carries off the calves when he is puffed up over the fact that suppressed impulses of lust are brought back to mind. For since two precepts are given in the great praise of the just — namely, the splendor of charity together with the light of good works — when anyone arrogant in his own estimation is puffed up, he is said to carry off both sheep and calves: sheep indeed in the innocence of good works, and calves in the mortification of bodily passions. Among these he has inserted the oxen, because one is not perfectly puffed up who regards himself as weak and powerless in some part. He is already great in his own eyes by the estimation of his chastity and good works, but he raises himself to the height of a greater pride when he recalls that he is perfect in the labor of preaching. But to what end all these things are brought is set forth in what follows: 'And they slaughtered them on the ground.' To slaughter sheep, oxen, and calves on the ground is to exult with base and carnal joy over the consciousness of virtues.

Whence also through Hosea it is said of the proud and arrogant: 'They sank their victims into the deep' (Hos. 5:2). They plunge their victims into the deep who do not raise the heavenly offerings of virtues to heaven through thanksgiving, but bend them down to earth through the desire for vain praise. Whence it is also well added: 'And the people ate with the blood.' The food of the mind is its interior joy. What then is eating with the blood, if not never removing the intention of vain favor from the inner appetite of the mind? For the blood is, as it were, cast away when the mind removes the intention of vanity from the joy of good works. For a mind of this kind knows how to rejoice in good works, because it rejoices that it draws near to heavenly things through good works, and for the time being it shrinks from being seen in those same works. Therefore, to eat with the blood is to take the joy of good works mixed with the intention of vanity. And indeed, when this is offered by others, it is simple food for the proud; but when no one is praising them, the conscience of the proud swells up, and they seize violently as if by plunder what no one freely gives. There follows: (Vv. 33, 34.) 'And they reported to Saul, saying that the people had sinned against the Lord, eating with the blood. He said: You have transgressed. Roll a great stone to me now.

And Saul said: Disperse among the common people and tell them that each one should bring his own ox and ram, and slaughter them upon this stone, and eat, and you will not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.'

40. It is proper to the preachers of the holy Church both to rebuke committed faults and to show how those rebuked faults ought to be avoided. Once rebuked, they become known, but if people do not know how to avoid them, once exposed they are repeated. What is shown in this eating of blood, if not the hidden poison of pride? But hidden vices are not cured unless they are exposed. Therefore, to suggest the manner of preachers, Saul first declares that the people have transgressed, then commands that the animals they are to eat be slain upon a stone. But we know who the rock or stone is, because Paul showed this, saying: "And the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). The stone is rolled before the preacher when the examples of the Redeemer are recalled in his presence. It is also said to be rolled over, so

that it may be seen from every side. It is called great because through Daniel it is reported to grow and fill the whole face of the earth (Dan. 2). Therefore it is not viewed carelessly, but turned from both sides, so that God may be beheld by the arrogant, and their arrogance may be crushed. Let the arrogant one see, then, how powerful in might, how sublime in majesty, how humble in power our Redeemer appeared. For while giving sight to the blind and healing the sick (Matt. 9), he commanded that what he had done powerfully should be told to no one.

On the mountain he shone in splendor, the Father brought forth testimony of his divinity, and yet he said to his disciples: "Tell no one of this vision, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9). And perhaps for this reason, when the Lord was now rising, an angel appeared at the tomb who rolled the stone away from its entrance. For then the stone had to be rolled away, because Christ, true man and mighty God, was to be recognized after the glory of the resurrection. If therefore the proud man has looked at one side of the stone, let him roll the stone and see the other side. Let him not view the stone in just any way, for Christ is not dead, but let him see it rolled away by an angel, because he rose from the dead. Let him behold from one side the eloquence of preaching, and turn it, and marvel from the other side at the splendor of humility. Let him see from this side the power of signs, and from that side let him see that he who shone with the power of might concealed that same might by a command of silence. But while he sees the humble side, let him see the sublime side as well. Behold, the humble side of the stone is perceived, for it says: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8). But if that side is turned, the other is revealed, for it continues:

"Therefore God exalted him, and gave him a name that is above every name. We roll the stone before the preacher, therefore, when in his presence we recall both the power and the humility of our Redeemer; when we observe him humble in his works, and from his humility exalted in heaven. Upon this stone let the ox and the ram be slain, so that in every class of men the vice of pride may be slaughtered through contemplation of Christ. There indeed all blood is poured out, because whoever is instructed by the example of Christ does great things, but does not exalt himself on account of those great works. He is indeed nourished by the joy of good work, but his food is not stained with the blood of vain praise. For if that stone is turned in words, it says: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin" (John 15:24). But because he did not swell with pride at his words, turning himself, he says: "I do not seek my own glory" (John 8:50). The ox and the ram are therefore slain upon the stone when by the example of the Redeemer all horned pride is condemned; when any chosen one both acts well and teaches excellently, but neither does his own life lift him up nor his instruction of others. For in the ram the strength of one's own innocence is expressed, but in the ox the labor and strength of preaching.

These are slain upon the rock, so that they may refresh the chosen mind with joy in such a way that they do not impart to it blood mixed with their flesh. This indeed the chosen

preacher not only speaks but also persuades. Whence it is also added: (Verse 34) "And all the people brought each one his ox in his hand until night, and they slew them there."

41. To lead a bull by hand is to destroy the sin of pride through the affliction of penance. For while by laboring one destroys what one committed through pride, one leads the bull to be slaughtered on the stone by hand. But what does it mean when he says: "Until night," unless that it is not permitted to sin, but it is permitted to destroy sins up until death? Therefore bulls are to be slaughtered until night, not in the night, because while we live, we can destroy sins by repenting, but after death we are unable to perform fruitful penance. And well is it added in the same place: (Verse 35.) And Saul built an altar to the Lord.

41. For when sinners are converted, a heavenly edifice is, as it were, constructed from stones. And since many manuscripts have: "And then Saul first began to build," the name of altar can be understood as compunction of heart. For when compunction of heart is raised up through the word of a teacher, an altar is surely built to the Lord. And it is said to have been built first, because there is a compunction of love. Hence in the tabernacle of the covenant, two altars were commanded by the Lord to be made: one, namely, for burning incense, and another for burning flesh (Exod. XXVII, XXXVII). The first altar was outside; the second was within the Holy of Holies. The first altar, therefore, is the compunction of fear; the second altar is the compunction of love. The former belongs to those who mourn their sins; the latter to those who yearn with all their desires for eternal joys. The stones of the former are recollections of sins; the stones of the latter are meditations on everlasting joys. Therefore the teacher builds the first altar when he sets forth the faults which the sinner, when he beholds them in himself, groans over. Rightly also is compunction called an altar, because it offers incense. But when each person is pricked with compunction for a long time over his sins, he advances through repentance to the practice of confidence.

For after the times of affliction, he begins to burn for eternal life, and he who formerly wept from dread of punishment now begins to weep even more abundantly over the delay of his reward. Therefore, since the first compunction of the elect is born from fear, while through the figure of the king and the people, preachers and their recently converted subjects are signified, Saul is said to have then first built an altar. But from the progress of some, a teacher is often inflamed to pursue the gains of others. Hence it is added: (Verse 36. And Saul said: "Let us rush upon the Philistines by night and lay waste to them until the morning light, and let us not leave a single man among them."

42. This has been sufficiently explained above, but because he desires to strike the Philistines in the night until the day dawns, this surely suggests that, lest demons be able to cause harm in the future, they must now be driven out and destroyed from the hearts of sinners. Indeed, this life is called night when it is compared to eternal life. For whoever has been able to worthily contemplate that life, in comparison with it, whatever appears bright here is judged to be the darkness of night. But that day dawns when, at the end of this life, it opens itself to the souls of the elect. For at its departure from the body, the elect

soul sees eternity dawning upon it, because it did not gaze upon the light of the present age, regarding it as darkness.

43. But what does it mean when it is said: ”And let us not leave of them a man”? But every Philistine man must be destroyed; every little one cannot be destroyed at all. For no one is without sin, except God alone. Therefore the ”men” are capital crimes and principal vices. But they are designated by the name of men, that is, of strong ones, when they subject the hearts of sinners to themselves. Rightly therefore it is said: ”Let us not leave of them a man,” because converted sinners, by the counsel of holy preachers, abandon all their strong sins and vices, but they cannot have no sin or vice at all. They can guard against crimes, but they cannot avoid all sins. They can extinguish vices, but they are unable to prevent themselves from being in some way struck by any of them. He says therefore: ”Let us not leave of them a man,” because the preachers of holy Church command us to uproot our vices; but while they slay the strong and principal ones in us, they are unable to bring it about that certain of them do not in some way live through a faint stirring. And adding concerning the obedience of the people, he says: (Verse 36.) ”The people said: Do whatever is good in your eyes.”

44. The eyes of preachers are the gaze of reason. He who is entrusted to the judgment of a teacher is therefore rightly said to say to him: ”Do whatever is good in your eyes.” As if to say: We who distrust the illumination of our own reason entrust to the light of your reason what we judge to be lacking in ourselves. But what Saul said, ”Let us rush upon the Philistines,” can be understood to mean that he did not put forward a deliberated decision, but by saying this, he was consulting whether they should rush upon the Philistines. But the fact that the people quickly gave their assent suggests what we observe, that some within the holy Church approve the words of their superiors before they understand them. For it is immediately added: (Verses 36, 37.) ”And the Priest said: Let us draw near here to the Lord. And Saul consulted the Lord, saying: Shall I pursue the Philistines? And the Lord did not answer him on that day.”

45. What does it mean that the words of the consulting king, which the people praise, the priest declares must be brought before the Lord, except that obscure and great matters, which escape the simple, are never rightly ordered if we do not seek their outcome in the sanctuary of the mind through careful meditation? For to approach the Lord is to know His will through secret contemplation. And it is rightly called an approach, because we move from external things to internal ones when we try to know the outcome of our work in the divine will. For he who seeks hidden and inward things yet does not leave behind external things does not find those things which he does not know how to reach. Therefore, when counsel is sought from us concerning hidden matters, let us approach the Lord, so that what must be done is set forth only when it is known in the divine will. For many things seem to be good and are not. Many things indeed must be done, but they are done more profitably if they are reserved for the fitting time. Some things, moreover, certain people ought to do, while others ought not. If any chosen one neglects to see these things in the secret place of

meditation, he certainly does not arrange them in right order. But on the contrary, he who is accustomed to examine these things or to act upon them through meditation knows not only what must be done but also what must be avoided. Whence it is also rightly said: (Ver. 37.) Saul consulted the Lord, and the Lord did not answer him on that day.

46. The day is a thought of the mind which is considered good and is not recognized for what it truly is. For while it pretends to be good, it carries, as it were, light. In that day, therefore, the Lord did not answer the one consulting him, because the word of God cannot agree with evil deliberation. Indeed, through the answer of a word we are accustomed to reveal the sense of our innermost will. In that day, therefore, the Lord does not answer, because almighty God is not discerned in the feigned light of thought — he who is always found in the brightness of truth. And it should be noted that he who gave the counsel of approaching the Lord was a priest. For what is holier than the counsel of approaching God? We are therefore priests as often as we minister good counsels to our brothers. For nothing more sacred can be given than that by which each person ought to go to the Creator. But since we are describing the order of spiritual warfare, we ought to connect what came before with what follows.

47. The word of Saul was indeed such that he would so devastate the Philistines that he would not leave a single man among them. This can also be understood as follows: because he wished to destroy the Philistines in such a way that none of them would be able to wage war any further. Great indeed is this day of the mind, in which eternal things are so sought that no temporal enemy is left alive from the slaughter. But because it is granted to no one to conquer so completely in time that he need not fight at all times, it is rightly said: ”The Lord did not answer him on that day. The answering of God pertains not only to His intimate word, but also to His grace and gift. For when He graciously grants what is piously requested, He is said to answer. Therefore the Lord does not answer on that day, because He indeed permits the elect to conquer, but He leaves their enemies, as it were, alive, so that they may find those against whom they must always fight. Yet if this is said because Jonathan’s fault is being concealed, a great fear is struck into those who hold authority. The son sins, and He denies a response to his father. One man is also found to have transgressed, yet on account of the fault of one, all are afraid to pursue their enemies.

What is signified by this event, except that the sins of subjects harm not only themselves, but also their superiors and those living in community with them? But since this hidden fault is investigated by the king, let us now see with what loftiness all hidden things are sought out. For there follows: (Verses 38, 39. ”Bring near all the corners of the people, and know and see through whom this sin has occurred today. As the Lord lives, the Savior of Israel, even if it was done through Jonathan, he shall die without reconsideration.”

48. By these words he clearly demonstrated the well-ordered procedure of judgment, because the fault must first be discovered, and then the punishment imposed. For the order of judgment is thrown into confusion if punishment is pronounced before the examination of the discovered fault. For lest he strike before the examination, he says: ”Bring here all

the corners of the people, and see, and know through whom this sin has occurred today." And because once the fault is known it must be struck more severely, he swears, saying: "As the Lord lives, even if it was done through Jonathan my son, he shall die without reconsideration." The matter must indeed be deliberated upon at length so that the fault may be found, but after it has been found, no one should be left alive in it. He is destroyed without reconsideration who, as soon as his sin becomes known, is forbidden to live in it. But this "without reconsideration"—that is, to destroy—is itself not without reconsideration, because the pastor exercises much deliberation so that the fault, which he discovers through careful examination, may be struck without reconsideration and extinguished swiftly.

49. But if according to the historical sense we consider the weight of this paternal oath, and equally observe the fervor of that time and the lukewarmness of this one. For the ancient fathers, in order to please God, did not spare even their sons from death. But we do not dare to pursue even with a mild harshness of words those whom we love according to the flesh. Behold, he who was raising his son for the kingdom says: "Because if the sin was committed through him, he shall die without reconsideration. We see sinners, and we either refuse or fear to rebuke the sinning. Why then do we do this, unless because we by no means love God as they did? For Moses, in order to properly punish the sin of idolatry, ordered the Levites to kill twenty-three thousand men. In carrying out which slaughter he indeed said: "If anyone is the Lord's, let him join me. Let every man put his sword upon his thigh. Go and return from gate to gate, and let each one kill his brother, and his friend, and his neighbor" (Exod. 32:26–27). As if to say: In this each one will show that he is the Lord's, if for love of Him he does not spare brother, neighbor, or friend. Saul therefore says of his son: "He shall die without resistance," because for us who now live under the grace of the Redeemer, even if bodily death is not decreed, the life of sin ought not to be prolonged.

Indeed, a ruler slays without reconsideration when he does not regard the affection of the flesh, but when he finds a crime, strikes swiftly. He reconsiders, however, who, lest he sharply sting the wicked one, thinks of the services rendered to him by that person, or of the affection of kinship. In this matter it should be noted that not all faults are to be struck sharply. For light stains of dust are better removed by shaking off than by washing or applying fire. Even serious faults are not to be pursued with equal severity in all cases, because wounds of bodies require the strength of medicine in proportion to the nature and strength of the bodies themselves. Most often, however, prelates of the Church, when they hear of faults, grow more heated than is just; and while they measure out punishment, they regard neither the nature of the wounds nor the strength of the offending persons. They indeed are to be tolerated when they threaten, but are to be calmed from vengeance by the counsel of good men. Whence it is also added here: (Verse 39) "To which no one contradicted him from all the people. For because the threats of superiors are to be humbly endured, it says: "No one contradicted him. And because their excess is to be restrained by the wholesome counsel of the devout, not much further on, when the king attempts to inflict the same death on his son, all the people cry out: "Shall Jonathan then die, who accomplished this salvation in Israel?

Therefore the people delivered Jonathan so that he would not die. But because he strives not to strike a fault not yet found, but to discover the hidden one, it follows: (Verse 40) "And he said to all Israel: 'Separate yourselves on one side, and I with Jonathan my son will be on the other side.'"

50. What does it mean that by the king's command the people are separated from the king and his son, except that when a hidden and suspected fault is sought, both the higher and lower persons must be examined? Indeed, often the people sin, and often their ruler sins; and sometimes the very fault of the subjects is ascribed to the prelate, by whose negligence it is said to be brought about. Therefore, when, after the signs shown above, it is recognized that a fault lies hidden among the people, and it is not known in whom it is concealed, let the king join himself in, so that the pastor may know whether the fault is his own or the people's. Indeed, King Saul was not conscious of the fault, which he had committed neither by consent nor by deed, and yet he is mixed in to be examined, so that if the fault also lies hidden in him, it may be found. For he was, as it were, searching himself as one unaware of sin, who said: "For I am not conscious of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this; the one who judges me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:4). As if to say: I do not cease to search myself and to find myself, because if I am hidden from myself, I will not be hidden from him to whom all things are naked. Therefore let the king, not conscious of that sin which was being investigated, say:

"I with my son Jonathan will be on one side"; because chosen teachers, when they rage against others through zeal for righteousness, by no means spare themselves and their own close associates. For they, as it were, separate the people on one side and do not separate themselves, who examine the faults of their subjects but do not care to investigate so as to find themselves. Great indeed is the ocean of human ignorance. For if we can scarcely or never search ourselves and find what we are, when can we search others? For what is it that the Prophet laments, saying: "My heart has forsaken me" (Ps. 39:13)? What is it that Sacred Scripture declares: "Man does not know whether he is worthy of love or hatred" (Eccl. 9:2)? Likewise, the Prophet declares the fruit of his searching, saying: "Your servant has found his heart" (2 Kings 7:27). If the saints can scarcely find their heart, with what recklessness do we cease from searching ourselves? But perhaps not even the Prophet could, because he added: "That he may fear you. He would surely have found his heart if he had fully known whether he was worthy of hatred or love. He who therefore did not find it so as to be secure before God, surely found it so as to fear. But we cannot easily do even this, because while we neglect to find our sins and to weigh them once found, we are, as it were, secure with a lost heart.

Therefore these are placed on one side, those on the other, so that the hidden things of each may be considered, and once the fault is found, it may be struck with a fitting punishment. Because this is greatly to be praised and not to be discouraged, there follows: (Verse 40. "The people answered Saul: Do what is good in your eyes."

51. But what does it mean that Saul commands the people to separate themselves to one side, and the people ask the king to do what he commands, except that simple people do not know how to examine themselves, even when they are commanded to? Therefore he says: "Do what is good in your eyes." As if to say: You will be able to manage our affairs better, you who have received the light of the heart not only for yourself, but also for foreseeing our paths. But the ruler is praised for the interior illumination which he has through grace, yet does not possess through his own estimation. He is praised, indeed, because he is able to know the secrets of others, but he himself lacks confidence that he can know himself. Because, therefore, he does not ascribe to himself the light of so great a grace, he does not neglect to seek it from God through prayers. Whence it also follows: (Verse 41.) And he said to the Lord God of Israel: "Give a sign. Why have you not answered your servant today? If this iniquity is in me or in my son Jonathan, give a revelation; or if this iniquity is in your people, give holiness."

52. We therefore ask that a sign be given when we demand that hidden things be revealed to us. But we must ask what such great diversity of words means. For regarding himself and his son he asks that a manifestation be given, but if the iniquity is in the people, holiness. This however can be stated briefly: because chosen teachers know their own strength and know the weakness of the subject people. For themselves, therefore, they ask only the manifestation of the fault, because they know they are accustomed to pursue it with the severity of penance. But for the people they seek holiness, because they do not desire merely to know the faults of their subjects; but those whom they find doing evil, they urge to arrive at pardon through lamentation. For what does it mean to say, "Give holiness," except, "Sanctify those whom you reveal"? You uncover their hidden things to me, but nothing is accomplished by the uncovering if you do not work upon those whom you reveal by pouring back grace. But because often subjects stand firm while prelates fall, there follows: (Verse 41.) And Jonathan and Saul were taken. And because it is not easily recognized by whom the fault itself was committed, there follows: (Verse 42.) And Saul said: Cast the lot between me and my son. And Jonathan was taken.

53. Those who cast lots often discover hidden things through conjectures drawn from visible things. Thus indeed Jonah is identified while fleeing (Jon. 1); thus Matthias the Apostle is found worthy of apostolic eminence (Acts 1). We therefore cast spiritual lots when, through the outward signs of works, we arrive at knowledge of hidden things. For the lot of each person is his own manner of life. Hence in Wisdom the wicked say: "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they wither; let no meadow be left untouched by our luxury; let us leave signs of our merriment everywhere, for this is our portion and this is our lot" (Wis. 2:8). But on the contrary, the Psalmist prays, saying: "Let my portion, O Lord, be in the land of the living" (Ps. 141:6). Paul also declares the same, saying: "Our manner of life is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The teacher therefore holds, as it were, the lots of each individual when he observes the manner of life of each one. And when the fault is known but the person of the guilty one is not known, he casts lots, as it were, when he compares the nature of the crime to the person of the negligent one. And perhaps he discovers the fault when, by a certain

sign of conjecture, he arrives at the evident truth of the crime. He who does not know both the strength and the weakness of the faithful committed to him presides negligently indeed.

For he ought to know the strong among his subjects — for which virtues they are suited, and by which vices the weak are prone through the negligence of their neighbor. He ought to know what devotion to virtues stirs these, and what character of vices disturbs the negligence of those. He therefore holds, as it were, the lots of each in outward things, when he foresees by which vices the latter can be overwhelmed and by which virtues the former can be exalted. Therefore, once the cause is known, he imprints marks upon the lots, as it were, when we ascribe the stain of an evident fault to the manner of life of the one who, through negligence, previously appeared inclined and close to perpetrating that very crime. But let this conjecture be held for the purpose of investigating the truth, not for the certainty of an established case, because there it is immediately added: (Verse 43. ”And Saul said to Jonathan: Tell me what you have done.”

54. For what is it that the captive is interrogated, except because faults which seem to have been detected by signs or conjectures are not yet to be struck? For it is as though the wound is already held, but it is still covered. Let it therefore be uncovered, so that it may be able to be healed and cured. He must indeed be compelled or admonished to confess the fault which is already perceived as if openly. He therefore says: ”Show me what you have done,” because a crime which is known by certain open indications is not to be judged before it is most openly demonstrated. And because it belongs to the elect to sin and come to their senses, to commit faults and to uncover those committed by confessing them, there follows: (Verse 43.) And Jonathan showed him and said: ”Tasting I tasted a little honey with the tip of the rod that was in my hand, and behold I die.”

55. What does it mean that he says: ”Tasting I tasted”? Why did he not say above: ”Tasting I tasted a little of this honey,” when he said: ”You have seen that my eyes were enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey”? But certain people, when they confess their sins, diminish them with certain words, while they show that they did not commit them with their whole heart. On the contrary, however, when the elect accuse themselves of the smallest things, they pronounce them not as small, but as great. What does it mean to say: ”Tasting I tasted,” except: I carried out the sin outwardly, I fulfilled it with a great burning of desire? And what does it mean to say after the confession of sin, ”I die,” except to drive death away from oneself by repenting and confessing, and to fear it once driven away? This indeed is properly characteristic of the elect, who abandon their sins and yet fear them as though they were not abandoned. And indeed they blot them out with pure confessions and the harsh torments of penance, but they vehemently fear them as though they were not blotted out. But what does it mean that he says: ”On the tip of the rod”? — except that when we pursue our sins by confessing, we ought not to bring forth falsehood against ourselves. Sin indeed must be revealed in confession, but it must not be enlarged by lying. It ought to be such in confession as it was in deed.

Therefore, so that the burning of desire may be well revealed, he says: ”Tasting I tasted”; and so that its quality may appear, it is added: ”On the tip of the rod,” as if to say: Boldly inflamed I did it, but this is what I did. And because it is the son of the king who confesses, he says: ”Which was in my hand. The rod of Jonathan signifies the teaching and discipline of the preacher. It is held in the hand when one not only teaches, but practices by doing what one teaches. What then does it mean that he says: ”Which was,” not ”Which is in my hand”? — except that he suggests the estimation of the elect, who even when they commit evil deeds, judge themselves unworthy of the ministry of preaching. He says therefore: ”On the tip of the rod, which was in my hand. As if to say: I sinned in pride over that very thing by which, in sinning, I made myself unworthy. It was therefore in my hand, and is not, because even if I once practiced what I taught, what I held by practicing I lost by being proud. Now therefore, struck with fear, he says: ”Behold, I die. And because that same fear is sometimes struck into the mind by divine inspiration, sometimes by the threats of teachers, it is added: (Verse 44. And Saul said: ”May God do this to me and add this, because you shall surely die, Jonathan. There follows: (Verse 45.

And the people said to Saul: ”Shall Jonathan then die, who has accomplished this great salvation in Israel? This is abominable. As the Lord lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day. Therefore the people delivered Jonathan, so that he would not die.

56. What then is the meaning of what is said, ”Shall Jonathan then die,” unless that another would have died for the same fault? By these words of the people there is surely shown to us the power of great discernment, because in the judgment of the elect, not only must the causes of faults be weighed, but also the merits of persons. This is openly shown by these words, because Jonathan is declared not to die not because he was the son of the king, but because he had wrought great salvation in Israel. When therefore great men fall, they are not to be handed over to the common judgment, because their prior works deserve that the gravity of their later faults be lightened. But this lightening of fault itself is not to be determined by respect of persons, but by regard for their prior life, because for his absolution the gains of Holy Church must be weighed, not carnal affection admitted. But what wonder if one’s own merits avail for the absolution of a sinner, when from the authority of sacred Scripture we learn that some have been delivered for the sake of others? Indeed, by the good work of some, others are helped, as is said by the Lord to the sinning King Solomon: ”Because you have not kept my commandments, I will surely tear your kingdom apart and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father;

but from the hand of your son I will tear it away” (1 Kings 11:11). Hence it is that not only do the works of fathers benefit their children, but we have also recognized that citizens are to be delivered for the sake of fellow citizens. Indeed the Lord promised to spare Sodom, which was to be overthrown, if He found in it only ten righteous persons (Gen. 18). Jerusalem also is said to be looked upon mercifully, because some good works were found in it. Hence

it is that Eli, righteous in his own life but negligent in pastoral authority, heard from the man of God: "A great part of your house shall die when they reach manhood; nevertheless I will not utterly take away from you a man from my altar" (1 Sam. 2:33), so that sacred Scripture might here openly show that he was both struck for his laxity and regarded for his past manner of life. But he could perhaps be struck in part, because he had some impurity of life. Of Jonathan therefore it is well said: "Shall Jonathan then die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? Far be it! As the Lord lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day. As if to say: He who has done great works has worthily deserved to be absolved entirely.

Because therefore in ecclesiastical judgment, even if there is no respect of persons, there is nevertheless a discernment of merits, he fittingly concluded the sentence, saying: "So the people delivered Jonathan, that he should not die."

57. In this passage it should be noted that the king twice uttered an oath above concerning the killing of Jonathan, whom nevertheless, overcome by the insistence of the people, he did not kill. What does it mean that he swore, and by no means kept the assertion of his oath? But from this matter two lessons come to us, namely that we ought to be both cautious and discerning. Cautious indeed, lest we swear; discerning, if we swear to do perverse things. For he who takes care not to swear cannot possibly commit perjury. But when one swears wrongly, it is more just that the oath be abandoned than that the crimes which are sworn be carried out. Therefore let everyone be cautious before he swears, so that either he does not swear at all, or does not swear that he will do evil things. That we should indeed be cautious, the Lord teaches, saying: "Let your speech be: Yes, yes; no, no. Do not swear by heaven, nor by the earth" (Matt. 5:37). On the other hand, the reprobate are both incautious and lacking in discernment. For they often promise that they will do evil things, and do not trouble themselves to revoke their promises, as though they would incur perjury. Hence it is that Herod swore incautiously, and fulfilled the wicked oath he had uttered in the death of the Lord's forerunner (Mark 6). We ought therefore to be cautious in our decisions, but if we neglect to be cautious, our resolutions must be abandoned, not fulfilled. For to desist from a resolution in this way is not the vice of fickleness, but the virtue of discernment. Nevertheless, swearing things that must be revoked and detested is absolutely to be avoided and greatly dreaded, because when such an oath is not fulfilled, guilt is not entirely avoided, but the lesser evil is chosen. There follows: (Verse 46.) And Saul departed, and did not pursue the Philistines.

58. When Jonathan's fault is discovered, when the king is found not to have fulfilled his oath, he is said to cease pursuing the Philistines, because when pastors are weighed down by their own weakness, they cannot vigorously seek the gains of others. For to cease pursuing the Philistines is to stop for a time pursuing the vices of others by preaching. For they judge that they must first attend to their own purification, and then, once purified, be watchful for the salvation of others, because while they are silent they prepare themselves, so that through their own penance, as it were, they may rise up vigorously to gain others. And because often,

while the teacher, conscious of his own guilt, is silent, evil spirits are not silent toward some of his subjects, suggesting impious things to them. There follows: (Verse 46.) Moreover, the Philistines went away to their own places.

59. When the teachers are silent, the demons depart to their own places; because through the silence of the pastors, none perish except those who are not predestined to eternal life. For the places of demons are those who are not foreordained by divine foreknowledge as a dwelling of God. Hence it is said, when the first teachers were preaching: "As many as were predestined to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Hence Paul says: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined, and whom He predestined, He also called" (Rom. 8:30). Hence it is that when the apostles wished to cross into Asia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16). Therefore those who are not predestined, whether they hear the words of the teachers or do not hear them, cannot be called into the dwelling of God, because through the wickedness in which they were foreknown before the foundation of the world, they have prepared a place within themselves for malign spirits. Rightly therefore, when the pursuit of the Philistines is said to have ceased, the demons are reported to have gone away to their own places, because sometimes by God's dispensation the teachers are silent, so that while they are silent, those who are not the Lord's may be reclaimed by evil spirits. But, as I said, when after their fault the pastors are silent, they humble themselves, so that, purified, they may rise powerfully to the ministry of preaching. While they are silent, they weigh their own weakness, but by examining themselves, they strengthen themselves more vigorously against hidden enemies. Whence it is also fittingly added: (Verse 47.) "But Saul, having established his kingdom over Israel, fought on every side against his enemies."

60. The kingdom is indeed weakened when pastors fall into certain faults. But the weakened kingdom is strengthened when through the satisfaction of penance they are raised up to the work of great virtue. And it is said to be strengthened over Israel, because as one advances to the height of life, he surpasses by his conduct those whom he exceeds in rank. He is set over those who see God, but he is raised above those who see God when he is taken up beyond all others in divine contemplation. Rightly therefore it is said: "He fought against all his enemies, and wherever he turned he prevailed," because he who contemplates eternal things more deeply easily crushes whatever comes against him from below to fight. For since no earthly things now please him who reigns through great charity over Israel, that is, in heavenly things, wherever he turns, he prevails. For what can the malignant spirit suggest to him who considers no earthly things, who no longer loves any joys of the world? The teacher fights when he preaches, but he prevails, because what he prohibits in preaching from touching worldly delight, he persuades by the virtue of his conduct. And because he is said to fight on every side against his enemies, his victory is shown to be one of great praise. He teaches that the teacher is perfect on every side who has the strongest enemies on every side. Therefore when he is said to turn and prevail everywhere, how great is the glory proclaimed of him?

What then does it mean that he is said to have enemies on every side, except that malignant spirits lie in ambush against all our senses? For they deceive some through speech, others through sight. Some they mislead through hearing, others through taste or smell. Still others they strive to drag into impurities through the snares of enticing delight or thought. To some they outwardly present obscene things, which they may then pursue by deliberation of the mind. But to show this encirclement more accurately: when they drag one toward pleasant things, they set their ambush as if on the right. When they cast another down through adversity, they press in as if from the left. When they invite us to past pleasures, they thrust us down as if from behind. They meet others as if from the front, because they often show to the minds of the weak the length of a strict way of life, as though giving counsel. For they come from the front because they do not allow souls to advance toward heaven. Therefore we have enemies on every side, because before, behind, on the right and on the left we endure the battle of malignant spirits. Hence the blessed apostle Peter also exhorts us, saying: ”Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8).

61. But now we know the circuit of war; let us see how kings conquer by going around. They indeed conquer in the circuit who guard their tongue, and mouth, and eyes, and all the members of the body from unlawful action. For while they perfectly fortify the tongue through silence, they are, as it were, victors on one side; and while they see with their eyes things which they disdain to covet, they become victors on another side. Often too they hear evil things and repel them, and because they reject what is harmful, they triumph by rejecting it. Therefore they are victors in all their senses who refuse to be subjected to malign spirits through any one of them. But also when an unfit thought is presented to the heart, the enemy who is rejected is crushed. For he who casts away whatever is harmful powerfully presses down the enemy. And because he likewise despises pleasant things and does not fear adverse things, does not return to the perverse things he once left behind, and fervently runs toward heavenly things, he is shown to overcome the enemies whom he suffers round about. Among these adversaries indeed, because the ambushes set against the five bodily senses are signified, they are fittingly expressed by the number five. (Verse 47) ’Against Moab’, he says, ’and the sons of Ammon, and Edom, and the king of Zobah, and the Philistines.’

62. For he who named the five nations designated the deceits of demons opposed to the five senses of the body. But because a teacher fights not only by living but also by teaching, when he disputes against all vices, when he slays them with the sword of the word in the minds of his hearers, he is surely seen to fight on every side, and wherever he turns, to overcome. But certain ones are specially named which principally stand against him: Against Moab, he says, and the sons of Ammon, Edom, and the king of Zobah, and the Philistines. Moab is interpreted ”from the father,” Ammon ”people of sorrow,” Edom ”red,” Zobah ”burning” or ”converting,” Philistine ”falling by the cup. For what is expressed by these names but the stages of the worst life? In Moab indeed, who is called ”from the father,” concupiscence is designated. In the reprobate mind, because it is planted by the devil, it is as though

begotten from a father. But what is shown by Ammon, who is interpreted ”people of sorrow,” except the frequency of evil works? For because they are many, they are called a people, and because they lead each reprobate to the bitterness of eternal mourning, they are rightly named the people of sorrow. But Edom, who is called ”red,” what does he suggest but the excessive fervor of sinning?

For first one becomes accustomed to sin, then through the habit of sinning advances to an increase of fervor, so that he dares to sin more often, and what he redoubles by daring, he always desires to repeat more ardently. By this ardor of sinning it comes about that in the reprobate mind whatever of virtue or good work had flourished is burned up. Therefore ”burning” is described after Edom in the spiritual war, because such is the fall of the lost mind that when it fervently strives to heap up evils, it is despoiled of all goods as though consumed by fire and reduced to nothing. Zobah is also called ”converting,” because fervent sin both removes the image of God from the reprobate mind and reshapes it into the likeness of the apostate angel. Of which it is already said by divine sentence: When the wicked comes into the depth of evils, he despises (Prov. 18:3). The proud mind now scorns the divine commandments and subjects itself to carnal desires. Who then is the king of Zobah, except he of whom it is said to blessed Job by the Lord: He is king over all the children of pride (Job 41:2)? But the Philistines, who fall by the cup, who are they except those who are drunk with all the above-mentioned evils? Who so forget heavenly things that they seem to awaken to them either scarcely or never. By Moab, therefore, the concupiscence of the flesh is expressed; by Ammon, the frequent practice of evil operation;

by Edom, the burning desire of sinning; by Zobah, the devastation and burning of virtues; by the Philistines, the forgetfulness of heavenly things. When therefore the chosen teacher seeks to lead someone out from the midst of so many snares, what a great contest of virtue does he undertake! And because from every stage of this perdition they return to repentance through the labor of teachers, wherever he turns he is said to overcome. For by preaching he sometimes slays concupiscence in someone’s heart, sometimes the habit of wicked operation. Now he draws those who had passed into the habit of sinning, now those who, with their virtues burned up and reduced to nothing, were serving their king the devil as though set ablaze. And because by preaching he recalls heavenly things to mind, he rouses those falling by the cup and forgetful of heavenly things to the pursuit of the spiritual life, and inflames them ardently through love. Rightly therefore it is said: (Verse 47. Wherever he turned, he overcame.

63. Because while He draws sinners of every kind to life, He is recognized as triumphing everywhere. The Lord was indeed commanding His soldiers, His princes, to carry out these triumphs when He said: ”Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He commands the Gospel to be preached to every creature, because He willed that all kinds of men be led to the faith, so that while He displayed the noble triumphs of His kings, He might show them conquering everywhere. Hence it is written: ”Who wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Indeed He

wills all men to be saved, because from every kind of men He chooses those whom He draws to the joy of eternal salvation. But he sets forth what he accomplished by special fortitude, because it says: (Verse 48.) "And having gathered an army, he struck Amalek, and delivered Israel from the hand of its plunderers."

64. Amalek is interpreted as "a people licking. What then is designated by Amalek, except the spirits of fornication? For their licking is to soothe the mind toward sinning by the flattery of the flesh. They seek to lick as if by the touch of a tongue when they touch the mind with light suggestions. What does it mean that he is said to have fought and conquered against Moab and Ammon, against Edom and the king of Zobah, yet did not gather an army, but to defeat Amalek he gathered an army? What does it mean that he gathered an army, except that to extinguish the spirit of fornication, a single virtue does not suffice? Abstinence from food is indeed very strong against this vice, but alone it does not prevail; for it is like a soldier who can fight but cannot overcome, because Amalek is not conquered unless an army is gathered. Therefore whoever desires to strike down fornication, let him add to bodily abstinence the virtue of humility. For if the mind disdains to submit humbly to God, it does not suppress the desires of its flesh by mastering and ruling over them. But it is still necessary to gather more, because the army is small. Therefore to the virtue of humility and bodily abstinence let there be added a frequent number of prayers. Indeed the affections of a heart intent on heavenly things are strong soldiers against the war of the flesh.

Now therefore in the frequent assiduity of prayers he has a battle line, but an army has not just one battle line but several. Therefore he does not yet have a complete army, and he is by no means able to strike Amalek. Does it profit him that he wears himself down by fasting, that he is pierced with compunction for a time by praying, if the slippery mind thinks impure thoughts and carries within itself the phantasms of wantonness? But he who does not have honorable thoughts within himself cannot prevail in avoiding base ones. For since we are always thinking, good things must be sought out by us, lest we think evil ones. What indeed are all the crowds of good thoughts, except innumerable battle lines of the mind? For while they surround the mind and diminish its weakness, they do not permit the most base enemies to approach it. And because by thinking we are kindled to the desire of great purity, our soldiers are clothed with powerful weapons, by which they both turn the assaults of fornication to flight by repelling them and destroy them by reducing them to nothing. For impure thoughts have no way by which they might enter the soul, which is adorned on every side, as if by the strongest soldier, with the honor of good thoughts. Now therefore let the soul that wishes to destroy Amalek gather an army, and free the seeing spirit from the hand of its ravagers.

Let it sit in their midst, so that surrounded on all sides by the examples of chosen strong ones, girded about with the teachings of the Scriptures, it may have no part of itself empty through which the enemy might break in. Because therefore innumerable are the examples of the faithful, because many are the teachings of the Scriptures, the army is great and strong, but it is not difficult to gather. Well therefore it is said of the king of Israel: "Having

gathered his army, he struck Amalek," because the spirit of fornication is not conquered before the body is worn down through abstinence, and all the baseness of obscene thought is put to flight by good things filling the mind. Then indeed the "people licking" cannot lick him, that is, soothe him by delighting, because with the flesh tamed by fasts, the mind endowed with the citadel of humility, girded with the weapons of prayer, intent on heavenly teachings, fortified by examples, it cannot prevail to offer an opening to impious suggestion by consenting. This gathering of an army indeed well befits kings, that is, the teachers of the Church, because whoever strives to instruct chosen subjects for extinguishing the madness of fornication, these many columns of auxiliaries must be gathered for him by the word.

65. Well is it also said that Israel was rescued from the hand of his destroyers. To be rescued is indeed said to be uprooted. And what is uprooted is understood to have sunk deep roots into the depths. The hand of the destroyers is the power of evil spirits. Whence it is also written: "By whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). What then is gathered from this, except that when fornicators consent to the desires of the flesh, they are subjected to the power of evil spirits? Because likewise the enticement of fornication is deep, when the soul is plunged into it through desire, it is held as if by roots in the deep. To be rescued therefore from the hand of the destroyers is to be freed from the abyss of fornication, which is in the power of demons. Well also are the assaults of fornication called destroyers, because concerning the vice of lust it is said through blessed Job: "It is a fire that consumes to destruction, and uproots all increase" (Job 31:12). The spirit of fornication is indeed called a destroyer, because whomever it invades, it surely leaves him no gifts of virtue. For the labor of ministry he can indeed possess some goods, but for the merit of salvation he cannot possess them. He is therefore said to be laid waste for whom, having lost chastity, no other goods avail unto life. The tender things of gardens are also said to be laid waste.

For what are the gardens of the heavenly Bridegroom, if not the hearts of the saints, fortified by watchfulness and flowering with the fragrance of chastity? For while they admit no shameful impulses, they are adorned with the white flower of modesty. Whence also it is said to the bride in the Song of Songs in praise of the bridegroom: "You who dwell in the gardens, make me hear your voice" (Song of Songs 8:13). And again: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride" (Song of Songs 4:12). A garden indeed, because flowering with the virtue of extraordinary chastity; but enclosed, because fortified by continence. Hence the bride explains what delights the bridegroom, saying: "My beloved is mine, and I am his, who feeds among the lilies, until the day breathes and the shadows decline" (Song of Songs 2:16). Unclean spirits therefore are destroyers, because if they deceive chaste hearts, the deceived hearts lose the tender flowers of so great a virtue. Those therefore who return from impurities to chastity, because they escape the dreadful powers of demons and ascend from the depth of perdition, are fittingly said to be rescued from the hand of the destroyers. But let us see what kind of helpers the king who is said to rescue the people has. For there follows: (Verse 49) Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua; and

the names of his two daughters: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger Michal.

66. The sons of Saul, who are born not to any ordinary inheritance but to a kingdom, represent those of whom it is said to the holy Church through the Psalmist: ”Instead of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you shall make them princes over all the earth” (Psalm 44:17). We recognize that they are three, because they defend the faith of the holy Trinity by preaching it. But since the sons of the king are named after Amalek was struck down, let us refer their number to the merits of the virtues. Mortification of the body, watchfulness of the mind, and simplicity of intention—these are three. Because, therefore, the teachers of the holy Church are strong in repressing the lust of the flesh, wise in guarding the heart, and lofty in lifting the intention of the heart toward heaven, Saul’s sons are said to be three. There are also three things: strength of action, the virtue of charity, and the most abundant grace of preaching. Since the teachers of the holy Church are exalted in their great manner of life, fervent in great charity, and eloquent in great wisdom of the word, they are fittingly signified by the number three. Their names certainly correspond to their virtues, for Jonathan means ”gift of the dove”; Ishvi means ”plain” or ”my desire”; and Malchishua means ”my king is salvation. Because the teachers possess the surpassing gifts of the Holy Spirit, they are rightly called ”gift of the dove.

Likewise, because amid their lofty gifts they are humble, they are called ”plain. Because they ardently seek eternal things on behalf of the faithful entrusted to them, they are said to be ”my desire. This voice is recognized as belonging to the little ones who are subject to them, but the power of so great a name belongs to the prelates. For we who are still small and cold, lying in our negligences, do not burn with ardent desires for the heavenly homeland. But what we cannot ardently demand for ourselves, one who pants with great desires for that homeland which they long for us to obtain intercedes on our behalf. Therefore, on account of the excellence of his charity, the king’s son is not called ”one who desires” but ”desire” itself, so that the fire of love may be shown to blaze particularly in the teacher’s mind. Hence it is also said of the Lord through the Psalmist: ”Who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a burning fire” (Psalm 103:4). For this reason also Daniel is called ”a man of desires” (Daniel 9), because he is said to have sought the prosperity of his people with great prayers. Malchishua means ”my king is salvation. The preacher is called ”king” because he holds the height of his order and the dignity of a great manner of life. He is likewise called ”king” because he holds the summit of eminence and the vigor of authority.

He is also called ”salvation,” so that it may be understood that by his integrity the sickness of the people can be driven away. For the teacher must act daily through the merit of his life and devout prayer, so that each one subject to him may be able to attain salvation. But the teacher must note again that when he is named by his subjects, he is not called ”our king” but ”my king. What then does ”my king” mean, except that he ought to be so familiar to all that he is felt through love to belong to each one individually? But he who is called ”mine” is named ”king,” because the humble and approachable preacher does not seem to hold his

preeminence as his own exclusively, but as the special possession of each individual, since he strives to be so accessible through grace that his eminence appears to be the personal possession of each one. Moreover, the weight of the word is expressed when he is called ”my salvation,” by which indeed the diligent zeal and solicitude of the preacher is commended, because he ought to attend to all collectively in such a way that he seeks and pursues the particular concerns of each individual. For he is called ”my salvation” by each one if he takes up the care of each sick person and leads that person to the blessings of eternal salvation.

67. What are Saul’s daughters, if not the qualities of the elect subject to the preacher? For some serve the pursuits of the active life, while others are hidden in the retreats of the contemplative life. They are called daughters on account of their fruitfulness. The one indeed brings forth a multitude of good works, while the other brings forth the fullness of interior joys. Rightly therefore they are called the king’s daughters, because when they conceive from the word of God, they bring forth heavenly fruits. Whence Merab is fittingly said to mean ”from the multitude. For the active life, because it is perfected through many good works, is rightly named ”from the multitude. Or she is said to mean ”from the multitude” because those who please God through the active life are many. For since those who yearn for heavenly joys through the contemplative life are fewer in number, in comparison with them he calls those who serve the active life ”many. They are indeed many in number, divided in ministry, because even though they seek one heavenly homeland through good works, they nevertheless serve through various works of piety. Of these, certainly some advance so far in love of the Creator that they even abandon good works themselves, and desire to pass over to the sweetness of the contemplative life and to be free for God in it. Whence Michal is fittingly said to mean in our language ”from all.

She comes ”from all” indeed, because no one is perfect in contemplation who has not arrived at the heights of that same contemplation from the labor of good works. Whence the Lord also says in the Gospel: ”Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Then the one who labors is called, when the desire of eternity is poured into doing good. And they come to the one calling them when they arrive at the rest of the contemplative life. In this indeed the laborers are refreshed, because they abundantly receive the joys of love from divine contemplation. He himself refreshes those who come, who shows himself to pure minds. In his revelation, because they find many joys of contemplation, they are satisfied as if with sweetness of every kind of delight, not by another, but by him himself. Michal therefore is said to mean ”from all,” because no one seeks the secret of the contemplative life who has not first been engaged in some good work. She is therefore called the younger sister, not because she is inferior in dignity, but because she comes later in time. But if anyone wishes, he can understand the contemplative life through the firstborn daughter and the active life through the younger. And then indeed Merab is said to mean ”from the multitude,” because she leaves behind the crowds of the multitude and comes to the rarer number of the perfect in contemplation.

She is therefore said to be not ”the multitude” but ”from the multitude,” so that not those with whom she is, but whence she came, may be recognized. But Michal is said to mean ”from all,” so that in the active life the universal life of the holy Church may be designated. For in the active life even those are first who afterward pass over to the secret of contemplation, but in the retreat of contemplation they are not burdened with the anxiety of the exterior life. The former therefore can be said to be ”from the multitude,” but the latter ”from all,” because the active life contains all, while the contemplative life withdraws from the sight of all, so that it may join itself, by the gaze of the mind, to heavenly things. How then are they called Saul’s daughters, unless because both lives are shown forth by the zeal of a good ruler? For those who teach us to do good, to be devoted to the pursuits of eternal life, are begotten for us by him through whose instruction they are learned in our hearts. This indeed, because it is evident concerning the works of the active life, seems remarkable concerning the contemplative life, which is described through Mary, the sister of Martha, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his word (Luke 10). But it is easily answered that while Mary sits, she signifies the perfect in contemplation.

Yet she is rightly called Saul’s daughter Merab, because even though sitting at the Lord’s feet she hears and learns from him what she wishes, she must nevertheless first learn how she can sit. Since this is surely learned through the instruction of a wise and learned teacher, Merab is rightly recalled as being Saul’s daughter (1 Sam. 18). He promised indeed to give her in marriage to David, but gave him the younger, because some love the beauty of the contemplative life, yet are by no means permitted to approach its embrace. For because they are necessary outside for ruling the faithful flocks, the supreme King so ordains that they receive Michal the younger and never grasp Merab the elder. But many receive the elder after the younger, because after devoted works of charity they are received into the love of the inmost secret; which Jacob well suggests, who loved Rachel but first received Leah, and thus afterward took Rachel in marriage (Gen. 29). What is this, that Jacob was permitted to have both sisters, but David did not attain the chamber of the elder, unless because David was a king, but Jacob was not a king? Therefore he who takes up the governance of souls, ecclesiastical discipline does not allow him to abandon the flock he has received and to devote himself to the leisure of a remote life. But Merab is promised to David and never given;

Michal alone is given, because some, when they take up the care of souls, think that they can bear the responsibility for others in such a way as to be free for themselves through that same responsibility; and yet they never find the rest they seek in their office of leadership; and it happens that while they cannot obtain from the Lord the grace of such great purity, they grow fearful as though they had incurred the Lord’s anger. As though the king were angry, therefore, they lose the firstborn promised to them, because they cannot embrace the love of inward rest which they thought they would have in their position of authority. But we have said these things briefly by way of digression; let us now return to what we had set aside.

68. Both are therefore called daughters of Saul, but they receive different names, because they both differ and agree. They agree indeed, because they strive through love toward the eternal life which they love. Likewise they agree, because the good works by which the one is ceaselessly extended, the other performs in whatever way she can. Because, therefore, both love the eternal things they see, and both desire to attain them through good works, they agree in whatever way; but they differ, because one does more, the other sees more. For Leah is not said to have been blind, but blear-eyed. And Rachel, if she did not bear as many children, nevertheless did not remain entirely barren. For if one life surpasses the other in contemplating or in working, yet from neither is the clarity of vision taken away, from neither is the glory of fruitfulness denied. Yet they differ in seeing and doing, because the active life has vision in passing, but work as its purpose; the contemplative life, however, has work on the journey, but its purpose in rest. Whence the evangelist Mark well says, when under the figure of those three women he showed the love of the contemplative life: "They bought spices, so that coming they might anoint Jesus" (Mark 16:1). As if to say: They stood in work, so that they might be able to run to contemplation. To buy spices is, through the labor of good work, to spread the fragrance of good repute all around.

And to anoint Jesus in the tomb is, through the mortification of the flesh, to attain the richness of intimate devotion. For he is anointed as if in the tomb when, by those buried together with him, the joy of his intimate brightness is most devoutly reached. They have work in passing, therefore, because even if they sometimes work, they abandon it as if running, since they are driven to the place of beloved solitude by a great impulse of the spirit. For because they rest with all their desires in the love of eternal things, they desire to see rather than to serve. They are therefore seldom in public work, constant in the secret of contemplation; they linger little outside, sufficiently within. For they are accustomed to judge it fornication to depart even for a moment from the contemplation of Christ.

69. On the contrary, the active life, which busies itself frequently about service, is rarely in the secret of contemplation. For she who has resolved to prepare eternal things for herself not by sitting and listening, but by busying herself and ministering, considers it not a loss but a waste if, being free for herself and seeking her own things and not those of others, she should rest from the customary offering of services. Therefore she labors more by working and prays less. Hence Martha too, who was busy about frequent service, stood and spoke (Luke 10:40). For she who stood was surely not permitted to sit, because if she had sat down to listen, she would perhaps have rendered her service unprepared and insufficient. And it should be noted that Martha saw the Lord in passing, yet she speaks not in passing but standing still. For the evangelist carefully expressed it, saying: "She stood and said" (ibid.). By this example we are surely instructed that we who render services to our brothers, if we cannot sit at the Redeemer's feet for a long time, ought at least to stand before the Redeemer for a little while. But we stand well before him if we see him while passing by and serving. But what is it to see the Lord in passing, if not to direct the intention of the heart toward him in all our good work? For we pass by when we minister to the Lord in his members by running here and there.

But we see the Lord in passing if through everything we do we contemplate him, whom we desire to please, as present to us. At this point it should be noted that Martha speaks confidently, saying: ”Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? (Luke 10:40). This certainly befits certain perfect workers of the holy Church, who offer prayers to almighty God with all the more confidence as they remember having ministered to him more laboriously in his members. But because even in those who serve the active life excessive anxiety must be restrained, Martha is rebuked, who is said to be so anxious that she is troubled about many things. The fervor of action is rightly ordered when we so persist in our work that with a tranquil heart we see him to whom we strive to consecrate our works. What then is excessive anxiety, if not the confusion of heavenly intention? Because while it divides itself among many things, once divided it no longer rises to the contemplation of heavenly things. For since the soul scarcely grasps that eternal and simple good of eternal vision when it is united, it surely does not raise itself to it when divided. Therefore the orderer and receiver of our works says: ”One thing is necessary,” lest the mind divide itself among many things, so that, united through tranquility, it may powerfully rise to the contemplation of the highest good.

The two daughters of Saul, therefore, although they are equally daughters of a king, differ in their names, because the active and contemplative lives are noble in the generosity of religion, but they are not equal on account of the diversity of their office. But since we have shown their father, let us likewise point out their mother. There follows: (Verse 50) ”And the name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz.”

70. For what is the wife of the preacher, if not good will? For he who is joined through love to good will, from her as from a noble spouse children are born to him. For when we wish to bring forth the fruit of good works, it is necessary that we first sow them in good will. Hence Ahinoam is fittingly interpreted as ”brother’s rest. For that brother of ours is He who, rising from the dead, spoke to Mary Magdalene saying: ”Go, and tell my brothers: I ascend to my Father and your Father” (John 20:17). Hence Paul, asserting the nobility of the elect, says: ”Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). What is meant by ”brother’s rest,” except that the Redeemer of the human race rests in the good will of His co-heirs? And because good will is bestowed upon us by Him by whom it is inhabited, she is said to be the daughter of Ahimaaz. For Ahimaaz is interpreted as ”brother’s beauty,” or ”brother who is beauty. For our Redeemer is called both brother and beauty, because human nature lost the vigor of its dignity through the sin of the first man, but in the person of the Redeemer it shone forth with increased splendor. He is indeed our beauty, because all who shine with the brightness of virtues in the holy Church receive from the fullness of His light. Hence Paul says: ”In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

Therefore, when the prophet Samuel regards the good will of our preachers, he expresses what he has seen through types, saying: ”Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz,” because indeed the beauty of good will is great, but it is born from the infusion of the Redeemer. For she ought to be loved as a wife, but if one looks to the father, she is loved all the more on

account of her nobility. (Verse 50. ”And the name of his captain was Abner, the son of Ner, his uncle.”

71. Abner is said to mean ”my father is a lamp,” and Ner is also said to mean ”lamp. What then is Ner understood to be, except the word of the Scriptures? Indeed, the letter of holy Scripture is like the clay vessel of this lamp, while the spiritual understanding is the brightness of its light, and its oil is the devotion of love. Therefore, he is a son of the lamp who willingly hears the words of the Scriptures, and wisely understands them, and what he gathers through understanding, he grasps through the affection of charity. Why then is he called a son of the lamp, unless because what is born from light is light? For what is sin, if not darkness? And likewise, what is a good work, if not light? For when holy men direct the steps of their works according to the guidance of the Scriptures, they receive, as it were, light from light through spiritual instruction. Indeed, John, expressing this light from light, says: ’Everyone who is born of God does not sin, because the heavenly birth preserves him’ (1 John 5:18). What is it to be born of God, except to love His will as it is known in the holy Scriptures? And what is it not to sin, except to stand always in the light of justice?

For the blessed apostle Peter wished, as it were, to make us light from light, when he said: ’You have the prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts’ (2 Peter 1:19). Rightly therefore Abner is called ”my father is a lamp,” and his own father is also named ”lamp,” because those in the holy Church can shine for others by their examples who have received both the brightness of light and the oil of perfect charity from the instruction of the Scriptures. But through John it is said ”does not sin,” so as to suggest the strength of preachers, who extend their hand to sinners in such a way that they themselves are not stained by the darkness of sins. But what does it mean that he is called a cousin of Saul? A cousin is one who is born from the brother of one’s father. Hence here too it is added: (Verse 51.) ’Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.’

72. And when a king to be chosen was sought, it was said: ”And there was a man named Kish, the son of Abiel” (1 Samuel 9:1). Since we have more fully explained what these names of the royal lineage signify, let us only set forth how Abner is said to be Saul’s cousin. Now Saul is known to be the son of Kish, that is, of ”the hard one”; Abner also is said to be the son of ”a lamp. We have shown that ”the hard one” designates men of excessively austere manner of life, and that Ner is interpreted as ”lamp. What then does it mean that ”lamp” and ”the hard one” are said to be sons of the same father, except that both what Holy Scripture commands as austere and the outward strength of a hard manner of life come from God? For ”the hard one” is the brother of ”the lamp,” because the grace of fulfilling the law comes from Him from whom the law itself has its origin. Hence the Psalmist also confidently promises, saying: ”For He who gave the law will also give a blessing” (Psalm 84:7). For to give the law is to set forth the precepts of life to the elect, and to give a blessing is to bestow the grace of fulfilling the law. Since therefore both the light of Scripture and the harshness of our life come from One, Kish and Ner are said to be sons of one father.

Therefore Abner, the son of Ner, is rightly said to be the cousin of King Saul, because he who is chosen for the care of souls is judged as needing to be of a hard and austere life. But those who desire to be helpers of preachers never accomplish what they desire if they do not bring to completion the light of Holy Scripture, in which they were conceived through knowledge, in good works and holy preaching, as if by being born. But since the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is ascribed more to the chief teachers than to their subordinate helpers, and following examples of conduct seems to befit the lesser rather than the greater, what does it mean that the king is called the son of "the hard one," while the prince of the king is called the son of "the lamp"? But by these words it does not signify what the chief teachers and their helpers possess, but, passing over what they possess, it sets forth what each must do. For the king, that is, the supreme and chosen preacher, because he already possesses the light of Scripture through the knowledge of the highest learning, should not so trust in his knowledge as to fail to follow the examples of others.

Likewise the prince, that is, the helper of the great teacher, because he is subject to the examples of his own superior, should lean toward the light, so that he who follows examples may be born, as it were, into the learning of higher doctrine, as into the great light of a lamp. He therefore who, being learned, is brought back through humility to the examples of his elders, and who, instructed by examples, is raised up through learning to the splendor of the Scriptures, is rightly said to be a king, the son of "the hard one," and a prince, the son of "the lamp. Such men, because they profitably stand over the chosen faithful, because they mightily advance their subjects to victories of virtues, it follows: (Verse 52. "And there was fierce war against the Philistines all the days of Saul."

73. The war of those teachers is weak and altogether feeble who have neither the light of divine knowledge nor the strength of good work. Therefore war is called powerful when harsh sons rule over the chosen peoples, because he is able to speak good things profitably to others who has been accustomed to precede his words with great deeds. But we must also subtly consider what is said in a more complex way: 'All the days of Saul'. What are the days of Saul, if not works of light? What is the war of a teacher other than what is waged by the tongue? Therefore he fights all his days who teaches others many things, yet puts forth nothing in his teaching except what first shines forth in his own work. For he fights in his own day who draws the words of preaching from the light of his own virtue. He therefore wishes to fight in another's day who strives to oppose wicked spirits not by speaking what he does, but by preaching what he knows. But he fights all his days, because he displays all the commandments of God in the light of his work, which he then wishes to set forth through the care of preaching. Rightly therefore is the war called powerful in which one fights with every kind of light of virtues and works. It can also be that by the statement that he fights all his days, the urgency of spiritual combat is signified.

For he who leads a life full of virtues lives in days. Therefore the powerful war of the chosen teacher is recognized in all his days, because he is always seen to overcome evil spirits who is never separated from the light of virtues. But chosen men have the virtue of fighting and

also the humility of fear. Through virtue they triumph, but through fear they do not cease to gather reinforcements. Hence they fight all the more bravely, the more they do not stop gathering forces for the conflict. Rightly therefore the cause of the powerful war is added: (Verse 52.) 'For whomever Saul saw to be a strong man and fit for battle, he joined him to himself.'

74. As if to say: He was able to wage war powerfully for this reason, because he did not cease to gather an army. But since he is said to have allied to himself not only strong men but also those fit for battle, the prudent teacher is shown in choosing Christ's soldiers. For some are strong for bearing burdens, not for waging battles, because when they do not know how to fight from their own strength, they are utterly unable to do so. Therefore men who are strong and fit for battle are those who know how to fight and are willing. By their will they are indeed strong, and by their knowledge they are fit for fighting. The recklessness of some is therefore repelled from Christ's war, since those chosen are remembered as both fit and strong. For some know how to fight against the devil but are unwilling. They are indeed wise to do evil, but they do not know how to do good (Jer. 4:22). These wish to serve the ancient enemy; they refuse to resist him. For what would a teacher accomplish if he allied such men, fit for battle, to himself? Such men are more able to destroy others by their examples than the teacher himself is able to build up by his word. For often such men even dare to teach, yet they do not maintain the power of teaching by their practice.

When they speak with us, they rush against the enemies, but through their deeds they suddenly turn their weapons into our own bowels. Like certain traitors in an army, they put on the armor of Christian doctrine, and by their examples they suddenly strike the little ones of Christ whom we thought they wished to protect by their speaking. Therefore strong men who are not fit must be repelled, not allied to us, because through wise but reprobate men our strength is destroyed, not increased. Who then are those who are strong but not fit, except those whom we see bearing the burdens of the world bravely, yet not knowing how to transfer their strength into the service of their Creator? For they bear the yoke of men and the great labors of the world bravely, but they are afraid to approach the service of God as though they were weak. What then are these, if not strong yet not fit — those who accomplish great things of the world yet cannot perform the light and gentle tasks of Christ? Often they are even converted in monasteries, and those who had bravely borne the burdens of the world sweat over the small tasks they perform as though amid great labors. What then is shown by these words, except that we should ally men to Christ's service with great discernment, and not grant entrance to those approaching before we know them to be both fit through knowledge and strong through good will?

Moreover, the reason they can be called men strong and fit for battle is that they follow up the wars against Amalek, that is, the wars against lusts. For those who cannot extinguish carnal desires are not strong men. And those who are not fit for fighting on behalf of chastity do not appear fit for battle. Let the teacher therefore choose Christ's soldiers; let him choose strong men, so that while they bravely subdue the flesh, they may powerfully conquer the

unclean spirits. Let him therefore choose men fit for battle, so that while they do not grow proud amid the gifts of their strength, they may be exalted in heavenly places by the glory of triumph.

Book 6

Commentaries on the First Book of Kings BOOK SIX. CHAPTER I. (1 Kings XV, 1-3.) And Samuel said to Saul: The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people Israel. Now therefore hear the voice of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel, how he opposed him on the way, when he was coming up from Egypt. Now therefore go, and strike Amalek, and destroy all that belongs to him.

1. We said above that Amalek designates the vice of lust, which as it were licks, since it suggests pleasure by flattering. Progress in the way of life is therefore shown, in that above he is declared to have been struck by Saul, and now he is not simply commanded to be struck, but all his possessions to be destroyed. First indeed the teacher strikes him, when through his word it is brought about that chastity is maintained in the hearts and bodies of the converted. For lust is as it were struck when the flesh has been in some manner subdued by the weapons of chastity, yet has not been perfectly subdued. For he who already abandons the defilements of lust, but still feels shameful impulses rising from himself against himself, no longer practices the wicked deed, yet nevertheless cannot drive it from his thought. Often unwillingly and unguardedly he is dragged to impure thoughts, and those things which he carelessly thinks within stir the flesh outwardly, so that it rises to the shameful impulses of pleasure. What then does it mean that Amalek, already struck, is commanded to be struck again and destroyed, except that the preacher must advance those whom he instructs for a chaste life toward the perfection of virtue? Amalek is therefore commanded to be struck again, because not yet well slain he still lives.

Amalek is struck again when by the words of the teacher even those impulses that assail the flesh are crushed, when the teacher instructs his subjects to be crowned for this purpose: that they should so tame the body that it in no way rises to enticing impulses. But because the flesh is never restrained in this way if the mind slips into impure thinking, after the striking, Amalek is commanded to be demolished. He is therefore struck in the body and demolished in the heart, while the flesh is worthily worn down through abstinence and the mind is restrained from all impure thoughts. In this passage the preceding words must also be considered, which Samuel speaks in the person of the Lord, saying: ”I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel, how he opposed him on the way when he was going up from Egypt.”

2. What is meant by the deeds of the Amalekites being recounted, except that the defilements of lust are greatly hateful to God? Whence the blessed apostle Paul says: 'Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body' (1 Cor. 6:18). Likewise he says: 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge' (Heb. 13:4). Hence also, rebuking more sharply and separating them from the kingdom of God, he says: 'Neither shall the unclean possess the kingdom of God' (Eph. 5:5). Why is lust recounted, except because the sinner is cast out by the justice of God, when he bends himself to perpetrate its defilements? He who is recounted, therefore, so as to fall, is sometimes recounted so as to perish, and sometimes recounted so as to rise again. And because the deeds of Amalek are recalled after such great spans of time, it is in some way suggested to us that such people sometimes come to their senses after long periods. Moreover, his deeds are described when it is said: 'How he withstood him on the way when he was going up out of Egypt.' Israel means "seeing God." Because he is said to go up out of Egypt, this signifies the newly converted, who abandon the darkness and depths of sins, draw near to the light of truth, and ascend the mountain of good works.

3. But Amalek opposed Israel on the way, because lust hurls the weapons of pleasure against those striving toward the summit of perfection, and strikes with the sword of impure suggestion whatever hearts it can. And because the battle of fornication is exceedingly strong and violent, Amalek is said not merely to have confronted Israel in some ordinary way, but to have resisted him. To resist indeed is to press upon someone with a fierce assault. That Israelite who was ascending surely saw these resisting Amalekites when he said: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7:23). Whence also, looking to his helper, he says: "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:24). Amalek is therefore said to resist because, as long as we are in the flesh, we endure the fierce wars of lust. But why is he said to resist those ascending from Egypt? Behold, he who had been caught up to the secrets of the third heaven still had the resisting motions of the flesh. Rightly therefore Israel ascending from Egypt represents not only novices but also those endowed with great virtue. By the name of Egypt, the darkness of this world is signified. And Israel ascends from Egypt because all the elect, as they advance by living holy lives, strive to reach the heavenly homeland.

And because as long as they are in the flesh, they have the law of the flesh contrary to the law of the mind, they see Amalek resisting them through powerful impulses. For the violence of this passion is shown when the very wars of Amalek that are recounted are described. For while Israel fought, when Moses raised his hands, Amalek was overcome; and Amalek prevailed when Moses lowered his hands (Exod. 17). But what does it mean that against others Moses fought with arms alone, yet against Amalek not with arms alone but also with the power of prayer? And what power and urgency of supplication was then necessary, where if he lowered his hands, he would give the honor of victory to Amalek? But truly the great struggle against fornication is shown, which is overcome with such great effort and such great difficulty. Therefore the most intense prayer of the army is a necessary

weapon. Arms indeed are necessary, because those who wish to fight against fornication cannot conquer unless they are fortified with the other virtues. The army, as we showed above, represents the examples of the Fathers and the precepts of the Scriptures, which indeed everyone ought also to consider, and so occupy the mind with them that one does not gaze upon the defilements of wantonness. But though instructed by examples and teachings, one can by no means trust in oneself.

Let him therefore lift up his hands, let him lift up his mind, so that he may shine with good work and devotion, who attempts to cut off perfectly from himself the war of lust.

4. What furthermore does it mean that when the hands are lowered he is conquered, except that often through the boldness of wicked work, even the very beauty of chastity is taken away? Often it is not taken away entirely, but it is weakened along with weakening works. Indeed, amid spiritual works and labors, we are strong against the goads of the flesh; but if, as though weary, we grow sluggish or soft from the rigor of our accustomed way of life, while we gradually grow negligent, the stings of the flesh rise up, which, as though Moses' hands were lowered, conquer Israel (Exod. XVII). Therefore, lest the hands grow weary, let Aaron and Hur place a stone beneath them, and by no means allow Moses' heavy hands to be lowered. Aaron indeed is called "mountain of strength," and Hur is called "fire." For when we grow weary, we are strengthened by contemplating heavenly things. What then is the mountain of strength, if not the height of heavenly contemplation? Which indeed, because it does not exist in a chosen heart without great charity, the mountain of strength is rightly said to stand beside Moses. They indeed place a stone beneath and support his hands, because he who ardently looks upon the highest rewards of heaven takes up great strength, and does not cease both to work well and to beseech the Creator. Because therefore the wars of the flesh are strong and altogether violent, Amalek is fittingly said to have resisted Israel as it ascended. Therefore the Prophet commands the king, saying: Hear the voice of the Lord. I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel.

5. What does it mean when he says: "Hear the voice of the Lord," unless that those who wish to live chastely must keep subtle watch against the deceits of the spirit of fornication? As if to say: Do not cease to consider with how many snares he prepares to subject the elect to himself. And therefore he did not say: "I have recounted how he resisted Israel," but: "Hear the voice of the Lord. I have recounted how he resisted Israel. As if to say: If you recognize the manner of his snares, you will more easily be able to overcome the enemy. Rightly therefore he added, saying: "Now therefore go, and strike Amalek, and demolish all that is his. As if to say: Because you know how you ought to go: Go, and demolish all that is his, and so destroy him that nothing of him may live any longer. But who could so subject the flesh to himself, who could ever so restrain his own mind, who could so remain in the flesh as to endure no shameful movements from the flesh? Who could so curb thought that no darkness of impurities would reach it through thinking? But if the shameful stirring of motion is not removed from the flesh, nevertheless the strength of that shamefulness is weakened, when there is indeed a simple movement in the flesh, but in that movement there

is no itch of lust. This movement is not Amalekite, because it does not entice the mind that it cannot delight.

It cannot be removed from the mind that it should in no way see unclean things, but it is led to a wonderful exercise of purity, so that seeing unclean things, it is stained by no taint of pleasure. Whoever therefore so governs the flesh, whoever so rules the mind, governs for this reason, rules for this reason: because he was able to demolish all of Amalek with strength. But now he explains in what follows what all his possessions are, saying: (Verse 3. "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his; but slay from man to woman, both child and nursing infant, and ox and donkey, and sheep and camel."

6. Who is this one who spares Amalek, if not he who retains something of wantonness either in thought, or in speech, or in the flesh? For many do not practice works of shameful conduct, yet do not restrain their tongue from shameful speech. Many avoid luxury through their actions, but do not avoid it through their thoughts. Some do nothing shameful, yet what they flee from in deed they desire in their heart. He therefore spares Amalek who holds onto the enticements of wantonness, either in speech, or through intention, or through thought. And so He says: "Do not spare him," because from so wicked a vice nothing ought to be kindled in the mind, nothing permitted to burn in deed. Let Him therefore say: "Do not spare him," so that all lustful impulses, all obscene utterances may be utterly destroyed in the body. He therefore says: "You shall not covet anything of his," so that it may be thoroughly uprooted from thought. For what is lust, if not fire? And what are the virtues arising from the flesh and mind, if not flowers? What likewise are shameful thoughts, if not straw? Who does not know that if fire is carelessly extinguished among straw, from the small spark that remains, all the straw is set ablaze? He therefore who does not wish to burn up the flowers of virtues in his mind must so extinguish the fire of lust that it can never blaze up again through even a faint spark. Let him also remove the stubble of carnal thoughts, lest while the natural heat, which cannot be extinguished, is kindled, the green growth of virtues, which cannot catch fire by itself, is burned up as if through straw mixed in with it.

7. What then is the meaning of: "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his," unless that all luxury in the flesh must be perfectly subdued, and torn out from the mind by the roots? It can also be understood: "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything from him," because men and women, children and nursing infants are commanded to be killed. For women could be coveted, and children and nursing infants could provoke pity. Who then are the men to be killed, who are the women, who the children, who the oxen, who the sheep, who the camels, who the donkeys — this must be carefully considered. For who are the Amalekite men, if not the persuading impulses of shameful conduct? They are indeed men, because they suggest violently and pour seeds of depravity into corrupted minds. The women are the desires of the mind, which submit themselves to the aforesaid impulses for impious offspring. But who are the children and nursing infants, if not those who are generated from the mingling of Amalekite men and women? For if the impulse of evil suggestion is received in the mind like an adulterer, desire is impregnated like a harlot.

Therefore, if that desire is allowed to pour forth its wicked offspring, the impulses of lust are then generated not only in the mind but also in the flesh. When these are born, they are children, because they do not yet inflict violence upon the flesh by their stirring.

They are nursing infants when they are nourished by slight and negligent thought. For he who now refreshes shameful impulses in the flesh by free thought no longer gives milk to little ones but food to adults. Therefore the milk of the little Amalekites is the slight thought of impurity, because if the shameful impulse is not fed through thought, the little ones are killed as if denied their milk. This milk the harlot mother offers, because while the heat of desire seizes the mind, it is stirred as if from the worst abundance of the heart, so that the worse offspring of impulses may be nourished in the flesh. What is understood by the ox, if not deceitful counsel, which by the example of the ancients suggests the pleasure of the flesh — those who pleased almighty God amid the works of the flesh? For it seems to split the earth with the plowshare of discernment, as it were; but if it is taken up through deliberation, it ensnares the neck of the wretched mind under the yoke of shameful conduct, which it bears through pretense.

8. By the name of sheep, the life of the innocent is signified. Whence all the elect are called sheep by the voice of our Redeemer, when He says: 'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:27). What then is the sheep of Amalek, if not the pretense of innocence? For some, when they consider both the very form of the human body and the properties of each sex, when they consider the desire implanted in their members, think they can freely use this as though it were a natural good. It is therefore like a sheep of the Amalekite, when something is suggested to the continent as though it were good, which is clearly proven not to be truly good. What also is signified by the camel? But the camel chews the cud and does not divide the hoof at all. What then is signified by the camel, if not a certain thought of lust, which seems to begin from reason but is not completed through discernment? For while one thinks, the camel as it were ruminates within, but while what one thinks is not ordered by truth, its hoof does not appear to be divided. For some indeed, having professed continence, when they are overcome by the desire of the flesh, trust that they can be saved in married life.

And some, when they hear the Apostle's permission: 'Let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband' (1 Cor. 7:2), declare that all without distinction of persons are included in this precept, and that men of sacred orders can make use of conjugal union. For a sentiment of this kind is an Amalekite camel, because it seems to begin from reason but drags one to an irrational life. What then is the donkey understood to be, if not the open wickedness of fornication? For the devil drives some into the open abyss of fornication, and deceives others through fraud. The donkey is also accustomed to carry the burdens of others. But the Teacher of the Gentiles, when he taught that the husband does not have power over his own body, but the wife does, and likewise: 'Nor does the wife have power over her own body, but the husband' (ibid., 4), what else did he command them than to carry one another's burdens? Therefore by the name of the donkey the strength of conjugal union is designated, because chosen spouses bravely bear one another's burdens, lest through the

weakness of the flesh they fall more loosely into the pit of fornication. Therefore the donkey must be killed, but the Amalekite one, because conjugal union must be strengthened in the honor of the marriage bed, but must be destroyed in its baseness. Indeed spouses ought to render to each other their due, but they ought not to come together in a shameful manner.

Therefore the donkey of Amalek is killed when in good spouses the love of honorable union is maintained, but all obscenity is avoided in shameful conjunction. Therefore all things of Amalek are commanded to be destroyed, because those who purpose to live chastely ought not to retain in themselves anything of the enticement of the flesh. They must indeed be in the flesh, so that they may do good things through the flesh, but they ought so to depart from the pleasure of the flesh through the loftiness of the mind that they do not tolerate insults from the flesh. Indeed the Apostle wished those to whom he was speaking to be such, saying: 'But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit' (Rom. 8:9). But let us consider with what helpers he who is commanded to destroy Amalek may suffice for these things. For it follows: (Verse 4.) 'Saul commanded the people, and numbered them as lambs.'

9. By the name of lambs, men of great prudence are usually designated. Hence through John it is said: "I saw upon Mount Sion a Lamb standing, and with him a hundred forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). For those who had taken up the name of the Lamb were called lambs. Explaining who they are, he also says: "These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. What then does it mean that when Amalek is commanded to be destroyed, the soldiers of the king are counted as it were lambs, unless that when we wish to destroy the spirit of fornication by preaching, we ought to bring forth the examples of the perfect? For however many men distinguished by the glory of chastity we present to the worldly who are to be converted, we bring as it were so many soldiers, like lambs mustered, to the wars against Amalek. Moreover, by the name of those mustered, the ministers of divine preaching themselves can be understood. They are therefore as it were lambs, because through the glory of perfect chastity they are now made like those virgins rejoicing with Christ in the kingdom.

By these words it is surely shown that those who undertake the ministry of preaching must first be adorned with the outstanding splendor of chastity, because if they fall away through incontinence, they can in no way make others continent, and those who do not have the rays of that light in the splendor of their own manner of life cannot prevail in calling others to the good of so great a light. Rightly therefore it is said: "He mustered them as lambs," because those who ought to drive out the spirit of fornication through the power of the office they have received must necessarily be very chaste. Hence the Lord says to them in the Gospel: "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning in your hands" (Luke 12:35), so that their subjects may hear the word of preaching, but the examples of a most luminous manner of life may draw them to the good of chastity that they hear. Hence they are fittingly designated by a perfect number, when it is added: (Verse 3. "Two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah."

10. By the name of footsoldiers the elect are figured, not when they preach lofty things, but when through good examples they demonstrate to others the straightness of the heavenly journey. Footsoldiers indeed run with their steps to where they wish to bring their arms. But what are examples of chastity, if not the footprints of heavenly soldiers impressed upon the earth? For in order to strike the vices of lust in slippery places, they hasten with the light of good examples toward the darkness of their hearts, and as if arriving by footstep, they slay the enemies—those who, after they are recognized through their works, draw the hearts of sinners to the good of chastity. When therefore through examples of chastity they destroy the darkness of impurities in the hearts of sinners, they are rightly called footsoldiers. And because they are splendid not only with the outward show of bodily purity but also with the light of the heart, they are said to be two hundred thousand. For in the number one hundred and one thousand, the entire sum of the Decalogue is contained. Perfect men therefore are contained in two hundred thousand, because through divine grace they have arrived at the highest citadel of chastity by both continence of body and integrity of mind. For they have perfection of purpose both in body and in mind. Or because they serve God through chastity not loosely or negligently, they have the hundred of work, and because they do not cease to serve Him, they have the thousand of multiplication.

But they are strong and constant in continence of body, perfect and persistent in watchfulness of heart through perfection of virtue. Indeed the Apostle, commanding that a widow also be such, says: "That she may be holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34). For she is holy in body and spirit if by the perfection of chastity by which she shines in body, she also shines in mind. But if widows are such, what kind must virgins be commanded to be? For concerning those many, under the description of one it was said: "The queen stood at your right hand in gilded clothing" (Psalm 44:10). In the same psalm (verse 14) the same queen is praised when it is said: "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within, clothed about with golden fringes in varieties. For what is the golden garment, if not the beauty and honor of the virginal body? It is called a garment because it shines outwardly in the body, but golden because it excels in dignity. But every kind of metal is inferior to gold. So indeed no other form of chastity can be compared to virginal beauty. What then does it mean when it says, "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within," if the glory of the golden garment is proclaimed to be outward? For if there is some great glory of the golden garment outwardly, all glory cannot be seen to be within.

What then does it mean that all glory is said to be within, except that even that glory which is outward is recognized to be within along with innumerable others? For virginity is not golden if it exists outwardly but not inwardly. Because therefore it is both within and without, because the same shines in the body and the same gleams in the mind, all the glory of the king's daughter can fittingly be understood to be within. All glory is within, because it is not outward alone nor inward alone. For because many are the splendors of virtues in the mind of the virgin, virginal radiance is so affirmed that all glory is proclaimed to be within. This indeed is what follows: "Clothed about with golden fringes in varieties. For the golden fringes are splendors never failing from the mind. Fringes indeed are the final parts

of a garment. They are therefore praised in the beauty of Christ's bride, because there is no glory of virtues if it ceases to shine before the completion of life. The queen therefore is spoken of with love, in the golden garment virginity is proclaimed. But all glory is declared to be within, and in golden fringes, and clothed about with variety, so that integrity joined with innumerable virtues may be understood to endure even to the end.

Rightly therefore are two hundred thousand footsoldiers counted against Amalek, because those are fit for conquering unclean spirits through examples of chastity who have learned to maintain it both in the light of works and in the splendor of watchfulness.

11. Because likewise they are instructed and perfected by the word of God, this is shown by the number of ten thousand men of Judah. For they are men by fortitude, and of Judah by proclamation. For Judah is interpreted as "confessing. But they are designated by the number ten, because they have attained the perfection of doctrine through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Whence also to Moses the ten precepts of the law are given, which were written by the finger of God (Exod. XXXI). For what is the finger of God, if not the Holy Spirit? Who, when He wrote the law, set it forth precisely in ten precepts, because even if He brought forth something carnal outwardly in it, inwardly He sealed the perfection of spiritual understanding. Therefore ten thousand men of Judah are to be led forth against Amalek, so that the spirit of fornication may be overcome by those fit in strength. For he laps by suggestion, because he counsels light and flattering things, but the things he counsels by lapping he displays through phantasms of thoughts. Therefore, so that the mind may not see the obscene things shown to it by demons, the examples of the elect must be revealed. And so that the unclean spirit cannot soothe it with foul suggestions, the tongue of preachers ought to be touched through the praise of chastity. Let the preacher lap it, so that the malignant spirit can by no means lap it.

And let him delight it with words, lest, for one who lacks heavenly things, the devil tear it apart through the delights of suggestions. Therefore against the twofold battle of the heart, because a twofold good of assistance is necessary, rightly both foot soldiers and men of Judah are said to be prepared against Amalek. But if anyone wishes to understand some as the foot soldiers and others as the men of Judah, the meaning of plain truth is evident: that the greatest doctors have those who, though they do not know how to teach by preaching, are nevertheless able to benefit by their works. But now, having been mustered for such great battles, let us hear by what strategy they fight next. There follows: (Verse 5. And when Saul had come to the city of Amalek, he set an ambush at the torrent.

12. What is this torrent, if not that of which it is said through the Psalmist: "He shall drink of the torrent in the way" (Psalm 109:7)? For a torrent designates the course of our mortality. Saul therefore sets an ambush in the torrent, when a preacher of the Church inserts the consideration of our mortality into the eternal rewards. For in order to catch slippery souls as if by guile, he begins by speaking of heavenly things, but suddenly turns to setting forth the bitterness of eternal punishments, so that minds secure in the pleasure of the flesh may be terrified. For he leads them out as if by guile, he strikes them through ambush, since by

speaking pleasant things he provokes them to listen, and then inserts the sorrows of death, so that the wayward may hear what will make them tremble. Saul therefore comes to the city of Amalek, when the teacher draws the hearts of sinners, fortified by illicit love, with the sweetness of eternal delight. But he hides an ambush for him in the torrent, because he introduces the consideration of death, so that the sinner may see, as it were, a soldier bursting forth against him from ambush, and while he considers that he will soon die, he may fear to extend the delay of sin any further. There follows: (Verse 6.) ”And Saul said to the Kenite: Depart, withdraw from the Amalekites, lest perhaps I destroy you together with him. For you showed mercy to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt.”

13. Who is the Kenite, who is known to dwell with Amalek, and who is compelled to depart, lest he be equally entangled with him? But perhaps this is the one about whom the Apostle says: ”Let the husband render to his wife what is due, and likewise the wife to her husband” (1 Cor. 7:3). The name also fits him, because ”Kenite” is said to mean ”possessing. These married persons, because they are bound by marriage, are not compelled to abandon everything. What then does it mean when it is said to the Kenite, ”Depart from Amalek,” unless that by these words all the foulness of obscenity among married persons is condemned? Indeed, those who are joined in the manner of harlots are united with Amalek. The teacher commands them to depart from Amalek when he strives to recall them to marital decency. As if to say: If you cannot contain yourselves from one another, let marriage be honorable for you, and the bed undefiled. Therefore, to depart from Amalek is for spouses to use one another not for the foulness of harlot-like obscenity, but for the temperance of decency and for the fruit of offspring. Hence the same excellent teacher says of the widow who cannot remain so according to his counsel: ”But if she cannot contain herself, let her marry, only in the Lord” (ibid., 9). Not in Amalek, but in the Lord; so that she who cannot prevail to abstain from marriage may avoid obscene acts within the covenant of marriage. He also threatens, saying:

”Lest I entangle you with him. To be entangled with sinners is to be condemned to eternal punishment. Hence the Lord also says of the wicked servant in the Gospel: ”Bind his feet and hands, and cast him into outer darkness” (Matt. 22:13). Now therefore, preachers do not entangle reprobate hearers, because even if they despise the word, they can still return to repentance as long as they live, when they wish. Therefore, marital decency must be urgently commanded to married persons, because with a stern penalty it is said: ”Go, depart without harm. Depart from Amalek, lest I entangle you with him. Without harm indeed one departs now, but not then, because those who are made entirely like the foul will not be free from their harm. He is also said to have shown mercy to the children of Israel when they were ascending from Egypt, because the weak children of holy Church, since they cannot preserve the good of perpetual continence, are received through the compassion of marriage. Indeed they ascend from Egypt, because they abandon the darkness of luxury and fornication. And they receive mercy from the Kenite, because they obtain the indulgence of marriage. Hence the teacher of the nations also says: ”I say this by way of

indulgence, not by way of command" (1 Cor. 7:6). And because holy Church persuades her chosen subjects of the good things she sets forth by speaking, there follows: (Verse 6. And the Kenite departed from the midst of Amalek.

14. The spouse departs from the midst of Amalek, but cannot depart from the part, because even if one avoids the act of shameful conduct, one cannot avoid the inclination toward pleasure. For married couples can temper the fire through honorable conduct. They go out, therefore, from the midst of Amalek, because even if they cannot be entirely free from carnal desires, they nevertheless moderate the very dominion of the flesh under the bond of the precept of honorable conduct. There follows: (Verse 7.) And Saul struck Amalek from Havilah until you come to Shur, which is opposite Egypt. 15. Havilah is interpreted as "one who gives birth," Shur as "anguish," Egypt as "darkness." But concupiscence gives birth to sin. Rightly, therefore, concupiscence is designated by the name of "one who gives birth." The Prophet also, fearing to fall into the anguish of an impenitent heart, beseeches, saying: "Let not the deep swallow me up, neither let the pit shut its mouth upon me" (Psalm 68:16). The teacher, therefore, strikes Amalek from Havilah to Shur when he suppresses in the hearts of his hearers the vices of conceived delight and the resolve of deliberate choice. He also strikes Shur when he appears to draw to the love of chastity those minds which had purposed to end their life in the stench of lust. For those who, already captured, are bound by the snare of evil habit are in anguish. And it should be noted that Shur is shown to be opposite Egypt, because he who resolves to end his life in lust is even now enclosed in interior darkness, from which he will be led to exterior darkness. But let this book also be closed, so that we may come through silence to the consideration of what follows.

CHAPTER II.

1. King Saul, who had good beginnings but by no means persevered in the good things he had begun, is presented through the text of sacred History, so that in him we may see what is to be imitated and what is to be avoided. Thus indeed we also pick from badly cultivated fields, which rise up to harvest mixed with thorns. He truly knows how to gather well from them, who takes care to pick the ears of grain while striving to avoid the thorns. So when the care of a garden is neglected, along with the vegetable that refreshes there grows the weed that pricks. For it was as if the Lord was instructing His disciples to enter badly cultivated fields cautiously, when He said: "The princes and Pharisees have sat upon the seat of Moses. Whatever they tell you, do; but what they do, do not do" (Matt. 23:2). As if to say: Because the deeds and words of the wicked are mixed together, they must be used in such a way that what gives life is taken from them, and what kills is avoided. Hence again, foretelling, He says: "They will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Up to this point, then, we have gladly attended to King Saul vigorously carrying out the care of the kingdom; now let us carefully examine in what respect he, as a despiser of the Lord's command, ought to be avoided and rejected. For the text continues: (Verses 8, 9.) "He captured Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but all the common people he slew with the edge of the sword. And Saul and the people spared Agag, and the

best flocks of sheep, and of the herds, and the garments, and the rams, and all that was beautiful, and they were unwilling to destroy them. But whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed."

2. The Word of the Lord came: Now go, and strike Amalek, and destroy all that belongs to him. Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of theirs. He therefore plainly stood forth as a transgressor through disobedience, because he refused through pride to fulfill the command of the Lord. The Lord indeed commanded the prophet, saying: Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his possessions. But this man is shown both to have spared and to have coveted all his choicest things: so that, while the manner of the transgression is shown, it might be demonstrated how detestable is the fault of disobedience.

3. But if we describe the wars of the flesh, we find that the falls of kings are great. Hence the Lord also says in the Gospel: "If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? (Matt. 5:13). The kings of the Church are her preachers, as has already been shown above. Who then is Agag, king of Amalek, if not the carnal sense? For since we possess from the soul both rationality and sensuality, rationality is ascribed to the mind, sensuality to the flesh; and through the former we share kinship with the angels, through the latter with brute animals. In the former, the higher we are raised, the closer we draw to the heavenly citizens. But through the latter, the more we slide toward the enticements of the flesh, the more carnal, so to speak, we are found to be. Hence, when the daughters of men had already been seen and desired, and pleasures had already been fulfilled in luxury, concerning those who by the merit of purity were called sons of God, the Lord threatens in Genesis, saying: "My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). For man becomes flesh when reason is subjugated to the carnal sense. The king of Amalek, therefore, is the vigor of the carnal sense, which commands through base impulses so as to drag captive reason toward the allurements of obscenity. And fittingly does the name of the Amalekite king suit the carnal sense. For Agag is interpreted as "meditating" or "speaking.

To meditate, for him, is to gather the phantasms of wantonness through inner meditation. And to speak, for him, is to arouse the flesh through base impulses to lust. For he has, as it were, a great cry of speech, because by striking the flesh he stirs it more ardently. For by meditating he gathers what he sets forth by speaking: because everyone who is subject to the carnal sense, the more freely he beholds the images of wantonness within, the more powerful the motions of baseness he feels outwardly. He meditates, therefore, through the inner vision of baseness, but he speaks through the outward motion of pleasure. The king of Amalek is therefore called "speaking and meditating," because he can arouse the slippery enticements of the flesh in those whom he deceives through base thoughts, and whom he instructs through the experience of alluring sensation. But it should be noted that the more freely he meditates, the more freely he also speaks: because he stirs the flesh more powerfully the more he holds the causes of his agitation impressed within through thought. For in the manner of fire, the more attentively it is blown upon, the more it is kindled: because if the breath of impure thought is absent, the heat of lustful agitation cannot be

present. The king of Israel therefore fights against the king of Amalek when a teacher of the Church argues against fornication. He captures the defeated one when he receives sinners converted to pardon not only as penitents but also as confessors.

He therefore holds the king of Amalek already bound, as it were, who sees the carnal sense in converted sinners already subjected to reason through the love of chastity. But what does it mean that the bound one lives, except that there are some who are not moved by their own passions, but upon hearing of the obscenities of others, are moved? They are strong in fighting, but as victors they fall. For he who kept the conquered king alive clearly found pleasure in the person of the captured king in the triumph of that very war.

4. But what else do those do who receive the confession of sins from others? For while they think about what those confessing have done, they burn with desire toward the crimes they hear; for often while they hear the enticements with which others had overwhelmed themselves, they themselves begin to love what those others, now dying to such things through their exhortation, confess. Already therefore Agag has been defeated and captured in his own city, but he is preserved by the victor, when what is detested by the subjects is loved by the prelates: because carnal sense begins to flourish in those in whom it had lost the vigor of its wicked dominion among the others. And because while the pastors rush toward the precipice, the subjects follow along, the king is said to have taken Agag alive, but the same king, and the people subject to the same king, are recorded to have spared the best things of Amalek. For to spare is characteristic of an affected mind, out of love for that which it spares. This certainly befits the vice of lust: because as soon as it begins to please, it draws the mind into love of itself. Because its force is also vehement, it does not know how to remain stationary: because assuredly it quickly accomplishes its work, if the wakening mind does not quickly expel it from itself. For when it invades the mind, it spreads itself through innumerable thoughts of shameful things.

Hence also both Saul and the people are rightly recorded to have spared the best of the flocks and herds. The thoughts of lusts are indeed called flocks and herds: because they are both innumerable and are fed in the reprobate heart by the contemplation of uncleanness. They are also the best, not by proof of goodness, but by the appetite of the one choosing them. For in the reprobate heart, because nothing is loved more dearly, they are called the best flocks, to which no others are compared. But they are called the best on account of the blindness of heart, and herds on account of the guilt of transgression. For to reprobate minds it is no great thing to think unclean thoughts; but before God it is no small thing to store unclean things in the temple of God, that is, in the regenerate spirit. He spares therefore not only the sheep, but also the herds: because he who through the love of lust regards the faults of uncleanness as though they were small, spares them as though they were small, but does not find the deserved punishments to be small. Moreover, by the name of sheep the lighter thoughts of lust can be understood, and by herds the stronger and more troublesome ones. The king and the people certainly spare these, when the reprobate teacher and his subjects are subjected to the vexations of unclean thought, both light and strong.

But what is it to spare the garments, except for the already condemned mind to deliberate upon unclean things? For if the golden garment is the glory of the virgin bride, what are the garments of Amalek, except the foul defilements of lust? But they are called garments: because by their covering both soul and body are stained. For because the perpetration of lust defiles both soul and body, they are called not a garment, but garments. But, as I said, to spare is to deliberate, and to love unclean things through the affection of the mind. But the unhappy soul thus captured, thus ensnared, because it is driven by wondrous impulses to perpetrate its deliberated depravity, is rightly recorded, after the sheep, herds, and garments, to have spared also the rams. For as it were the horns of rams please it in the gentle blows of lusts, since it strives to retain in itself that one thing by which it may be pierced through to the death of uncleanness. He therefore spares the rams, who gladly receives the blows of his own headlong fall. For he is pricked, that he may serve the desires of his flesh; but that which pricks him sharply, delights him lightly. Because likewise lust entices the mind through innumerable modes of obscenity, they are recorded to have spared not only these named things, but all things that were beautiful. All things which the unclean soul is seen to fashion gladly for itself from the pleasure of lust are called the beautiful things of Amalek.

For it could in no way desire these things, if their appearance did not violently please it.

5. But because the fall of the victors is asserted, it is said: 'Nor did they wish to destroy them.' As if to say: They could have destroyed them, if they had wished. For nothing is conquered more easily than lust, if every impure thought is avoided. Therefore it can be destroyed all the more easily, the more each person is able to think of things other than the pleasures of the flesh. For since we cannot imagine two things at the same time, while we think of something else, whatever it may be, we cannot think impure thoughts. Swift and easy, therefore, is the victory over lust through the watchfulness of thought: if, as often as carnal things present themselves, we turn to anything at all that is not an enticement of lust. This I would call easy for those who are standing, not easy for those who have fallen: because he who is made a slave of the impure spirit through the commission of sin can neither freely avoid thoughts of the flesh nor quickly turn to other thoughts. Therefore it is said of the victors: 'They did not wish to destroy them, though they could have,' because before the fall, sins are easily avoided by the free; but if they refuse to avoid them when they can, afterward they cannot even if they wish, because they cannot perfectly will it. To whom indeed Truth Himself says: 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (John 8:36). As if to say:

Because you willingly ceased to be free, you no longer have in yourselves the power to attain freedom. But what does it mean that it is said: 'But whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed,' except that some, through the practice of greater pleasures, disdain the lesser ones? What is worthless and vile to them is what they despise by choosing those things that please them more. For because they seek more refined sins, they reject certain ones; and because they approve more precious sins, they consider the lesser ones cheap and

small. Rightly therefore it is said: 'Whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed.' Because they choose more refined sins, and those that please them less they reject as unfit and despise as cheap.

6. All these things, understood morally, signify the battles and victories over lusts; but according to the historical sense, they designate the swelling pride of the arrogant and disobedient. For the command had been given to Saul by the Lord that he should so destroy Amalek that he would spare none of them and covet nothing. He who is therefore declared to have spared the king of Amalek and all the best things is openly shown to be proud and disobedient. But perhaps he despised the command because he heard it from the prophet, not from the Lord. Yet he certainly ought to have listened to the prophet in such a way as to heed the authority that the prophet set forth beforehand. For the prophet, about to command that he strike the king of Amalek, prefaced it by saying: "Thus says the Lord," so that Saul would not dare to despise the command he had heard through a man, as though it were merely a man's. Lest again the exalted king should treat his ministry with contempt, the prophet likewise prefaced it by saying: "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king." As if to say: The Lord commands you in your royal ministry through the same one through whom He raised you to the dignity of kingship. Therefore he ought to have obeyed all the more humbly, the more clearly he recognized that this man had been sent by God. But while he despised the prophet who was sent, he equally despised the Lord who sent him. Whence it adds: (Verses 10, 11.) "The word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying: I regret that I made Saul king, because he has abandoned me and has not fulfilled my words in deed."

7. He believed that he did not hear the words of the prophet, but the Lord complains that He has been abandoned, when He shows that His words have not been fulfilled in deed. Now the Lord speaks to the Church, saying: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me" (Luke 10:16). Therefore, those who through disobedience depart from the word of preachers abandon the Lord, because they withdraw from those through whose ministry they are made present to the divine will. They do not then fulfill the words of the Lord in deed, because outwardly men speak, but inwardly God speaks in men. Therefore it is not they who speak, but the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:20). In preachers, therefore, the outward lowliness of the flesh is not to be despised, whose minds the sublimity of the Godhead so graciously inhabits. What then does it mean that the Lord is said to repent, when He is not believed to be changed by emotions? But because supreme immutability speaks with mutable beings, after the manner of those with whom He speaks, when He is said to repent, it is indicated that the recklessness of the proud displeases Him. For we are accustomed to repent when those to whom we recall having bestowed honors or gifts repay us with evils. Because, therefore, almighty God complains after our manner about the ingratitude of the proud king, He is said to repent of having conferred royal dignity upon him.

This is certainly said to the great increase of damnation for the proud: because what they are, they now are not for merit but for punishment, because they are not in the will of God. Therefore, for God to repent is to not have His will in the reprobate, when He remembers

the honors He bestowed, but recognizes that those upon whom He conferred good things make evil use of the good things He conferred. Indeed, God intimates this repentance of His to the Jews in other words through the prophet Malachi, saying: ”I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept an offering from your hand” (Mal. 1:10). How greatly, therefore, we see the fault of disobedience must be guarded against, if we attend to how severely it is struck by these words of the Lord.

8. Now, in the war of Amalek we have described the battle against fornication, which is commanded through the sacred Scriptures to be utterly destroyed by us. Rightly, therefore, what the Lord complains of can be understood concerning teachers who have fallen in the war of the flesh, when He says: ”It repents me that I have made Saul king, because he has forsaken me and has not fulfilled my words in deed. For His word is the commandment given to preachers: ”Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning in your hands” (Luke 12:35). He, therefore, who has the word in preaching but does not have it in the girding of chastity is seen to be God’s by speaking, but is proved to forsake God by his conduct. Outwardly he carries out divine things, but secretly, while he dissolves in the pleasure of the flesh, he is shown not to fulfill the Lord’s words in deed. For he has forsaken the Lord by setting forth evil things; he does not fulfill His words by presuming to do what is forbidden. Rightly, therefore, it is said: ”It repents me that I have made Saul king. As if He were saying: Him whom I then wished to rule over others, I now do not wish, because him whom I preferred when he was humble, I now see as a proud, haughty transgressor. This, indeed, is not said of any who have fallen whatsoever, but of those whose fall is manifest and whose repentance is in no way foreseen.

For concerning the fall of the righteous it is written: ”The righteous man falls seven times a day and rises again” (Proverbs 24:16). Their fall is in a certain way their standing, because they are sometimes permitted to fall so that they may always be able to stand more firmly. They are permitted to stumble into evils lest they lose the highest gifts of virtues through pride. These, indeed, even if they sometimes do not fulfill the Lord’s words, do not depart from the Lord, because they are abandoned for a time so that they may be held eternally; and they are foolish in a small matter, but after a little while they come to their senses. When, therefore, Saul is reproved not only for not fulfilling the Lord’s words in deed but for having forsaken the Lord Himself, whom does he signify better than those who have fallen and are impenitent? Of whom, indeed, it is said through the prophet: ”They have struck a covenant with death and with hell” (Isaiah 28:15). To strike a covenant with death is to perpetrate evils boldly and to promise to do them always. For they commit evils unceasingly, but by loving what they do, they pledge themselves, as it were, never to withdraw from friendship with death. The more insensible these become in their covenant with death, the more sharply the heart of mother Church is shaken with compassion. Whence it is well added: (Verse 11. ”And Samuel was grieved, and he cried out to the Lord all night long.”

9. Samuel indeed is saddened, because the chief preacher is afflicted over the perdition of his subject. And he cries out to the Lord all night, because he beseeches the divine mercy

with devoted prayers for the restoration of the fallen one. For the teacher to cry out is to implore the mercy of almighty God with great longings for the sins of his subjects. He who cries out all night takes upon himself through compassion the entire darkness of that sin, and makes satisfaction to God as a penitent for it, as though for his own crime. Therefore, for the preacher to cry out all night is to take up the entire cause of his subject and to strive to destroy all the darkness of that sin through the affection of devout compunction. But what does it mean that he is said to have cried out and the Lord not to have answered, except that the darkness of an impenitent heart, which I have mentioned, is signified in the fault of Saul, for whom he cries out? The Lord would indeed have answered if He had heard the voice of the one crying out. There follows: (Verse 12.) And when Samuel had risen in the night to go to Saul in the morning, it was reported to Samuel that Saul had come to Carmel and had erected for himself a triumphal arch.

10. What is the life of a sinner, if not night? And what is the light of the just, other than day? Whence also through Paul it is said to converted sinners: 'You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord' (Eph. 5:8). But for the preacher to rise by night is to raise up the affection of the mind from the taking on of another's fault. For the teacher lies, as it were, in the night when he mourns the darkness of another's sin, because he is brought down from the lofty security of his own innocence, so that in the depths the darkness of sins in the consideration of another may be destroyed. He therefore rises by night when he raises himself from affliction, and arranges to come to the guilty one in the morning, because he laments secretly through compassion and strikes with open rebuke through zeal. The teacher also mourns by night, but comes in the morning to reprove, because inwardly he loves the sinning subject, but is by no means ashamed to reprove the one erring openly. For it is as though morning dawns when the teacher begins to lay open the crime that lies hidden. What then does it mean that the one to whom he came is said to have come to Carmel and to have erected a triumphal arch for himself, except that the advance of evil is clearly proclaimed?

Indeed, after the fault of disobedience, to erect a triumphal arch or structure is to do evil deeds and to take pride in the perpetration of those same evils. For they raise, as it were, triumphal signs when with a certain ostentation they bring forth those things by which they think they excel others. This certainly applies to teachers who are arrogant as well as to those who are dissolute. The former indeed, while they speak great things, raise themselves to the height of esteem, and what they see themselves to be within, they make known outwardly through boasting and ostentation. And when they draw even that which others accomplish on their own to the favor of their own praise, what else do they seem to do but display a lofty sign of victory with a notable inscription? But some both live shamefully and speak most honorably; they consider the dignity of their words, yet do not reckon the baseness of their own life. When therefore they desire to appear not by the substance of works but by the splendor of words, they assuredly construct a triumphal arch in which they exalt themselves as if victors. And because by the word of the shameful, many other shameful ones come to their senses, after Amalek has been conquered, for them to come to

Carmel and erect a triumphal arch is to glory vainly before the simple over the lust that has been extinguished in their subjects. Carmel indeed is interpreted as ”soft” or ”tender.

For who are understood by this name of ”tender,” except those who are unformed in holy conduct? And who are called ”soft,” except those who have not yet been made firm in their begun goodness through the practice of virtue? Therefore in Carmel they raise a sign of victory, because they display themselves to the unformed and weak, lest they be found out by the experienced and strong for what they truly are.

11. For these men seek the splendor of victory not in words but in works, because they judge trees not by the beauty of their leaves but test them by the flavor of their fruits. Whence the Lord also, teaching, says: ’By their fruits you shall know them’ (Matt. 7:20). Because, therefore, they desire to be praised in vain, because they flee the judgments of the most proven men, and to the unskilled and weak they falsely represent themselves as being other than what they are, Saul is said to have come to Carmel and to have erected a triumphal arch for himself. But what does it mean that he passes on to Gilgal, except that in the same manner in which he displays himself to the simple and religious, he desires to become known among the religious and learned? For Gilgal, as I have already said many times, means ”wheel.” But some within the holy Church are learned in Sacred Scripture yet are not religious, because they do not possess the power of Scripture, namely charity. When these hear eloquent and carnal men speaking, they admire the words they recognize. But they cannot examine their hidden qualities, which they do not know. Rightly therefore Saul is said to pass on to Gilgal, because those who seek favor from eloquent speech find what they desire not among the learned and religious, but among the simple and unskilled, or among the irreligious wise. But great men, when the reprobate teach good things, fear all the more for the elect subject to them—lest those whom they build up by their tongue, they corrupt by their hand, that is, by their conduct. Because, therefore, slippery teachers are not to be left long in the ministry of preaching, it is fittingly added: (Verse 12.) ’Samuel therefore came to Saul, and Saul was offering a burnt offering to the Lord, the first-fruits of the spoils which he had brought from Amalek.’

12. He came indeed to Saul, to cast down the proud man whom he had raised up as a humble man to the height of the kingdom. He found him as he truly was, not as he had shown himself by the signs of his pride. What then does it mean that he offers the firstfruits of Amalek as a holocaust to the Lord, except that some both live wickedly and think they please God through the advancement of others? And because they believe that what they offer pleases God in no small measure, they are said to offer not a sacrifice or a victim, but a holocaust. They are called the firstfruits of the spoils so that in Samuel the watchful zeal of the highest and chosen priest may be indicated, by whom the beginnings of evils are swiftly suppressed. As if to say: He came in great haste, in whose absence not even the beginning of the holocausts could be freely undertaken. The firstfruits of the spoils can be understood as the choicest things from the plunder. These the slippery offer with open mouth but struck with hidden blindness, when they believe they please God by destroying

in their hearers what they allow to live in themselves. As if more openly reproving one who offers indiscriminately, he says: He was offering alive what he would have offered better slain. For if according to the words of the Lord he had destroyed all the spoil in Amalek, he would have offered a wholly acceptable holocaust to almighty God.

So indeed the slippery teacher too, if he rejected by willing all the enticements of the flesh that he condemns by speaking, would burn a holocaust that could not be rejected. What then does it mean that it says he was offering the firstfruits of the spoils that he had brought from Amalek, except that the darkness of a blind heart is condemned, because it so esteems what benefits others that it neglects to see what harms itself? As if to say: He rejoiced over that as a victor—a victor in others—which he carried alive and unconquered in himself. And because for the most part they rage so madly that they even attempt to offer a pretext of virtue to the very elect and highest preachers. There follows: (Verse 13. And when Samuel had come to Saul, Saul said: Blessed are you by the Lord; I have fulfilled the word of the Lord.

13. The word of the Lord was that he should have destroyed Amalek. But what does it mean that he says, "I have fulfilled the word of the Lord," unless that the sin of fornication, the more shameful it is perceived to be, the more carefully it is concealed by the reprobate? Because therefore those who are subject to this same vice of fornication always desire to remain hidden, in their type Saul both disdained to demolish Amalek and said to Samuel: "I have fulfilled the word of the Lord." As if to say: Both in other matters I have subdued lust, and in myself I have destroyed its enticements. And because he strives to bend the mind of the great man with flattering adulation, he first said: "Blessed are you by the Lord." As if to say: This indeed I have done, but I was able to do it not by my own strength, but by your merits and intercessions. But perfect men can hear their own praises, yet cannot be bent from the rigor of justice. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 14.) And Samuel said: "And what is this voice of flocks that resounds in my ears, and of herds, which I hear?"

14. The voice of the flocks and herds of Amalek is the report of shameful deeds. When anyone is defamed for lesser sins of indulgence, the voice of the flocks is said to resound. When likewise one is accused of more criminal and more obscene things, it is the voice of the herds. As if he lays bare what was hidden under the pretense of his false virtue, saying: You justify yourself with your own mouth, but the crowds of your uncleannesses cry out through the mouths of all. But now let us see by what defenses he who has begun to put forward excuses may escape the charge of the infamy brought against him. There follows: (Verse 15.) They brought them from Amalek. The people spared the best sheep and herds, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; the rest we have slain.

15. What does it mean that he says: "They brought them from Amalek," and did not say, "We brought them"? But when the reprobate are accused, they sometimes conceal their faults by denying them, and sometimes transfer them to others. They conceal them by denying, when they can remain hidden; but when they are caught, as it were, in the open, what they cannot deny they ascribe to others. Indeed, Saul, displaying the ways of such

people, says: ”They brought them from Amalek. The people spared the best of the sheep and the herds. As if to say: The evil that is heard of should be weighed against the frailty of the people, not against the virtue of the pastor. Indeed, the sins of subjects should be disregarded in comparison with those of prelates. He says therefore: ”They brought them from Amalek. As if to say: What resounds about a shameful life is true, but nevertheless that same shamefulness flourished among the little ones, not among the great. Again, still softening the same fault, he says: ”The people spared the best of the sheep and the herds, to sacrifice them to the Lord your God. As if to say: The people truly sinned, but not unto death; because the sins of their deeds they now strive, at my exhortation, to blot out through the humility of confession. For the flocks and herds of Amalek are sacrificed to the Lord when the wayward and incontinent come to confession and hasten to blot out by repentance what they have wickedly done.

He says therefore: ”The people spared”; that is, indulged in sin. ”But they brought them to be sacrificed”; because in those matters in which the people recall having fallen, they are now pierced with compunction through confessing and doing penance. The better flocks and herds, as above, designate the choicer sins of lust. As if to say: Even if the people sinned gravely, we ought not to be reproached, because in proportion to the magnitude of the crime they have lamentations of compunction. What does it mean that he says: ”To sacrifice them to the Lord your God”? But by this the habit of the deceitful is shown, who, when they seek to hide from great men, resort to flattery. For what does it mean that he claims God is singularly his, except that he shows him to be a familiar friend of God? ”To the Lord,” he says, ”your God. Not mine, but yours; because I am a sinner, you are singularly holy. But with a marvelous practice of fraud, the deceitful so conceal themselves as to reveal, and so justify as to accuse. They also temper the manner of accusation so that by accusing they appear just, lest by excusing they become known. For when he calls God his, he indeed exalts him and diminishes himself. But when he asserts that what was brought from Amalek is to be sacrificed to the Lord, he tacitly brings forth not that for which he ought to be reproached, but praised. And still adding more, he says:

”But the rest we destroyed. Indeed, sins that are forgiven are slain. Living sins are those that either still reign in the mind through concupiscence, or those that, though despised through conversion, have not yet been blotted out through penance. The former still live for pleasure, the latter live for punishment; because even if we have now ceased to sin, unless we bewail what we have committed, we are held bound by the obligation of what was committed. But he attributes the greater sins to the lesser people, and the lighter sins to the greater. For what does it mean when he says, ”The rest we destroyed,” except that there are very small sins among the greater ones, which are washed away by confession alone? These the teachers destroy when, to those who humbly confess, they remit them by apostolic authority. To all these words—because the deceitful strive to conceal themselves, not to expose themselves—there is added the authority of the elect preachers by which they are reproved: (Verse 16. For Samuel said to Saul: ”Allow me, and I will tell you what the Lord has spoken to me this night.”

16. What does it mean when he says: "Let me alone, and I will tell you," unless that while deceitful men persist in verbosity, they do not grant their examining superiors an opportunity to speak? As if to say: While you do not cease from verbosity, you do not permit me to say the things you ought to hear. By this word the intention of the flatterer can also be mocked; for while he believes he is pleasing through the blandishment of praise, he supposes that those whom he praises are, as it were, held fast by those same praises. It is therefore as if the chosen leader were to mock his praiser with honorable gravity, saying: You who praise me—I cannot speak harsh things to you. Let me alone, therefore, that is, permit me to speak, and understand the things I am about to say. And because, as I said, flatterers believe they are pleasing by praising, they by no means expect to hear harsh things from those whom they praise. Therefore, as if about to hear joyful and favorable things, Saul follows up, saying: "Speak. But chosen men, when they hear their own praises, do not grow soft from the rigor of justice amid the encouragements of praise. For those who despise the deeds of the reprobate can by no means accept their words. Because, therefore, they cannot be bent by praises, they both examine dishonest flatterers with subtle reasoning and pursue them with stern judgments. Whence it follows: (Verses 17–19. And Samuel said:

"When you were little in your own eyes, were you not made the head among the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel; and the Lord sent you on a mission and said: Go, slay the sinners of Amalek, and you shall fight against them until their utter destruction. Why then did you not listen to the voice of the Lord, but turned to the spoil and did evil in the eyes of the Lord?"

17. By these words, the disobedience of the proud king is subtly examined: because he first sets before him the gifts that were bestowed, then strikes at the audacity of his transgression through a careful investigation of that same fault. For it is a subtle examination when a crafty sinner is so scrutinized that no excuse for his guilt is left to him, so that God's sentence holds him bound, as it were, to the death of his crime, since no refuge from sin remains for him. Therefore, so that every way of escape may be blocked for the deceitful and proud, both the loftiness of his dignity and the manner of his ministry are recalled to him, when he says: 'Were you not, when you were little in your own eyes, made the head among the tribes of Israel? And the Lord said to you: Destroy the sinners of Amalek.' And so that, now surrounded and besieged by these arguments, he might catch him, he lays upon him the hand of guilt, saying: 'Why then did you not hear the voice of the Lord, but turned to the spoil and did evil in the sight of the Lord?' As if to say: Behold what you were, what you were made, what you ought to have done; behold what you have done; behold how far you have departed from what you ought to have carried out. Therefore, when he pressed further, saying: 'Why did you do evil in the eyes of the Lord?' he seized the deceitful defendant, as it were, by surrounding him on every side.

18. But in this passage it should be noted that, while the proud king is rebuked, the times of his election are recalled, so that the swelling of his heart may be perceived not to have been present at his choosing, but to have grown from the eminence of his office. He was indeed

chosen as a good man by the Lord, but while he grew from his high position, he declined through pride. Therefore He says: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel'; now, turned to plunder, 'you have done evil in the eyes of the Lord.' As if to say: Through the truth of humility you merited the kingdom, but now, humble in pretense yet swollen in truth, you are losing the kingdom. For what are the eyes of the heart, if not the gaze of reason? For he who has unimpaired sight of reason is perfectly illuminated. He is therefore humble in his own eyes who perfectly examines himself and recognizes himself as humble with perfect vision. By these words, then, not only the past humility of the fallen king is commended, but also the keenness of his reason: because he was so great in reason that he knew himself perfectly, and so great in virtue that, examining himself closely, he truly saw himself as humble. Since, therefore, when he is rebuked his past qualities are recalled, what else is described but that he lacks the things he once had?

For none can become proud unless they first lose the eyes of the heart. Concerning the lustful, the matter is even more plainly evident: they would never plunge themselves into the abyss of fornication if they had not first grown dim to the light of inward glory. Because they despise the lofty precepts of chastity, they are also convicted of pride. He who had come to depose the king from his office therefore says: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel; now you have done evil in the eyes of the Lord.' As if to say: Proud now and blind, you are justly deposed, you who formerly, seeing and humble, deserved to obtain the kingdom. For the proud Pharisees too are called blind by the Truth itself, who says to the disciples: 'Let them alone; they are blind, and leaders of the blind' (Matt. 15:14). This blindness is especially ascribed to the lustful, because there are no vices that cast thicker darkness upon the mind than lust. But now you may see many who stood firm as clerics fall once they became priests. To these, certainly, through the command of Samuel it is said: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel.' As if to say: When in a lesser rank you kept the precepts of chastity with an illuminated heart; now, having lost your eyes, you have fallen into the abyss of fornication.

You have turned to plunder, because you have broken the divine precepts by violent presumption. For since they burst in to violate the sanctuary of chastity while God forbids, and stands armed, as it were, with threats and blocking the way, they lead, as if through the plunder of spoil, Amalek's chosen things into the Lord's land. And because the unchaste hide themselves from preachers as much as they can, Saul is rebuked for having done evil in the sight of the Lord. As if a preacher, threatening and terrifying one who has fallen into carnal pleasure, should say: The crime of impurity is indeed hidden from men, but it is not concealed from Him who sees all things. When the impenitent hear these and similar words, they can by no means be terrified. Hence, even though they are already caught by reasoning, like serpents they strive to slip away through their slipperiness from the hands of those who hold them. They put forth the tail and hide the head: because the outward results of their deeds are now visible, but the true quality of those same actions is concealed. Whence it also follows: (Verse 20.) 'And Saul said to Samuel: On the contrary, I have obeyed

the voice of the Lord, and I have walked in the way by which the Lord sent me, and I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have destroyed Amalek.'

19. For as if concealing his own hidden faults while bringing forth the exposed faults of others, the slippery teacher commends himself on the success of his preaching, saying: I ought not to be rebuked for the fault of my subjects, but rather praised, since I have destroyed it in the offenders by preaching. I struck Amalek: because the spirit of fornication fell by the sword of my tongue in the hearts of my hearers. The king, even if he lives, has been brought captive: because even if the sense of the flesh, as long as we are in the flesh, cannot be entirely destroyed, it has been captured, as it could be captured, because it cannot prevail over reason. Eager to show that his subjects themselves have been corrected and are confessing their sins, he added, saying: (Verse 21.) But the people took from the spoil sheep and oxen, the firstfruits of those things which were slain, to sacrifice to the Lord their God in Gilgal.

20. When something belonging to someone is taken away by the violence of armed men, it is called plunder. But the vices of the flesh and soul, because they are propagated at the devil's suggestion, are as it were his own property. Whoever therefore, recently lax within himself but now violent, destroys vices, takes plunder; because he powerfully seizes what belongs to another. And it should be noted that both slaughter and plunder are mentioned, so that it may be taught that some things are left behind dead while others are carried away alive. Indeed, the pleasures of lust are slain when they are driven from the heart by the power of heavenly intention and cut away from the body by contrition of spirit. But they are brought alive for sacrifice; because even if by the conversion of the sinner the delight of the flesh or mind is abandoned, the punishment of past delight is not entirely destroyed. Let vices therefore be slain, and let the living firstfruits by no means be kept from sacrifice: so that he who powerfully destroys the force of sin in contempt of pleasures may fear that the punishment of delight remains alive for him to sacrifice. What then are the firstfruits of the slain, if not the delights of sins? He is said to offer these who confesses before God to the priests. And the offerings are sacrificed when their punishment is destroyed through repentance. For they are, as it were, offered slain as firstfruits, yet live on through what follows:

when someone confesses sins but does not strive to sacrifice them, that is, to slay them before God, through repentance. Therefore, when the firstfruits of the slain are said to be reserved for sacrifice, the error of certain people is confounded—those who abandon sins but do not nevertheless bewail them. Because therefore sins must not only be confessed but also destroyed by the severity of penance, while Saul feigns the figure of a good teacher, he asserts that his subjects brought the firstfruits of the slain to be sacrificed. Because the measure of penance must also be determined by the reasoning of the Scriptures, the firstfruits to be sacrificed are brought to Gilgal. Moreover, not only oxen but also sheep are kept for sacrifice: so that those who are concerned about their salvation may strive to destroy great sins through repentance in such a way that they do not neglect to bewail lesser

ones. But concerning the proud it is clear: because, while they always desire to appear great, they are ashamed to be marked as sinners. Even when caught they resist, and they desire to appear just even in those things which they do. What then does it mean that he says: "Indeed, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord"? But Samuel says: "Let me alone, and I will tell you what the Lord spoke to me in the night. And after a little: "Why have you turned to the plunder, and done evil before the eyes of the Lord?

It is clear therefore how wondrously swollen with pride is he who seeks to justify himself at the very time when he recognizes that the Lord is rebuking him for sin.

21. But if he is believed to have responded thus because he thought the words were the prophet's, not the Lord's, but the prophet's, we still see imitators of Saul who, while trusting in their own learning, both despise through pride the commands of their superiors that they hear, and believe they can improve them by changing them. What then does he mean when he says: "Indeed I heard the voice of the Lord, and I brought Agag the king of Amalek"? But it is as if he were saying: Both what was commanded I strove to fulfill, and what was lacking I supplied. It was necessary that Amalek be struck down; but because, with God's help, he is conquered, it was fitting to supplement this by preserving what could be offered in sacrifice to Him. This clearly appears in the proud: because when they cannot conceal open fault, they attempt to alter or diminish it. As if to say: Even if you judge the open faults of the deed, the hidden simplicity of intention ought to be considered. It would indeed be a fault to bring anything from Amalek, unless what was brought ought to be sacrificed to God. This indeed often happens in monasteries, when any overly devout subject presumes to add to the commands of spiritual superiors; when he despises the common regular life and follows the judgment of his own will.

For while he strives to improve his life by choosing rather than by obeying, what else is shown but that he colors open disobedience with the appearance of virtue? Indeed, not only subjects but also superiors ought to examine this matter carefully. Subjects ought to note carefully that Saul displeased God because he attempted to sacrifice to God contrary to the prophet's command. Let superiors note carefully that the prophet gave the king the command to destroy Amalek. For thus a teacher ought to praise the common life without despising the particular gifts of individuals. That common life indeed is praised which is joined by charity and is not darkened by intervening vices. The Apostle's judgment is: "Each one has his own gift from God, one indeed in this way, another in that way" (1 Cor. 7:7). Those, therefore, whose food and table are common ought to attend not only to the common good of refreshment but to the particular nature of their struggle: so that they eat together, but do not equally contend to fight against the stings of fornication through abstinence. For his flesh must be subdued more whose thorn of the flesh is more troublesome. Therefore the common life is no longer merely to be stirred up where the community of meals is observed, but each is said to fight individually against his individual battle. Nor does a teacher command well if he does not command that by which Amalek is struck down, but rather that by which he lives.

Therefore let the teacher command, but so that the spirit of fornication may be overcome. Let subjects not refuse to obey, but only where the crime of pride is incurred, not where the abyss of death is avoided. But the disobedient, while with swelling heart they fail to carry out the commands of their superiors, when they attempt to improve what is enjoined upon them, while they desire to offer their own works to God, they destroy themselves. For through other virtues we render Him what is ours; through obedience we offer Him ourselves. Therefore Samuel adds, saying: (Verse 22. "Does God desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed?"

22. For what are the good works of the elect but sacrifices and burnt offerings? Since therefore the Lord had commanded burnt offerings and sacrifices to be offered through the law, what does it mean that the Lord is said not to want burnt offerings and sacrifices, yet promises that He wants to be obeyed, unless that those things which are done apart from obedience are not burnt offerings and sacrifices? As if to say: Good works are then good when they do not disagree with the judgment of those set over them. But if this is said in order to commend the virtue of obedience, it is clear how sublime a good it is, which surpasses sacrifices and offerings. What then does it mean that He wills obedience to the voice of the Lord, unless that all good works must be set below those goods which are commanded? For when superiors rightly command, the goods which subjects choose of their own judgment are set below the commands of their superiors. Those very works set below them are called burnt offerings and sacrifices, so that not only may the small works of inferiors be perceived as not to be compared with the commands of superiors, but the greatest burnt offerings indeed belong to those who wish to withdraw themselves entirely from public work, so as to offer themselves wholly consumed by love to God in the secret of contemplation.

Sacrifices belong to those who by no means separate themselves from the common public life, but act with singular virtue, so as to surpass the virtues of others by living more strictly. These things indeed, and things of this kind, when they are done with the permission of good rulers, are sacrifices and burnt offerings which God approves; but when they are done in such a way that through them the commands of superiors are neglected, let those who offer hear what the prophet sent by the Lord says to the disobedient king: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed? As if to terrify those who despise the commands of their fathers as lesser things, and present their own as greater, saying: Because you think you do something great, you despise what is small and lowly; but if you see clearly, through this you do not please the Lord. And rightly, while the work of the proud is examined, the prophet keenly inquires, saying: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed? He inquires indeed so that the swelling of pride may be struck by pastoral authority. He says: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices? Because those who choose to follow their own will think they please God; but God by no means approves their works, even when they are great and mighty. But now he added with what praises obedience ought to be proclaimed, and said:

(Verse 22. For obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken is more than to offer the fat of rams.

23. For since he said above: "Does God desire holocausts and victims? does he not subject both to the praises of obedience, so that when he set forth victims and the fat of rams, he understood the holocaust in the fat? Whatever is better is certainly better than something good. But those holocausts and victims which God does not want are by no means good. What, then, does it mean when it is said in praise of obedience, "Obedience is better than victims, and to hearken than to offer the fat of rams," unless that obedience is then better when the holocaust and victim is not evil? As if, therefore, he brings back the proud and disobedient to the consideration of so great a good, saying: Even if nothing were done by you through presumption, the virtue of obedience would be better than the works you choose. It is clear, therefore, on what summit it is placed, which the prophet saw as higher than divine oblations. But if, as above, we follow the spiritual sense, victims are to be referred to the austerity of a great way of life, and holocausts to the compunction of a more secluded life. For obedience is better than victims, and to hearken is more than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is of far higher merit always to subject one's own will to another's will than to wear down the body with great fasts, or to slay oneself through compunction in a more secret sacrifice.

For what is the fat of rams but the rich and interior devotion of the elect? He therefore offers the fat of rams who, in the pursuit of a secret way of life, possesses the affection of devout prayer. Nevertheless, obedience is better than victims, and than to offer the fat of rams. Because he who has perfectly learned to fulfill the will of his superior excels in the heavenly kingdom both those who abstain and those who weep. Certainly, because he says this against one who is proud and openly contemning the Lord's commandments, he does not compare the good that he did with the good that he despised; but he destroys the pretense of good by showing the truth of a better good. As if he were saying: Even if you were seeking an excellent good for the more excellent glory of virtues, you ought rather to have chosen the good of obedience, which excels even excellent things. Speaking thus, he indeed destroys the pretense of good by argumentation; but by adding what follows, he openly confounds the parent evil of disobedience, saying: (Verse 23. "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as the wickedness of idolatry."

24. What is it that those who resist and refuse to comply are likened by the prophet to diviners and idolaters, except that diviners strove to know divine things and to divine hidden matters, while idolaters subjected themselves to figments by venerating them? But those who resist the commands of their superiors resist precisely because they judge that they know the divine will better. To resist is therefore like the sin of divination: because, as if despising the divine altar, they receive responses at the altars of demons, when they trust in the deceitful and proud inventions of their own heart, and oppose by contrary thinking the salutary counsels of their superiors. To refuse to comply, moreover, is said to be like the crime of idolatry; because surely no one would persist in the obstinacy of his disobedience

if he did not carry in his heart the figment of his own purpose as though it were an idol. For when he conceives in his heart what he intends to do, he makes, as it were, an idol, and when he resolves that he will carry out the purpose conceived in his mind, he bows down, as it were, to adore a graven image. To refuse to comply is therefore like the crime of idolatry: because whoever is obstinate in his own resolve is raised up outwardly in contempt of his superiors precisely because inwardly he is bowed down to the graven images of his own purpose which he has established by his own devising.

But it must be carefully asked why resisting is compared to the sin of divination, and refusing to comply to the crime of idolatry. For ”crime” is used only of a great sin, while ”sin” is the term used even for what is slight; but if diviners were so called from ”altar,” because they were accustomed to receive responses by consulting, the sin of idolatry was a crime in comparison with it, because it was more insane to worship stones than to receive false responses about how to live well under the guise of divine things. Why then is resisting said by comparison to be a sin, while refusing to comply is called a crime? But to resist is to dissent from the will of one who commands. Many indeed seem to resist for a time, when they do not immediately accept the commands of their superiors, yet after a little while they comply with those same commands. But to refuse to comply—what is it but both to resist an enjoined obedience and to persist in the obstinacy of that very resistance? For those do not comply who are unconquerable in their heart's resolve and who omit nothing of what they determine to do on account of anyone's authority. Rightly therefore, in comparison with resisting, refusing to comply is called a crime, because it appears to be a far greater and more horrible sin. Because, then, those who are of this sort are not overcome by reasoning, the prophet added what punishment should restrain them, saying: (Verse 23.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king.

25. For what does it mean that Saul is cast off, except that he is judged incorrigible? It is as if He were saying: Because you reject all counsels of salvation, for the guilt of obstinacy you ought no longer to be corrected by words, but condemned with the punishment of rejection. How greatly the guilt of disobedience ought to be feared is shown, if one considers attentively that on account of it even kings are deposed. What does it mean when he says: ”Because you have cast away the word of the Lord, the Lord has cast you away”? But the word is cast away when it is not reverently preserved in its sublimity; for to cast away is to let something slip from the hand to the ground, whether through negligence or through violent throwing. Now the word of the Lord, because it speaks salutary things, is heavenly or sublime; it is negligently cast to the ground when through sloth it is not fulfilled. But it is cast away through contempt when the proud and disobedient repel it with swelling heart and disdain to observe it with the hand of action. But because he is reproved not for casting away but for rejecting the word, this signifies that while the proud follow their own will, they become far from the Lord. For to reject is to repel something far away.

For those who worthily undertake the guidance of others are not only near to God through obedience, but also make those near to Him who through vices and crimes are far from Him.

It is therefore as if He were saying: You are expelled far from the order of dignity, because you were unwilling to be present to the merit of that same dignity. For the merit of dignity is the observance of the divine word. When this is rejected, because the merit of dignity is lost, the dignity itself is also removed. It is fitting, then, to observe how much the proud lose through disobedience, and how much the humble gain. The former, while they rejoice in fulfilling the judgment of their own will, offer God great labors of works, yet have no rewards for their labors; the latter, while they abandon themselves, while they follow the judgment of another's will, earn the glory of eternal sublimity; whence also through the most blessed Mary, Mother of the Lord our Redeemer, it is said: "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble" (Luke 1:52). Indeed the Lord puts down the mighty from their seat when He casts off the disobedient proud, and He exalts the humble, because He glorifies the obedient with eternal glory. But words do not correct the proud; rather, only while they tremble at losing their honors do they feign the humility they do not possess, lest they lose the summit of glory; whence it is added: (Verse 24.

And Saul said to Samuel: "I have sinned, because I have transgressed the words of the Lord and your words."

26. What does it mean that Saul is rebuked by the prophet for not having heard the voice of the Lord and for having done evil in His eyes, and yet he does not at all confess that he has sinned; but when he sees himself rejected from the kingdom, he confesses that he has sinned and transgressed the word of the Lord and His commands? It is because the proud are bold in despising the words of the humble, yet they cannot, in the manner of the elect, despise the honors they covet. They are indeed bold enough to scorn the commands of their superiors, but they are not prepared to relinquish high positions. On the contrary, the humble are ready to obey the commands of their superiors and secure in losing high positions. For since they desire not earthly but heavenly things, they despise the heights of earthly exaltation, they strive to labor for heavenly things; they willingly submit, and they shrink from being placed above others. Saul, therefore, refusing to obey God yet fearing to lose the kingdom—what else does he show us but the character of the proud, who, when they prevail, avoid being seen as lowly or as sinners, but when they are compelled, feign the virtue of humility? But when, under compulsion, they confess, they diminish by their words the sin they accuse.

For although he declared that he had sinned by transgressing the word of the Lord, he recalled that he had incurred that same transgression by necessity rather than by will, saying: 'I feared the people and obeyed their voice.' As if to say: The sin for which I am rebuked ought to be struck with a lighter punishment, inasmuch as it was committed not through malice but through weakness. Now, to sin by deliberate purpose and will is a great transgression; but to sin through weakness is the more tolerable, the more the one who lies subject to the sin is unequal to the forces of that same sin. And because by the same craftiness of their heart they suppose themselves to prevail over the humility of simple

teachers, he added, as if already having persuaded: (Verse 25) 'But now, I pray, bear my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.'

27. Correctable sins are indeed borne, because after they depart from the will of the one who committed them, they can be wholesomely purged through satisfaction. But the sins of those in whose minds they have become ingrained through impenitence are not borne. Whence John also says: "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that one should pray for that" (1 John 5:16). A sin unto death is that which is committed by one who can never come to his senses. This sin is assuredly not borne by superiors, because it is not wiped away by the prayers or offerings of priests. But Saul, representing in all things the proud and obstinate, does not cease to swell with pride, and yet begs that his sin be borne; he heaps up an unbearable burden, and asks that it be carried as though it were light. This indeed happens as often in the Church as those who willingly commit great crimes fail to consider their magnitude. They gather up unbearable things, and reckon them to be trivial and of no weight. They hide their sins from their superiors, and so that they can scarcely be discovered and rebuked, they minimize those same sins as much as they can, lest those who preside over them recognize their enormity. They are also strong for sinning, but weak for weeping over their sins; they want to be dissolved in the pleasures of sin, but they refuse to be purged by the bitterness of penance.

What then does it mean when he says, "Bear my sin," except that they receive the sweetness of sins in themselves, but want to burden their prelates with the weight of those same sins? Some even come voluntarily to confess, but they themselves do not mourn for the things of which they accuse themselves; instead they beg others to do penance, they think they are saved by faith alone, and they do not care to return through penance once they have been cast down. Whence Saul also adds, saying: "And return with me, that I may worship the Lord. For the preacher is, as it were, departing when he rejects the shameless; therefore he says: "Return with me, that I may worship the Lord. He thinks that he is not divided from the communion of the elect solely because he preserves the common faith; or certainly, to worship the Lord is to submit oneself to the discipline of faith and the keeping of good works. But because Saul represents feigning hypocrites, there follows: (Verse 26. Samuel said to Saul: "I will not return with you, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king."

28. What then does it mean that the prophet refused to bear the sin of the penitent king, except that he saw him not truly penitent? To whom he first responded with those words of rejection, because he recognized that the king would by no means be changed. By this steadfastness of the prophet, certain overly lenient priests of this present time are reproved, who are weak in their conduct yet bold in their recklessness. They can scarcely sustain themselves, yet dare to take up the burdens of others to be carried; they do not bear their own light burdens, yet subject themselves to unbearable ones. Behold, the mighty prophet fled from taking up the burden of the king's sin, so that the priest of the Church may fear and dread to undergo the weight of unbearable sins. For the most part, however, let him so take

up the sins of others that he nevertheless permits the one by whom they were committed to weep over those sins he undertakes to expiate. Hence Samuel by no means promised to bear the king's sin, yet he mourned for him whom he had declared rejected. For concerning him it is written shortly after: 'Samuel mourned for Saul, because the Lord repented that He had made him king over Israel.' He did not indeed promise to bear the king's sin, so that the king would strive to weep over it himself. But nevertheless he wept for the one he had declared rejected, so that he might render the Lord favorable toward him.

In the literal sense, indeed, when the prophet repeats the sentence, he shows the irrevocable sentence of divine justice by which the sinner is so cast away that he is never permitted to return to the hand of divine mercy. It can also be understood in another way, that he asks the prophet to return with him to worship the Lord. For holy men who do not abandon the Lord by sinning have no need to return to Him through repentance. For to return belongs to one who has departed. This indeed befits sinners who withdraw from the Lord through sin; it does not befit the just who remain steadfast. What then does it mean that the just Samuel is asked to return with Saul the sinner, except that chosen preachers are afflicted like penitents on behalf of their fallen subjects, and come as if returning, when they accompany fallen subjects with fatherly affliction? They therefore return with them, when the sins of their subjects are equally mourned both by the subjects who sinned and by the prelates who stood firm. It is therefore as if he were saying: I have now recognized through the rebuke of preaching that you cling to me with fatherly affection, you whom I did not leave to sin further. Since therefore I have come to my senses through your reproach, I ask you to return with me, because by my own strength I am by no means sufficient to blot out so great a magnitude of wickedness.

But such prayers of affection would deserve to be received if they proceeded from truth of heart; fittingly therefore it was answered to the hypocrite: 'I will not return with you.' As if to say: I do not know how to sacrifice to God on your behalf, since I do not perceive you to be subject to God in the truth of humility; and repeating the earlier words, he says: 'Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king;' and because the crafty must be rejected and abandoned, there follows: (v. 27) 'And Samuel turned to depart.' In this departure of the elders, indeed, hypocrites fear the loss of temporal honor more than the loss of their eternal inheritance. Hence even when abandoned they cannot be at rest, but what they dare not accomplish by themselves, they strive to obtain through the intervention of others. Fittingly therefore it is added: (v. 27) 'But he seized the edge of his cloak, and it was torn.'

29. What are the garments of a teacher, if not to teach the qualities of the subjects adhering to him? Concerning these garments, indeed, a promise is made to the great shepherd through the prophet: 'As I live, says the Lord, you shall clothe yourself with all these as with a garment' (Isa. 49:18). And through the Psalmist it is sung: 'The Lord has reigned, He has put on beauty; the Lord has put on strength' (Ps. 93:1). For He put on beauty, who joined to Himself the splendid minds of the faithful, as it were garments. Saul therefore

seized Samuel's cloak, when any proud and rejected person seeks the honor of high office to be conferred upon himself by great men through those dear ones and intimates who cling to him; and because no one intercedes on behalf of the reprobate among perfect hearers, he is said to have seized not the cloak, but the edge of the cloak, that is, the extremity; but that edge is torn, because he who suggests useless things is rejected. For when a lesser person making an indiscriminate request is repelled, it is as though the edge of the garment is said to be torn. For it was as though a part of the great prophet's cloak was torn, when He answered Peter who was making a bad suggestion, saying: 'Get behind me, Satan, for you do not savor the things that are of God, but the things that are of men' (Matt. 16:23).

Hence He likewise commands, saying: 'If your hand or your foot scandalizes you, cut it off and cast it from you; likewise, if your eye scandalizes you, pluck it out and cast it from you' (Matt. 5:30). By these words, assuredly, not only the edge of the cloak but even the middle portion is designated as needing to be cut away: because when they suggest evil things, even perfect hearers must be disregarded. For this is why the sons of Zebedee together with their mother ask that one sit at the right hand and the other at the left of the Redeemer; but as though ignorant of what constitutes a good request, they are repelled (Matt. 20). For it was as though the Lord tore a part of the cloak, when He rebuked and confuted those members who were causing scandal. And it should be noted that the whole cloak is not torn, but a part of the cloak is torn: because when a good person suggests evil things, he ought to be repelled in that which he suggests wrongly, and in that in which he is otherwise good, he ought to be retained out of love.

30. By the garment, the conduct of the ruler is also signified, as the Psalmist attests, who says: "Let your priests be clothed with justice" (Ps. 131:9). The edge of the cloak is therefore seized when the teacher is praised for great holiness, when that which displays outward beauty is spoken in his praise. But because the good qualities of the just that lie hidden are more numerous, only the edge of the cloak can be grasped: because what is seen of the chosen teacher's justice is little, while much indeed is concealed. But that very little which is known, when it is grasped, is torn: because the just are not held by their own praises. For because they despise them in a moment, they cannot be held, as it were, by the tearing of the cloak. The torn part of the garment is indeed held, but the prophet is not held: because what is said in praise of the just person is true, and yet the just, while they despise what they hear, leave, as it were, the torn piece in the hands of the one holding it. Of the greater ones, therefore, because certain things can be known, a part is, as it were, grasped. But when all that is done is known by the little ones, if it is praised, it must nonetheless be cast aside; because nothing of good works should be held onto through vanity.

For hence it is that while John, still a youth, follows the Lord already seized, and is held by his garment, he is described as having fled naked, leaving the garment behind (Mark 14). For the youth is caught by the garment when he is praised for the beginning of his good conduct; but he who despises the praises he hears flees naked, leaving the linen cloth behind. For to flee naked is to have a praiseworthy life, but to despise the praise of a chosen life. For

he flees as if naked who ascribes nothing to himself through vainglory from the adornment of virtues. He can also be understood to have fled naked for this reason: because he who is said to have been caught by part of the linen cloth is reported to have left the cloth behind; because it frequently happens in the conscience of the elect that, through the fact that they are praised in part, they suspect that they have lost not a part of their merits, but all the merit of a good life. Samuel's cloak is therefore torn, because chosen teachers despise their own praises. And because they are not swayed by praises, he repeats the severity of the former sentence, saying: (v. 28) "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from your hand this day."

31. For perfect men, because they are softened by no praise from the rigor of justice, are the same before as after the testimony of their praise, and they confirm by repeating afterward the same things they had said before. But we must ask what this signifies, that which is said: 'Today'. For if the life of the reprobate is night, what does it mean that Saul's kingdom is torn away in the day? But if the life of a reprobate pastor is night, when his kingdom is torn away, it makes day. For day does not come unless night departs. He says, therefore, 'Today', because the darkness of the disobedient one is declared to be condemned. Whence also, when Judas went out, the Lord says: 'Now is the Son of Man glorified' (John 13:31); because He saw the night of that man's life depart, and the pure light of justice remain in the other disciples. It is also said 'Today', because with the proud one removed, the kingdom was being handed over to the humble king. Whence it is also added: (Verse 28) 'And He has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.' When therefore "today" is said, nothing bright is seen in the rejected king, but the glory of his successor is proclaimed, who from the height of the kingdom was to shine with the splendor of great virtue. And asserting the immutability of the divine sentence, he adds, saying: (Verse 29) 'Moreover, the Triumphant One of Israel will not spare, and will not be moved by repentance.'

32. For who is to be understood by the name of this triumphant one, except the Creator of the human race? For whoever overcomes hidden adversaries conquers by His power, who bestows upon him the grace of overcoming temptation. What does it mean that the triumphant one is said not to spare, when Samuel is being entreated? Because when preachers grow angry at sinning subjects, when they strike the proud or the dissolute with divine judgment, they do not act by the impulse of their own fury, but carry out the decision of the divine will. As if he were clearly saying: I indeed pronounced not my own sentence, but His, whose decree, once issued, cannot be revoked. Therefore He does not spare, and is not moved by repentance—but toward those who can neither cease from their sins nor repent of the sins they love. And adding the reason, he says: (Verse 29. "For He is not a man, that He should repent. As if to say: His very being belongs to Him in whom there is no changeableness. By the name of the triumphant one, the perfection of the substitute king can also be designated, who was destined to have the glory of many triumphs and who would not dare to spare anyone against the will of the Creator. Whence also in this very same book it is written of him: "And David struck the whole land, and left alive neither man nor woman" (1 Kings 27:9). Of him also it is said:

”For He is not a man, that He should repent. For what is designated in this place by ”man,” except one subject to carnal passions? As if he were still stinging the proud one, saying: You now repent of your sins when you receive the sentence upon your boldness; but he will not repent who, being a man, is not subject to disobedience and pride. And Saul still confesses with his mouth, saying: (Verse 30. ”I have sinned. But he reveals the quality of that confession, because he added, saying: (Verse 30. ”But now honor me before the elders of my people, and before Israel.”

33. It is clear what kind of repentance he bears who still desires to be honored. For if he truly repented of his sin, he would have desired to be dishonored rather than honored. It is fitting, therefore, to marvel at the hardness of his cast-off heart. As the man of God, carrying out the command of the Creator, says: ”The Lord has cast you off, that you should not be king,” on the contrary, he who receives the sentence of rejection seeks honors through the desire for exaltation. What does it mean, then, that he says: ”I have sinned”? Indeed, confession of sin should be followed not by honor or glory, but by profit and self-contempt. For what does it profit to confess sins if the affliction of repentance does not follow the voice of confession? For three things must be considered in everyone who truly repents, namely: conversion of the mind, confession of the mouth, and punishment for sin. For he who is not converted in heart, what does it profit him if he confesses his sins? A sin that is loved is by no means erased by confessing it. Indeed, there are some who reveal their sins by confessing but, by not converting, in no way detest them. These indeed accomplish nothing by confessing, because what they cast out by speaking, they bring back in by loving. Whence Scripture also suggests to those wishing to confess profitably, saying: ”With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

What is it to believe with the heart unto righteousness, except to direct the will toward faith working through love? Therefore, when someone directs the intention of the heart toward righteousness through love, through the beginning of good will he has the fruit of good conversion. This one certainly now confesses unto salvation, because by speaking he casts out from the wound more than conversion has pierced. The third kind, therefore, that is punishment, is like a necessary medicine, so that the abscess of guilt, which is lanced by conversion, may be purged by confessing and healed by the medicine of affliction. Therefore, he who does not believe in his heart unto righteousness by no means makes confession unto salvation, because he displays, as it were, the leaves of a bad tree whose deep roots he fixes in his heart. The sign of true confession, therefore, is not in the confession of the mouth but in the affliction of repentance. For then we perceive a sinner to be well converted when he strives to blot out with worthy severity of affliction what he confesses by speaking. Whence John the Baptist, rebuking the badly converted Jews flocking to him, says: ”O generation of vipers, who has shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:7). Therefore, repentance is to be recognized in fruit, not in leaves or branches. For good will is, as it were, a tree. What then are the words of confession other than leaves?

Therefore, leaves are not to be sought by us for their own sake but for the sake of fruit, because every confession of sins is received for this reason: that the fruit of repentance may follow. Whence also the Lord cursed the tree adorned with leaves but barren of fruit (Mark 11), because he does not accept the ornament of confession without the fruit of affliction. Therefore Saul, who confesses and wishes to be honored, not afflicted and humbled—what does he signify except those who have a sterile confession and bear no fruit, who display the beauty of confession with humble words but pursue the greenness of words, not the humility of repentance?

34. But why do we look to the ancients, when now we see such a great multitude of fallen rulers? For now they rush headlong into disgraceful deeds in droves—not only the weak who are subject to authority, but also negligent prelates and priests. Those who by the rank of their ministry have been assigned to heavenly sacraments act with slippery sinfulness. But many of them, when they somehow come to their senses, confess that they have erred. Yet they wish to bring forth their sins against themselves in such a way that they still desire to be honored on account of their sacred office; in secret they declare themselves shameful, but outwardly they blush to appear humble beyond the dignity of their rank. What then are these men but those who see themselves as cast down, and yet dare to wish to be honored? Often, moreover, they do not come of their own accord, but are seized against their will; they receive the commands of their own abjection, and yet they ask to be honored. They wish indeed to do unclean things, yet dare to cling to the sacred altars. Behold how many Sauls we observe, how many fallen rulers we contemplate from the height of Holy Church. To each of them individually it must surely be said: 'Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king'—so that those whom earthly disgraces do not cease to defile may not perform the heavenly ministry.

But this indeed we can say, yet we cannot persuade slippery ministers of it. For Saul both heard that he was rejected and continued to reign; because unclean priests recognize that they have been cast down from the priestly summit through the defilements of luxury, and yet they do not cease to handle the sacred mysteries against God's will. But a king reigning against the Lord's will was not a king but a tyrant; because an unworthy priest, who is rightly cast out on account of his defilement, when he presumes to minister, ascends to the summit of so great a glory only to be condemned. Hence also that great senator of heaven, wishing to terrify such tyrants, says: 'Whoever eats the bread and drinks the blood of the Lord unworthily, eats and drinks judgment upon himself' (1 Cor. 11:27). Often, however, it happens through urgent confession that those who confess are also believed to have undergone a conversion of heart. Sometimes the chosen preachers accept the false humility of the reprobate, so that by their example others may be led to salvation. For they recognize two things in hypocrites: one within, the other without. Within, indeed, pure evil; without, a pretense of good. They detest both, but they often feign approval of the outward show of good in them, so that those who see the good on the outside and do not know the evil within may follow the examples of good that they behold. Rightly therefore it is added:

(Verse 31.) 'So Samuel turned back and followed Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.'

35. For on account of the evil that lay hidden within, he deserved to hear: "The Lord has cast you off from being king." But so that under the pretext of good he might draw others to the truth of that same good, Samuel wished to follow Saul, and saw him worship the Lord. Sometimes even the evils of kings and the great ones of the earth must be tolerated, lest being provoked they slip into worse things. For the children of Israel often worshiped the gods of the nations. Whence also it was said above concerning those converted by Samuel: "The children of Israel removed from their midst the Baals and the Ashtaroth" (1 Sam. 7:4). And perhaps if the rejected king did not see the prophet returning with him to worship the Lord, he would worship the images of demons. And so he casts him off, yet returns with him; because in the powerful of this age, iniquity must be condemned in such a way that the good they possess is not lost through provocation. For often they are evil in secret, and the good that is seen, others imitate more devoutly. Certainly the evils of the powerful of the age are great evils for them; but the good things they put forth benefit the example of the faithful more than the good deeds of others. Rightly therefore Samuel returns with the rejected king; because the elect preachers both strike the powerful of the age for their iniquity, and permit them to do certain good things for the sake of example. Whence it also follows: (Verse 32.) And Samuel said: "Bring here Agag, king of Amalek." And Agag was brought to him, very fat and trembling.

36. Kings adore the Lord when the proud and scornful humble themselves to carry out the Lord's commands. The unchaste adore when they are subjected to God through the obedience of chastity. But sometimes they pretend to adore, because some have a pretext of humility or chastity, yet while they are believed to truly possess the good, others through the good they believe them to have lose the practice of good works. Therefore they hand over King Agag to Samuel, because by confessing they bring forth the vigor of their sensuality. For when they confess the sins of lust which they committed through the vigor of the flesh, what else do they do but offer the king of Amalek to the prophets to be slain? But what does it mean that Agag is called very fat, when the vigor of sensuality is fat in some and lean in others? What then does it mean that he is offered fat, except that he was led forth by the subjects of the reprobate king? For subjects are often negligent; but when they behold the examples of their chosen pastor, they groan amid the evils they commit. Through the frailty of the flesh they fall into impurities; but struck by the examples of their superiors, they cannot fully rejoice amid the pleasures of impurity. In whom then is Agag fattest, if not in those of whom it is said: "They rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things" (Prov. 2:14)?

For the subjects of a lustful teacher sin all the more boldly, the fewer examples of their superiors they have placed before them to see. But they cast themselves down far more madly when they do not see in their pastors a good that they might follow, and they do see an evil by whose example they perish. In these indeed Agag grows fat, because joyfully, securely, and freely the vigor of the flesh is stretched out in the pleasure of lust, which, with nothing

standing in the way, is not deprived of the practice of allurement. Therefore the fattest is offered to be slain when those are converted who greatly rejoiced in the pleasure of lust; for the king is, as it were, handed over when the carnal sense which ruled the mind is revealed to the priests of Christ through confession. Fat also customarily nourishes fire. Rightly therefore this is ascribed to the Amalekite king, because while the spirit of fornication possesses the mind, the more sweetly and frequently it feeds there through shameful thoughts, the more abundant fuel is supplied to it for increasing the fire of concupiscence. But he is said to be trembling, because the carnal sense, when it is handed over to spiritual men through confession, is weakened. Therefore trembling gives a sign that it does not have the strength of its members. When therefore the vigor of sensuality begins to be weakened, what else trembles but the king of the Amalekites?

Or he is said to tremble because many, when they begin to be converted, are terrified by the rigor of penance. And because all carnal people cannot abandon the customary pleasures of the flesh without grief, there follows: (Verse 32) And he said: ”Does bitter death thus separate?”

37. For to say this to the carnal sense is to strike the mind with the turning of sorrow over the loss of accustomed pleasure. For because the recently converted suffer great darts of bitterness, the king whom they had served, as it were, complains about death: because in them carnality is by no means slain without great tribulation. Therefore to ask the carnal sense about the separation of death is to strike the still-sorrowful mind of the converted person over the loss of past delight. But also the manner of separation is inquired about, when he says: ”Is it so?” For as though, having seen the austerities to which it must be subjected, his sensuality says to the mind: ”Do you spurn joyful things for such sorrowful ones?” Samuel certainly hears this voice: because the chosen preacher recognizes the tempted heart of his subject by certain signs. But what does it profit to recognize, if he himself says nothing against that which rages within in the heart of the subject? Therefore there follows: (Verse 33) And Samuel said: As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.

38. What is the mother of carnal sense, if not original sin? For since before the sin of the first man no lust was present in the members, the Amalekite king did not exist. There was indeed the sense of the flesh, but it was not shameful and lustful; but as soon as he fell into sin, he felt the itching of his members, because he could not have obedient movement of the flesh when he himself was disobedient to God. Original sin, therefore, is rightly understood as the mother of the shameful sense of the flesh, because from it there comes forth by birth that which began to exist from it. Whence also the Apostle, as if abhorring the law of carnal sense as that of a most severe tyrant, showed not only the king himself but the mother, saying: ”Therefore it is no longer I who work that, but sin which dwells in me” (Rom. 7:20). For the sin which he declared he did not work, he understood as the movement of the flesh; but the sin dwelling in him, as original sin. Because therefore from original sin comes the sin of the movement of the flesh, when we consider the carnal sense

as king, we rightly name his mother as the first sin. Moreover, the children of this mother are all concupiscences, sins, and vices. The mother is surely made without children when every fault from the flesh and every fault from the mind now seems merely to remain.

For she is then without children, because even if no shameful thing now comes from the flesh, if no concupiscence now reigns in the mind, nevertheless that sin remaining in us cannot now be destroyed by the power of a teacher. For what does the Apostle mean when he says: "It is no longer I who work that, but sin which dwells in me"? From that sin indeed, which we contract from the corrupt root of our nature, we have the capacity to be corrupted by the passions of vices. The disordered law of the members, therefore, when it moves the members contrary to our will—we do not work this, but sin which dwells in us. The will indeed is then present with us, but we do not yet find the ability; since we would wish that nothing could be moved in us against our will. And these are perhaps the conceptions of the worst mother, by which that sin is impregnated; if they are allowed to pour forth into shameful and obscene acts, they are said to be, as it were, nourished. The children, therefore, are the movements which are not only naturally within, but which are manifested in shameful and obscene works. The mother of Agag is therefore made without children when original sin is so restrained that it is not permitted to produce any acts or movements. Or perhaps she is made without children because she once had children.

When, therefore, converted sinners cease to be shameful both in act and in the gestures of luxury, the fault dwelling in them, as a mother, is as it were bereft of children.

39. And it should be noted that the mother is said to be made without children by way of comparison. As he says, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." The virtues of the mind, from which good works proceed, are mothers; but the sword of Agag is called the weapon of lust, which indeed makes women childless, because lust destroys all good works. Or certainly the women are understood as the minds of the faithful, while the children of holy minds are good thoughts, virtues, and good works. But the sword of Agag made mothers childless, because the delight of lust, if it is allowed to be unsheathed like a sword, slays from them indeed all good thoughts, all virtues, and good works. For the sharp pleasure of this pestilence, if it is received into the mind, while it delights one to gaze more intently upon what is impure, can think of nothing clean and holy; and while it ardently drags one toward the fulfillment of wicked deeds, it permits one to do nothing of virtue. And because through its burning all things perish, not only the children of Agag but all the children of the women are slaughtered. Therefore it makes mothers childless, because the delight of lust, like a sword, while it strikes the fruits of minds, by no means allows thoughts of virtue or the good of work to live. Just as therefore it made mothers childless, so also his own mother is made childless, when the sinner is so converted that, apart from the guilt naturally implanted in us, nothing of obscene works or impulses appears to remain in those who are converted. Whence it is also fittingly added: (Verse 33.) And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

40. That he is cut into pieces means that, once dead, he is divided into small parts. For Agag is slain when the vigor of the flesh is so crushed by fasting, vigils, and spiritual meditations that nothing wanton, nothing lustful is felt to stir. For to slay him is to render the flesh unable to move shamefully. But the corpse of the slain one remains whole when its movement remains. Lust does not remain when it weighs down the mind by its mere heaviness alone; that is, when a simple and natural motion of the flesh resides in the members, but has nothing of lustful ardor. But because the minds of the elect bear this very thing with difficulty, they carry, as it were, the whole corpse of a dead king. But what does it mean that he is cut into pieces, except that they do not wish to leave even that natural motion its strength? He is therefore cut into pieces, because each time it strikes, it is slain. Therefore, while the alternating movements are not allowed to come together, the corpse of Agag is, as it were, cut into pieces. Or perhaps this Agag is of such a nature that he cannot die unless cut into pieces. For as I said above, lust is kindled after the manner of fire; and if it is extinguished carelessly, the nearby stubble is quickly set ablaze. A great fire, too, can often be better extinguished when dispersed.

For when many coals come together into one, they make an enormous mass of embers. Lest therefore the one extinguishing it be burned, the mass of embers is first wisely scattered, so that it may be quickly extinguished through the individual pieces of coals. For what are thoughts of luxury, what are lustful motions of the body, but coals of fire? Which indeed, if they come together in the heart or in the flesh, can quickly burn, but can never easily be extinguished. Let the fire therefore be scattered, let Agag be cut into pieces, and let the mind be guarded so that it disperses unclean thoughts and does not allow one to cling to another. For since one cannot bring it about that one never thinks harmful things, let one do what one can: immediately cast out the thought that carelessly enters the mind. Thus indeed one divides a very great fire quickly into individual coals and swiftly extinguishes it, if one separates all the flames of thoughts in such a way as not to allow them to be joined together in the mind, neither through negligence nor through desire. Thus indeed the vigor of the mind also represses the motions of the body, when it does not allow them to come together with one another. For an enticing motion of the flesh, if it is not at all nourished by thought, does not seem to come together with another. For the glue of enticing motions is unclean thought:

because whoever willingly looks upon unclean things immediately moves the flesh violently toward the things loved by lusting after them; the more willingly and lingeringly one thinks, the more, as coals to coals, one binds shameful motions to even more shameful ones. Let him therefore maintain a strong guard over his soul who wishes to powerfully scatter the motions of the flesh. For within, Agag is first divided, so that outwardly he may likewise be divided into pieces; because for one who does not allow evil thoughts to come together, the shameful motions of the flesh are also, as it were, divided into pieces. Thus indeed the very fat Agag is slain, if he is divided into pieces; because we powerfully extinguish the sense of the flesh along with its unclean motions, both in the body and in the soul, if we keep watch against each of its individual snares with singular attention. Hence that Wise Man

also carefully admonishes, saying: ”With all watchfulness keep your heart, because from it life proceeds, and from one that is neglected, death comes forth” (Proverbs 4:23). For life proceeds when the heart is guarded, because when all uncleanness is repelled, the spirit of the converted is enlivened toward virtues. Therefore Agag is cut into pieces by the prophet when, through the counsel of teachers, individual particles of uncleanness are destroyed both in the body and in the mind of the hearers. Moreover, it is rightly said that he was cut to pieces both before the Lord and in Gilgal;

because those who know how to think wisely both about almighty God and about the Holy Scriptures can powerfully divide the minute particles of enticing thoughts and shameful motions. But, as I said, teachers often tolerate the feigned good deeds of the wicked not for their own sake, but for the sake of others; because what they do in pretense benefits not the pretenders, but the onlookers. Indeed, the elect often see the feigned good deeds of the wicked; but because they do not know their hearts, they imitate the good that appears to shine outwardly. Saul asked Samuel to return with him to worship the Lord; but he, having returned, cut Agag into pieces, because elect teachers, through the works that the reprobate perform, turn the elect toward the pursuit of living well. But because they do this very thing by way of dispensation, that is, for the sake of something else, when the necessity of the dispensation passes, they abandon those very reprobate whom they had, as it were, followed toward good works, once they have lapsed into the impenitence of a reprobate heart. And so it is well added: (Verses 34, 35. And Samuel went away to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house in Gibeah, and Samuel did not see him again until the day of his death.

41. What is the house of the transgressor, if not the habit of wicked work? For whoever is enclosed in a perverse habit dwells, as it were, in a house. Saul therefore ascended to his house, when any reprobate, after the rebuke of teachers, returns to the practice of evil work. For he descended, as it were, to the plains when he feigned humility in order to learn the commands of his superiors. But what does it mean that Samuel is said to have departed before Saul ascended to his house? Yet, as I said, when there is no need on behalf of others, the chosen preacher cannot remain with the crafty man; and because the pretender advances in the absence of the teacher, Saul did not go away to his house, but ascended. For to ascend, for the reprobate, is to advance from bad to worse. Likewise, when the proud man is said to descend, he is declared to ascend. For to ascend to his house, for the proud man, is to exalt himself through pride up to the measure by which he is to be condemned. For the house of the proud man is the measure of his own wickedness. For when they are permitted, through the prosperities of this world, to exercise tyranny, to disturb the earth, to oppress the good, and to afflict the innocent, what else do the proud appear to do but ascend?

But because it is predetermined by God how much they may harm, how much they may rage, how much they may exalt themselves through tyranny, they are permitted to ascend only up to their house. For their house is the measure of wickedness in which they will always remain: because when they have arrived at the fullness of their crimes, they are

snatched away by death and punished with eternal torments. For he remains, as it were, in his house, who can never escape from the punishments of his way of life. This can fittingly be understood not only of the proud, but also of the lustful and all the reprobate. For they were still in the ascent and not yet in their house, those of whom it is said: 'The iniquities of the Amorites are not yet full' (Gen. 15:16). Hence likewise the blessed apostle Paul says: 'To fill up their sins' (1 Thess. 2:16). Therefore they ascend to their house when, by the advancement of evil, they advance to more wicked works, for which they will endure eternal torments.

42. Moreover, Samuel is said to depart to Ramah. For teachers separated from the reprobate do not merely go, but depart. They go when they leave those who are to be corrected, because those whom they dismiss as if in anger, they afterward return to, invited by their good amendment. Therefore, for a teacher to depart is to abandon the impenitent wicked with perpetual condemnation. For they so abandon those who work sins unto death through impenitence that they are not compelled to return to them any further. Well therefore it says: 'Saul did not see Samuel again until the day of his death.' And because they perceive that this must be done in the contemplation of the highest truth, he is recorded as departing to Ramah. For a consummated vision is the perfected understanding of innermost truth. Lest therefore the severity of preachers be judged excessive by the carnal-minded when they separate the reprobate from the communion of the Church in perpetuity, let them hear that after Samuel came to Ramah, he saw Saul no more—because the teacher eternally separates the one whom he does not recognize as belonging to the number of the elect. But this is believed with confidence if in the figure of Samuel the affection of charity among the preachers of the holy Church is perceived alongside their severity. For the zeal of severity is shown in that it is recorded he did not see Saul until the day of his death. But concerning the affection of charity, it is added: (Verse 35) 'Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul, because the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.'

43. For what is it that he mourns for one whom he disdains to look upon, except that even with their zeal for righteousness, the holy teachers possess a disposition of great charity, and the very greatness of that charity is shown by the fact that he is said to weep for the rejected king? With what affection, then, do they weep for the sins of their elect subjects, who have learned to weep so tenderly even for the cast-off reprobate? For the urgency of the mourning is shown by what is added next: CHAPTER III. (1 Kings XVI, 1.) The Lord said to Samuel: How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him, so that he should not reign over Israel?

1. For when it is said to him: "How long will you mourn?" it is shown that he was mourning persistently. Great, therefore, is the affection of the saints, even when they outwardly bring forth the severity of punishment. For on the outside they rage, but inwardly they melt with love. In the manner of mothers they strike their little ones, yet they groan with the affection of the little ones whom they chastise. But what does it mean that the Lord says: "How long will you mourn for Saul?" Can a mother see her son dying and not weep at all through the

rending of her heart? She who dies endures the dead without grief, but is weakened. What does it mean that He says: "How long will you mourn for Saul?" Unless it is because the lost are not to be mourned excessively? For often a teacher is vehemently afflicted over the perdition of his subject, but is consoled by regard for the supreme justice. What, therefore, does this saying of God to the prophet mean, except to relieve the preacher's mind from affliction through inward consolation? And because, when prelates have fallen, the elect are substituted through divine mercy, the Lord adds, saying: (Verse 1.) "Fill your horn with oil, and come: I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided among his sons a king for myself."

2. For as if consoling one who mourns, he says: Why is the casting off of one person lamented, when a better one is substituted? Hence Saul is shown as not foreseen, but David as foreseen. How great, therefore, and of what quality he was, let it be weighed with prompt consideration—he who is determined by the judgment and choice of Almighty God. But what does it mean that God foresees and the prophet is sent to anoint, except that the spiritual customs of the holy Church are being described, which is seen to appoint no one except those whom it contemplates God to have chosen beforehand and preordained? "Come," he says, "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have foreseen among his sons a king. As if to say: Presume nothing on your own part, but by ordaining you will follow him whom I have foreseen. Hence also a little later he adds, saying: "And you shall anoint the one I shall point out to you. What is this, except that those who wish to ordain others to the summit of the Church ought to be prophets? For they can recognize what has been foreseen by God, if they consult the sacred Scriptures to find the person of the bishop to be chosen. For it is as though God is shown speaking when such a Pastor is chosen as is commended through sacred eloquence.

In the literal sense, however, Samuel is told to come from the Lord so that he might be called back from compassion for the reprobate and rejected king. But if by continual weeping he was seeking the restoration of the fallen one, for him to come was to cease from such an intention. And he filled his horn with oil, because he tempered pastoral sublimity in anointing the king with the splendor of praise. For with a harsh horn he assailed Saul, because he struck down the sinner as if with a great assault, saying: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king" (1 Kings 15:23). What does it mean, then, that the horn is commanded to be filled with oil, except that the justice of the king to be anointed is commended? As if to say: The king who is now anointed will not need to be struck with rebuke, but proclaimed with the favor of wondrous praise—he needs not to be assailed, but to be favored. He is sent to Jesse the Bethlehemite, so that the king who is chosen might be taught to be one who would endure. For through the patriarch Jacob, the condition of the kingdom that would endure was shown long before, because he said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a ruler from his loins, until he comes who is to be sent" (Genesis 49:10).

Therefore the king foreseen among the sons of Jesse is declared, so that the king who is commanded to be anointed might be taught to be not one who would depart like Saul, but one who would be lasting. As if he rouses the prophet wasting away in anguish over the rejected one, saying: Why is the one rejected for his fault lamented, when one worthy of praise is substituted?

3. We have touched upon these things according to the literal sense; now let us consider the election of our prelates beneath the literal narrative. What does it mean that the horn is commanded to be filled with oil, except that such a pastor is to be chosen in the holy Church who ought not to be accused as a transgressor, but commended to the example of others with wondrous praises? For the horn is the weapon of animals. And what else are the authority and rebuke of the chief bishop but weapons? Indeed horns strike when their sharp points are applied to sinners through rebuke. For to strike with the horn is to reprove sinners sharply. The horn is filled with oil when the sublimity of the preacher does not have the harshness of threats, but the gentleness of favors. Or the horn is filled with oil when to the chosen pastor there is given at once both the exaltation of the summit and the power of anointing—when the lofty rank is ascended, yet he who is raised to the heights is filled with the abundance of merits. Therefore priests are anointed from a full horn who attain to the highest rank with the fullness of graces. Because indeed fire is kindled by oil, the oil is the love of the teacher's heart—in which fire is kindled, because in the richness of the mouth the power and grace of the Holy Spirit burns.

Because therefore the teacher ought to have the richness of great charity, the king who is commanded to be anointed is said to be anointed from a full horn. The fullness of the horn is also spoken of in terms of the perseverance of graces; for those who fail before the end do not merit to be anointed with the fullness of the horn. Still more must be said about the fullness of this horn: it is commanded for this reason, because he who must fill others from his own fullness needs a great anointing. Whence Moses too is said to have been so full that the Lord is shown to have taken from his spirit and given it to others (Num. 11). Or the horn of the prophet is filled when the pontifical sublimity is prepared for teaching more perfect things. For when the princes of the Church are ordained, the things they ought to do must not be preached to them in half-measure. Therefore the bishops fill the horn when they set forth full and perfect virtues, which the chosen princes of the Church may imitate. Because indeed those who anoint ought themselves to be spiritual, they are commanded to fill the horn. The horn is indeed from the flesh, but it is not enclosed in the flesh. Therefore the horn is the spiritual manner of life of the teacher. The horn pours out oil when he preaches lofty things who demonstrates these things by his lofty manner of life.

Therefore to fill the horn with oil is to take up the preaching of great virtues in a lofty manner of life. And he pours it on the head when he imprints it on the mind of him who comes newly to the highest order. Therefore when the elect are promoted, they are anointed from a full horn, because they advance to the height of their order by the power of perfection.

4. But the prophet is sent to Jesse of Bethlehem, a king is foreseen among his sons, because that shepherd is chosen who has been instructed in ecclesiastical devotion. Bethlehem, therefore, which is called "house of bread," what else does it designate but each and every house of religion? For by the name of bread the teaching of perfection is shown, as Paul attests, who, rousing the weak to conversion, says: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. For you were not yet able, nor are you yet able" (1 Cor. 3:2). For if milk belongs to little ones, bread belongs to none but the perfect. Whence also it is said of the strength of the perfect man: "He shall dwell on high, the fortifications of rocks shall be his loftiness, bread has been given to him" (Isa. 33:16). Therefore in the house of bread a king is sought for anointing, because those are profitably advanced who are nourished in the order of perfect conduct. For he is able to make others strong who has not been nourished in lax and negligent conduct. Therefore he is sought in the house of bread, because in promoting a bishop, strength of conduct must be sought. From a weak congregation a person of virtue is almost never taken. Whence rightly the search is made among the sons of Jesse, who is named "salvation of the Lord," or certainly "salvation" absolutely. Indeed, a prelate is rightly called salvation. For what are sins and vices, if not diseases of souls?

But a chosen preacher, through the integrity of sound doctrine, through the solidity of innocence, through the splendor of an elect life, is rightly named the salvation of the Lord. There are indeed other teachers whose speech creeps like a cancer. From the family of these a king is not taken, because he does not lead sick minds to health, but kills them. And it should be noted that Jesse is called by another name, Isai. He has indeed a twofold name, because a good teacher is not always at peace. In time of peace he is called the salvation of the Lord, so that the wounds of wars may be taught to be healed, as it were, within the secure vestibules of his house. But in war he has the name Jesse, because he both fortifies himself bravely and protects others valiantly. For Jesse is said to mean "relief of the island. But by the name of island, what is understood if not minds surrounded by the waves of temptations? They are indeed islands, because even if they endure great conflicts, they are not moved. Whence also the Psalmist, proclaiming the victory of the elect, says: "The Lord has reigned, let the earth exult, let many islands rejoice" (Ps. 97:1). The Lord indeed reigns when no storm of enemies disturbs his throne, namely the elect minds; but the earth rejoices, because the solid hearts of teachers are glad. The islands rejoice, because when they overcome temptations by his grace, the hearers of their superiors are gladdened.

The earth indeed is the strong mind and the firm tongue of the teacher. But the island is said to be the strong heart of the subject, which is still assailed by temptations, yet is not moved. What then does it mean that Jesse is called the relief of the island, except that through the strength of teachers the hearts of the lesser are uplifted? For amid so many waves of temptations they would collapse, if their hearts were not raised to the desire of the lofty life by the strength of their superiors. Therefore a king is described as hidden among the sons of Isai and Jesse, because those profitably come to the summit of the Church who have learned under the instruction of the elect both to guard peace and to arrange or wage spiritual wars. Therefore it is well said: "For I have provided among his sons a king for

myself. For among these and not among others is a king foreseen, because through divine grace none attain to the summit of the Church who do not follow the instruction of the elect through all the successive periods of time. There follows: (Verses 2–3. And Samuel said: "How shall I go? For Saul will hear of it and will kill me. And the Lord said: "You shall take a calf from the herd in your hand, and you shall say: I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. And you shall call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you are to do."

5. What is shown by these words, except that the cunning and cruelty of tyrants must sometimes be eluded by pious deception? For by the Lord's command a calf is taken from the herd, a sacrifice is simulated, and the royal anointing is reached, because when tyrants desire to do harm, certain things which they may believe must be set before them, so that they find no opening to do harm. Thus tyrants must be eluded in such a way that the guilt of lying is avoided. This is well accomplished when what is asserted actually takes place, but what takes place is stated in such a way that it is concealed, because it is partly spoken and partly kept silent. For the prophet Samuel is commanded to go to anoint the king, and to declare that he is going to sacrifice to the Lord, not that he is going to anoint a king; so that in sacrificing he speaks the truth, and in concealing the anointing he eludes the tyrant's cruelty while speaking the truth. For that he went to sacrifice, he shortly afterward clearly sets forth, where it says: 'He therefore sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.'

6. But now it is better handled if we consider what these things signify spiritually. What does it mean, then, that the prophet takes a calf in his hand, and so arrives to anoint the king? But what is the calf, if not the splendor of the image of the Redeemer? For since he strives to make the one he chooses conformed to the Redeemer, when he preaches the very form of the Redeemer, he carries, as it were, a calf in his hand. And because he demonstrates the splendor of the Lord's manner of life, which he preaches, in the power of his works, he leads by hand the calf he takes from the herd. For to take up a calf in hand is to preserve the preaching of the Lord's manner of life in the power of one's works. Thus indeed, going in this way, he is not killed; otherwise he would be killed: because he who speaks and does not act is condemned by the sword of his own mouth. What does it mean that he is commanded to say: "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord"? What does it likewise mean that he does what he says, since he comes and sacrifices, except that the one who promotes others ought to be of such efficacy that he not only speaks good things, but persuades them? Indeed the sacrificial victim, which is seen in the prophet's hand, is recognized upon the altar.

For what is the heart of a chosen hearer, if not the altar of God? For when a teacher speaks good things with his mouth and shows them by his works, the calf is in his hand. But when he also persuades his hearers of what he says and does, the victim is on the altar. He therefore sacrifices when chosen hearts receive through love that which shines forth in the word and example of the teacher, concerning the imitation of the Redeemer. There follows: "And you shall call Jesse to the sacrifice. Perhaps this passage suggests that subjects are not to be promoted without the knowledge of their superiors. Jesse is first called to the

sacrifice, so that the good which the subject is seen to undertake may be grounded in the mind of his master. Rightly it is added: "And I will show you what you are to do. Expressing this very thing, he says: (Verse 3. "And you shall anoint the one whom I shall point out to you."

7. For unless Jesse is first called, what must be done is not revealed to him: because without the will of the master, nothing concerning the person of the subject is to be done. Therefore, when he has been called, what must be done is shown, because with the will of the devout teacher, the humility of the subject is raised to the height of prelacy. But what does it mean when it is said: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," except that all the disciples are not equal to the chosen pastor? For among them, some are useful for obeying; others both obey humbly and have learned to command with discretion. Therefore He says: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," so that when a person is sought for the summit of the priesthood, the search may be conducted with great care. By these words, certainly, nothing of their own judgment is left to the ordainers of Churches in the election of others. "The one whom I shall show you," He says, "him you shall anoint. Who are those who anoint those whom God does not show, except those who, led by carnal affection, elevate to the summit of the Churches those who are to be ordained, who do not discern merits but show favoritism toward persons? These indeed anoint kings, but not those who are shown by God. What is their own, they do; what is God's, they take away. For it is God's part to show the person;

it is the ordainer's part to provide the anointing. Therefore, when they show to themselves those whom they anoint, they refuse to have God as their co-worker. Hence also through the prophet Hosea the Lord complains about such chosen ones, saying: "They have reigned, but not from me; princes have arisen, and I did not know it" (Hosea 8:4). Therefore it is said to the elect, what the reprobate cannot hear: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," so that no one may be promoted unless he is judged worthy of so great an office by the commendation of the Holy Scriptures. For in them the Lord speaks; there it is recorded what kind of man and how great the teacher of the Church ought to be. Therefore, the one shown by the Lord is chosen, who is commended through sacred eloquence. These things indeed wicked rulers despise, but good ones carry out. Therefore, concerning the obedience of the good, it is rightly added: (Verse 4. "So Samuel did what the Lord told him. He came to Bethlehem, and the elders of the city were astonished, coming to meet him."

8. As for the historical sense, the elders are amazed, because the prophet was not accustomed to come there. By this it is perhaps signified that chosen teachers should scarcely ever be seen in public, should be frequent in solitude, free from civil affairs, full of spiritual ones. Therefore it becomes a wonder to the people when the person of the pastor is seen in public. They marvel that he goes out whom they knew as a cultivator of secrecy. Because he is held in great veneration by the people, the elders of the city are reported both to have marveled and to have gone out to meet him. But because not the people but the elders marvel, the perfect virtue of teachers is shown, which is praised not by the little ones and the

simple but by the great and the learned. They also inquire about the peaceful coming of the prophet. As if, then, he who said threatened a coming that was not peaceful: "What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in the spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). What then is the meaning of what is said: (Verse 4) "Is your coming peaceful?"

9. But the chosen faithful, when they rightly consider the deeds of spiritual teachers, assuredly weigh the divine will in them. For because they knew Samuel to be a prophet, it was assuredly because he had known the secrets of divine dispensation. Therefore, when they ask about his peaceful arrival, what else do they do by asking than wish to know the secret of divine counsel? Would that we also, as often as we see holy men, would be eager to inquire about the security of our peace, and to learn diligently from them how we are seen by God, we who do not have the eyes of our own knowledge. Therefore the arrival of teachers is peaceful when they come to those who are not to be struck for fault, but to be exhorted for the sake of righteousness. He therefore who had come to the righteous man who had been advanced, answered saying: (Verse 5) "Peaceful; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me, that we may sacrifice."

10. Those who direct their intention toward heavenly things go with the doctors to offer sacrifice. And the prophet sacrifices before those who go, when the doctor binds in the hearts of those present through love what he proclaims by word. But that we may attend a little to the historical sense, we must carefully examine what is said: "Sanctify yourselves and come with me. For if they do not dare to be present at the sacrifice unless sanctified, what must we think of those who sacrifice? For to sanctify is to purify. How pure, then, ought the priests to be, where the people invited to the sacrifice are not to be admitted unless sanctified? For the sanctification of the body is chastity, and the sanctification of the mind is charity and humility. Let the one invited to the sacrifice therefore be sanctified, but he who invites is all the more compelled to be so. Let the priests note what they say to those invited: "Come with me. For the sanctified come with them if pure priests approach the service of God together with pure people. For to go with them is for the pure to approach together with the pure. For if the people are pure but the priests are not pure, they do not come with them, because they do not approach in an equal order of purity. Let such ones hear what another prophet admonishes, saying: "Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11). Let them likewise hear what he says:

"Wash yourselves, be clean" (Isaiah 1:16). Because therefore the people must be cleansed, he says: "Sanctify yourselves. Because likewise men of the highest rank must always remain in the continual state of their purity and draw others to the pattern of their purity, he adds: "And come with me. But because the elders are invited to the sacrifice, what do they demonstrate by this type, except that for choosing a bishop, or for anointing and consecrating him, many wise and religious men must be called? Who are indeed sanctified and come, if they resolve not to follow anything carnal in that election. For them to be sanctified is to bring a spiritual and holy intention to the bestowing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And well

is it said in the type of the chosen, both of Jesse and of his sons: (Verse 5) ”Jesse therefore sanctified his sons and called them to the sacrifice.”

11. And because we have taught through the sacred scriptures that the Lord shows who should be chosen as bishops, let us now see, as the mysteries of this sacred history speak, what kind of men He shows to be worthy and what kind He rejects. There follows: (Verses 6, 7.) ’And when they had come in, he saw Eliab and said: Is this the Lord’s anointed before Him? And the Lord said to Samuel: Do not look upon his countenance, nor upon the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, nor do I judge according to the sight of men. For man sees those things which appear, but the Lord beholds the heart.’ For what does it mean for the wise to enter in, except to pass into the subtle sanctuary of discernment? But he saw Eliab when he entered, because the pastor recognizes that man as worthy of leadership in the holy Church who possesses both the strength of good works and the knowledge of truth. But what does it mean that the Lord commands him not to look upon his stature or his countenance, except that in the holy Church neither works nor knowledge are commended without humility? For what is a person’s countenance but the outward manner of life by which he is known? And what is his stature but the height of knowledge by which he is raised to higher things? Whom then does Eliab more fittingly signify than those who do good and are learned, yet are arrogant?

Hence Eliab is interpreted as ”my God is father. This indeed is the name they dare to presume for themselves. For what does it mean that ”my God is father” is said, except that while they vigorously do good works and wisely understand spiritual things, they boast that by singular merit they have passed into the number of the sons of God? For they would say ”father” not ”mine” but ”ours” to the almighty Lord, if through humility they saw themselves in common with the other elect in the order of heavenly birth. Rightly therefore he is rejected, because in the spiritual heights none but the humble are preferred. Thus the prophet subtly inquires about the person to be anointed, saying: ’Is this the Lord’s anointed before Him?’ This happens now when the chief teacher recognizes both the life and the understanding of the one to be chosen, but still inquires about the virtue of humility. But he sees his countenance and stature rejected, when he recognizes that whatever beauty he has in works, whatever loftiness exists in his learning, is without the virtue of humility. Rightly therefore the Lord says: ’I have cast him aside, nor do I judge according to the sight of man, because man sees the face, but God beholds the heart.’ As if He were saying: Men are accustomed to praise great works and words of knowledge, but I praise neither words nor works that I do not see founded in true humility.

Those who are of this sort would tremble at the repulse of their unworthiness if they were willing to hear attentively what the Lord says to the prophet: ’Do not look upon his countenance, nor upon the height of his stature, because I have cast him aside.’ For they consider what the arrogant do to be of great importance; but behold, the Lord declares it so worthless that it is judged not even worth looking upon. But with this one set aside, what follows is

shown: (Verse 8.) 'And Jesse called Aminadab and brought him before Samuel. And he said: Neither has the Lord chosen this one.'

12. Aminadab is interpreted as "urbane." Rightly therefore, by the Lord's deliberate counsel, he is rejected: because the holy church does not choose for the governance of souls one who is vigorous in secular affairs, but one who is distinguished in spiritual conduct. Indeed, those are urbane who, having set aside their focus on heavenly things, strive to show themselves vigorous in outward pursuits. Therefore the Lord did not choose this one either, because by the zeal of a faithful pastor, heavenly things, not earthly ones, ought to be provided for the flocks of the faithful — not weak and fleeting things, but sublime and eternal ones. (Verse 9.) Then he brought forward Shammah, about whom he also said: "The Lord has not chosen this one either."

13. Sama is interpreted as "hearing." What then does Sama designate, except the obedient and simple? For to hear, for them, is to carry out by obeying those things which are commanded by their superiors. Whence also concerning the obedience of the Gentile people it is said through the Psalmist: "A people whom I did not know served me; at the hearing of the ear they obeyed me" (Psalm 17:45). But what does it mean that they are said not to be chosen by the Lord, except that at the summit of the Church are placed not the unskilled humble, but the humble wise, who both know how to carry out what is commanded and wisely command what ought to be done? For it is necessary for him both to do and to teach. Therefore let him do humbly, and let him teach wisely. Because therefore those who know how to act through humility but do not know how to command through learning are not to be taken up into royal dignity, Sama is said not to be chosen by the Lord for the kingdom. From this, then, from this let the simple and the disobedient gather how penally they thrust themselves forward to preeminence, if Almighty God does not receive even him for governance who is called "hearing" through the humility of obedience. And because holy Church has many of this kind, both simple and well-living, as well as humble and wise, it follows: (Verse 10.) And so Jesse brought all his sons before Samuel. And Samuel said: "The Lord has not chosen from these."

14. Because perfection is usually signified by the number seven, the prophet Isaiah testifies, who, declaring the gifts of the Holy Spirit abiding in our Redeemer, says: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him" (Isaiah 11:2). What then does it mean that those who are rejected from the office of preaching are signified by the number seven, when that same number signifies perfection, which no one possesses except from the infusion of the Holy Spirit? But this is fittingly asserted: because to many the grace of the Holy Spirit is given for living well, but is not given for teaching. Since they are many and perfect in good works, they are fittingly contained in the number seven. Likewise, because they do robust things but do not understand subtle things, they are rejected from the governance of the kingdom. And so there are seven sons, and yet none of them is chosen for the governance of souls: because even though by living

well they know how to govern themselves strongly, they are by no means able to protect others strongly through doctrine. Let the ordainer of the Church never rush so hastily in ordaining, because, even if he has many who are not suitable for undertaking the care of souls, those who can preside cannot be lacking to him.

Therefore let the teacher seek earnestly, let him not cease to seek, until he can find those who are hidden. The great virtues of the elect, like treasures of almighty God, are almost always hidden in secret. For almighty God acts in the manner of fearful rich men: because lest he lose the treasures of virtues, he both places them in elect minds and conceals those very minds in secrecy. Therefore let him who desires to ordain, or rather to adorn, the head of the Church seek the hidden treasures. He desires to adorn the bride of Christ; but he cannot unless he brings forth the hidden treasures of the bridegroom for her adornment, and let him not cease until he finds those that are hidden. But why do I urge pastors to seek, when unless God brings forth the hidden [it seems one should read "the hidden ones"], they cannot be found? For what else does this mean: "You shall anoint whomever I shall show you"? Nevertheless they must be sought, because unless they are sought for a long time, they are by no means shown. For the Lord also promises that he will show, and yet the prophet strives to seek, that he may deserve to find. Whence the Lord also commands persistence in seeking, saying: "Seek and you shall find, ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

Therefore the prophet, seeking and persevering in seeking even after so many have been rejected—what does he suggest to us, except that by no dispensation should the unworthy be permitted to come to the summit of religion? For although in most affairs of the holy Church dispensation is salutary, it is certainly deadly and fatal where either the blind through ignorance, or the irreligious though learned, or those devoted to secular affairs are permitted to come to the leadership of others. For the first destroy the souls of their subjects through ignorance, the second through knowing and not doing, and the last likewise through neglecting spiritual things and following carnal and earthly things. The first indeed labor with all their strength so that what they say may be praised; the second do not know what to say; the last strive with every effort to be more abundantly honored among the great ones of the world—who indeed are so much worse than the first, inasmuch as the first wish to appear exalted in spiritual matters, while these wish to appear exalted in carnal and worldly matters. The desire of these last is to be supported by riches, to be exalted by honors, to be elevated by the friendships of the powerful of this age. From all these affections of a reprobate mind can arise neglect of the souls of subjects, contempt of Christ, and the squandering of the Church's resources. Therefore let the teacher seek, so that by no dispensation may he set the unworthy over others:

because what is deadly should never be permitted. Whence it is added: "And Samuel said to Jesse: Are all your sons here? What does it mean that he seeks another, except that the seeker ought not to rest before he deserves to find? And because often what is cast aside

and despised on the outside is exalted within, it follows: (Verse 11) "Who answered: There remains yet the youngest, and he tends the sheep."

15. What is the least, if not the rejected? I mean rejected by himself, not by God: because by God one is rejected through pride; but he is rejected by himself who is considered worthless and lowly. Or he is called the least who, in comparison with others, does not appear to be anything. The rejected one, therefore, is called humble; because he sees himself despised and endures it, cares not at all to be displayed, but feeds the sheep; because he nourishes simple thoughts in the contemplation of the eternal inheritance. Of these pastures of the elect, the Lord certainly says: They shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures (John 10:9). For within they have the pastures of contemplation, without the pastures of good works. Within they enrich the mind with devotions, without they satisfy themselves with pious works. Rightly is this little one said to feed the sheep, because every chosen one is humble and is not barren, who daily does great things but does not think great things of himself. Rightly therefore he is declared not only the little one, but the shepherd: because those who are truly humble cast themselves down outwardly, but through interior fellowship they dwell in the highest and eternal pastures. For it is written: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). And what grace? If not that they may see and know the highest things, know and love them, and run toward those beloved things as ones who are well-fed and strong. And so, because he is exceedingly suitable, he is urgently commanded to be brought forth. For there follows: (Verse 11.) And Samuel said to Jesse: Send and bring him. For we shall not sit down until he comes.

16. But what does it mean, "We will not sit down until he comes"? Whom does he seek, except because in the observance of fasting the sacraments of anointing are to be celebrated? But we must attend not only to the sacraments themselves, but to the power of the sacraments. For there are certain foods which, if they are not avoided, by no means allow one to anoint kings well. Indeed, the outward affairs of the Church are certain foods of the soul, which are devoutly administered by the elect. But if the soul is satiated by the multitude of affairs, it is not perfectly permitted to enter into receiving spiritual things. Therefore, when spiritual matters are pressing, let outward things be deferred, because they must be arranged with great quietness of mind. There follows: (Verse 12.) "So he sent and brought him in." The future king is brought in when the humble are brought forth from the hiding places of their concealment. They are hidden indeed, but in pastures; because, even if they conceal themselves among the lowly and weak things of the flesh before men, great is the breadth of heavenly contemplation in which they dwell. But let us see what kind of man the one now set over others appears to be. For it follows and says: (Verse 12.) "Now he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon."

17. What does it mean that such great beauty of the king is affirmed, except that the person of the teacher must be adorned with great splendors of virtues? For of the Redeemer it was said: "His Spirit adorned the heavens" (Job 26:13). For the heavens are the sublime preachers. These heavens indeed were adorned by the Spirit, because they receive from

the Holy Spirit the virtues by which they shine. What then does it mean that he is said to be ruddy, except that in red matter the fervor of charity is often signified? Hence also in the vestment of the high priest, scarlet twice-dyed is placed, so that he may be clothed with a twofold charity. He is therefore called ruddy through the ardor of charity, because while he displays the burning precepts of charity, he glows red, as it were, through the heat. What likewise does "handsome in appearance" mean, except conspicuous in inner contemplation? For he has, as it were, a handsome appearance, who shines with the beauty of vision in inner contemplation. What then does the face signify, except the outward glory of uprightness? For since everyone is recognized by the face, the beauty of the face is the illustrious uprightness of one's manner of life. For he is perceived, as it were, through the beauty of his face, who is found to be splendid in every gesture of his body. He is therefore ruddy with love, handsome in appearance on account of knowledge, fair of face, splendid in uprightness.

But since the fervor of charity is demonstrated through holy works, the labor of work itself can be signified by the redness. For he who labors greatly displays a redness of face, because while he grows hot within, he draws redness outwardly upon his countenance. For so it is with all spiritual labor. For the more each person strives to labor for eternal life, the more fervently he is kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit to labor, as though in growing hot he produces a redness that he bears outwardly. The teacher is therefore ruddy through the labor of pious work, handsome in appearance through the splendor of contemplation. But the beauty of face is the very beauty of charity. For through other virtues we receive the form of holiness; through charity itself, we clothe that very form upon ourselves with, as it were, a wondrous beauty. Those other virtues are the body of justice, but charity is rightly understood as the face of this body. For everyone is recognized by the face, not by the body. For if you see the body but do not see the face, you do not recognize the one whose body alone you behold. But what else does it mean that the foolish virgins are answered by the bridegroom: "I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12)? Behold, virginity is preserved through great labors, and virginity itself is recognized as a great and incomparable virtue.

What then does it mean that the foolish virgins are not recognized by the bridegroom, except that they have a body by which they stand, but they do not have the beauty of face that the bridegroom would recognize? They have indeed labor in preserving the body, but they do not have the beauty of countenance in perfect charity. For these three things advance in the life of the elect in the order in which they are set forth. For no one is able to possess the beautiful visions of contemplation unless he first exercises himself vigorously in the labor of pious work. Indeed, the joys of eternal light, the immensity of that supreme light, the eternal vigor of ineffable splendor—the more laboriously it is sought, the more generously it opens itself to those who seek it. He who is already such is indeed seen to be fit for teaching; but unless he shines with a fair face, unless he bears a mind illuminated by the rays of perfect charity, he is not proven worthy of so great an eminence. Let the pastor therefore be ruddy, and not be slack in work; let him be handsome in appearance, that is, lofty in contemplation; let him be fair of face, so that the whole strength of his work and the height

of his contemplation, known to the eyes of the heavenly majesty, may shine through the ineffable beauty of charity.

Indeed, because the teacher of the holy Church must possess these three marks of immense beauty, Peter is taken up on behalf of all and is asked three times whether he loves the Redeemer. For first it is said to him: ”Peter, do you love me? (John 21:16), that through love he may strive to do mighty deeds; second, that in contemplating he may know lofty things; third, that with the affection of perfect charity he may both burn with fervor toward his neighbor and blaze more ardently toward the beauty of his Creator. Let us then hear by what testimony such a one, so great, so handsome, so fair a youth, is brought forth. For there follows: (Verse 12) ”Arise and anoint him, for this is he.”

18. What does it mean, ”Arise, and anoint him”? Was the boy so small that he could not be anointed while sitting? For indeed, while sitting, we cannot reach high things. Great therefore is the virtue, great the loftiness of the humble, if not even prophets can reach their heights. The prophet therefore arises when the pontiff raises himself in wondrous veneration of the chosen preacher. For outwardly he beholds a humble person, as it were, by seeing; but inwardly he does not recognize his merit unless he raises himself in interior contemplation. The teacher is therefore commanded to arise, because he who wishes to bestow such great sacraments upon someone must first come to know the sublimity of that person’s merits. What then does it mean when it is said, ”Arise, and anoint him, for he is the one,” if not: offer sublime sacraments sublimely to the sublime? For often undiscerning pastors know the negligent and reprobate life of those who approach, and yet do not fear to promote them. These indeed anoint but do not arise, because they do not perceive those to whom they grant the sacraments of anointing as situated in a high place of merits. When therefore a sublime teacher is presented, his ordainer is admonished to arise, because the sacraments of anointing are worthily bestowed through ministry when the one to be anointed is perceived in the lofty sublimity of virtue. Of him indeed it is said, ”For he is the one”: if therefore he is the one, no other is;

because unless he shines with these virtues, he necessarily cannot attain to an order of such great loftiness. Him therefore whom the Lord promised He would show, He presented as ruddy and handsome in appearance and fair of face, saying, ”For he is the one. Because no one ought to undertake the summit of governance who does not possess the strength of great work, namely the knowledge of contemplation and the fervor of charity. Rightly therefore it is added: (Verse 13. ”Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers.”

19. The horn of oil is lifted up, so that the entire life of the pontiff may be shown to be spiritual. The horn of oil is lifted up, so that in that excellent liquid the master of the Church may strive to be a man of great mercy. The head of the king is anointed with oil, because he ought to shine upon the lampstand through the flame of the word. The horn receives oil, so that by rebuking he may cleanse, and by showing compassion he may draw others through gentleness. The horn also receives, in the loftiness of office, oil for the nourishment

of virtue. But he is anointed with a full horn, so that the virtue of the pontiff may be shown to be complete. For the horn has fullness in its anointing if he is perfect in the virtue of mercy as well as in charity and in the word. He is also recognized as having a full horn in his anointing whose every power is dispensed through mercy. Indeed, the very authority of the holy Church, when it is without mercy, is nothing; for the rigor of discipline is spiritual only when it is not devoid of the balm of mercy. Therefore the horn and the oil are shown together, so that discipline may always be maintained with mercy. For the horn is said to be full of oil, so that wherever the horn displays its sharpness, it may also display the anointing of poured-out grace.

But when the anointing is brought to anoint the king, the horn is seen on the outside, while the fullness of oil is hidden within. Let the prophet therefore carry the horn on the outside, but fill it with oil within; let him set forth the text on the outside, but declare the mysteries within. Let the prophet therefore know what he bestows; let the anointed king know, by receiving what is offered, what he must do. What then does it mean that the horn is on the outside and the oil within, except that often the hardness of subjects deserves to feel the rebuke of the pastor, yet fails to perceive something of his mercy? The ruler therefore displays the horn, in which the oil lies hidden; because when someone is sharply corrected out of charity, the punishment is felt, but the charity is not seen. For the ruler appears harsh who rebukes in such a way as if he does not love; he reproves as if he vehemently hates. What then is perceived by those who are stung with compunction, except the sharpness of the horn by which they are struck more keenly? But because the pastor deeply loves within the one whom he strikes outwardly by reproving, what else does he do but show the horn by rebuking while hiding the oil by loving? Therefore a full horn is declared in the anointing of the king, so that in the chosen preacher both qualities may be shown to be perfect.

For he ought to be sharp in reproving, gentle in showing mercy. Let him strike perfectly, so that he may perfectly pierce the whole force of the disease; let him anoint perfectly through mercy, so that he may restore to health the wounds he inflicts. For if he strikes less forcefully than he ought, he fails to expel what lies deeper hidden. And if he strikes forcefully but does not anoint abundantly, he kills the one struck through severity and does not restore him to health. Let the horn therefore be whole, and the fullness of oil complete, so that through the horn wounds may be struck with severity, and through the oil they may be soothed.

20. But what does it mean that he is anointed in the midst of his brothers, except that he is commanded to spread examples of virtue all around? He is anointed in the midst of his brothers so that all may be able to become partakers of so great an anointing. For he who is placed in the midst is seen from every side. He is anointed with oil in the midst of others because he who is set up as an example for others ought to have no part of himself obscure, so that all may look upon him and take from him an example of light. Hence also the holy living creatures are described as having eyes all around (Ezek. 1), because when the chosen teacher receives the ardor of charity, the power of mercy, and the zeal for righteousness from the gift of the Holy Spirit, he dwells as it were in a sphere of light, which renders him

radiant from every side to those standing around him. Or he is anointed in the midst of his brothers so that he may always consider himself both anointed and in the middle. Let him therefore acknowledge his dignity and exercise the force of that dignity, because he has been anointed. Let him see himself as one in the middle, a man of common condition, so that he may recognize that those over whom he stands are his equals.

He is therefore anointed in the midst of his brothers so that he may be both humble and exalted—exalted in rank, humble in self-estimation. Likewise, he is anointed in the middle so that he may not love himself with private affection, but from all his preeminence may seek the gain of others. Hence Saul is reported to have been anointed alone at the farthest part of the city (1 Sam. 9). For what does it mean that he is anointed alone by one alone, except that he was destined to swell with pride over the power of his high position through private self-love! For when he wished to love himself singularly on account of the dignity he had received, he carried the nourishment of light, as it were, alone. Hence also the boy who accompanied him is sent ahead, because none of the elect follows the examples of him who is rejected by divine authority. David, therefore, is anointed in the midst of his brothers, because the chosen teacher does not glory with singular love in that by which he is raised to singular heights. And because spiritual gifts are heaped upon chosen rulers through the ministry of men, it is added: (v. 13) "And the Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day forward."

21. For the Spirit of the Lord is directed after the anointing: because we receive the sacraments outwardly, so that we may be filled inwardly with the grace of the Holy Spirit. For outwardly man operates, inwardly God, and not man. For outwardly man rises, inwardly the spirit directs itself: because man bestows upon man the order of religion, but the spirit is directed into him upon whom the order is conferred, so that outwardly he may receive the sublimity of the order, and inwardly the strength of the Holy Spirit. Outwardly the order is entrusted, so that he may do the things that are of God; inwardly the spirit is directed, so that he may powerfully accomplish what is enjoined. For great is the burden of holy orders, great the frailty of the flesh. Therefore, because so great a burden is entrusted to one who is weak, the spirit is directed: so that the weak one may be strengthened, and may bear so great a burden all the more willingly, the more powerfully the almighty spirit itself helps him to bear it. But the spirit is said to be directed, so that, turned away from the proud king, it may be perceived. Therefore the spirit directs itself into another, when the grace of the same spirit flees the proud and the deceitful. Whence it is also written: "The Spirit of the Lord of discipline will flee from the deceitful" (Wis. 1:7). Hence also He says through Himself in the Gospel:

"The Spirit breathes where He wills, and you hear His voice, and you do not know whence He comes or where He goes" (John 3:8). The Spirit indeed comes and goes, because He abandons the reprobate and takes up the elect. And because the judgment of almighty God is inscrutable, man does not know whence He comes and where He goes: because it cannot be known whether anyone ought to persevere forever in the grace which he receives. The

spirit is therefore said to come from him who has fallen away, and to go to him who will persevere: because He abandons some in time, takes up others, and yet does not abandon them. Whence also, as a type of the elect, it is said of David: ”The Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day and for the remainder. He is directed indeed on the day of anointing, when we so receive the sacraments of Christ outwardly that we are filled inwardly with the grace of the Holy Spirit. And the spirit is directed ”for the remainder,” who never departs from the grace which he receives. This grace of the directed spirit we ascribe to preachers in such a way that we attribute it to all orders of the holy Church. For whoever receives the faith of our Redeemer is reborn through the baptism of our redemption, and is redeemed from all sin by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Whence also, suggesting the gift of the same Holy Spirit to the elect who have been redeemed, the Apostle Paul says: ”In whom you were sealed on the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). If therefore we consider the people formerly proud in circumcision losing the Holy Spirit, we see equally the direction of the same spirit into those who are baptized. In whom indeed we are directed, because through pride they lost the grace of the Holy Spirit. What then does it mean, what is said, ”From that day and for the remainder,” unless that the grace of the Holy Spirit is so received that the elect are taught to persevere in it even to the end? Many indeed after the remission of sins commit sins unto death, in whom assuredly the spirit does not appear to be directed ”for the remainder. Therefore the spirit is directed in the elect alone ”from that day for the remainder,” because for the reprobate, at the beginning of their faith, sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit, but they afterward lose the grace of the Holy Spirit through iniquity. For He is directed ”for the remainder,” but in David, because David is interpreted as ”strong of hand. He is indeed strong of hand who prevails over the devil and holds through perseverance unto the end the good that he has received. Of whom the Lord certainly says: ”He who perseveres unto the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22).

But if the state of the universal Church is considered, we see the Spirit of the Lord directed upon David ”for the remainder”: because the grace of the Holy Spirit began to fill the elect of the holy Church from the very beginnings of that same Church, whom He does not cease to guard even to the end of the world.

22. Now indeed, according to our plan, the book ought to be brought to a close at its end; but it returns to memory that we referred the beginnings of the volume to the conversation of the Redeemer. And since through John our same Redeemer is declared to be the beginning and the end, the book is most fittingly closed if it is completed in the narration of our Redeemer (Rev. 1:8). David, therefore, meaning ”strong of hand,” represents the Redeemer of the human race Himself, who prevailed over the ancient enemy and carried away the elect from his power. He is called the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, because He willed to be born from that people whom He filled, as it were with bread, with the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. For Judea was the ”house of bread,” which possessed the solid food of the Scriptures in spiritual understanding, as if from bread. But what does Samuel signify,

except, as we have already often said, the order of the new preachers? And what does David represent, except the Redeemer? Samuel is therefore sent to anoint him. For to anoint him is to preach his incomparable sanctification to those who are ignorant of it. For he is, as it were, anointed when the fragrance of his renown is opened to those who do not know him. For he was anointing him who said: "Because in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9).

But why do we take only the new preachers as pertaining to his anointing, when we see that the old ones also anointed him so reverently? For what smells better and sweeter than what the prophet Isaiah poured out upon him, saying: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety; and the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him" (Isa. 11:2)? Likewise, he who is held in our hands, David, speaking to him, says: "Beautiful in form above the sons of men, grace is poured forth upon your lips" (Ps. 44:3). And shortly after: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. Moreover, Daniel anointed him and offered the whole sacrament of anointing to the Jews, saying: "When the Holy of Holies shall come, your anointing shall cease" (Dan. 9). The prophet is therefore sent to anoint him, because the fragrance of him is never grasped by the little ones unless it is spread abroad through the mouths of preachers. Whence also those three women prepare spices and anoint the Redeemer in the tomb (Mark 16). Jesus is indeed anointed in the tomb when the glory of his resurrection is preached. Whence also when they come, Jesus is not found; because when they rightly discuss the Lord's death, they show that the dead one is already rising, and as it were by coming they do not find him;

because where they rightly understand the cause of his death, they find that life has been restored through that death.

23. But what does it mean that he is commanded to fill the horn with oil? For what was the severity of the law, if not the sharpness of a horn? For it struck as if with a horn, since it did not pardon sins through mercy, but punished them by inflicting penalty. The horn, therefore, is filled with oil, because such a King is anointed who mercifully forgives the sins of men, not punishing through the severity of the law. For they were holding forth the horn of Moses, who said to the Lord concerning the woman who had been caught in adultery: "Moses commands that such a woman be stoned; what do You say about her? (John 8:5). But He who had been anointed with the full horn says: "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her. That man had taken up the horn for striking, as it were, who said: "If this man were a prophet, He would know who and what sort of woman this is who touches Him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). But Jesus, who had been anointed from the fullness of the horn, forgave everything, saying: "Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much. Hence to those murmuring about His reception of sinners He says: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13).

The prophet is therefore sent with a full horn to anoint David, because teachers now preach Him who dissolved the harshness of the law, and restored through the warmth of His grace everything that it had set forth rigidly. Was he not anointing Him—he who was sent to anoint Him—of whom it is said: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: he came as a witness, to bear witness to the light" (John 1:6)? But we have heard how he was sent; let us hear how he anoints: "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

24. By the horn, namely of his kingdom, the sublimity of the holy Church can be designated, which is great, but is not harsh and proud. Concerning this horn it is said above through Hannah, the mother of Samuel: 'He will exalt the horn of his Christ' (1 Sam. 2:10). For hence it is said through Zechariah: 'He has raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of David his servant' (Luke 1:69). What indeed is the horn of salvation, if not the sublimity of ecclesiastical power? For what is nowhere said to the ancients is now said to the universal Church: 'Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven' (Matt. 16:19). This horn is indeed said to be raised up and full of oil, because the holy Church, together with the sublimity of power, extends the bowels of compassion. And because through the vice of condemned humanity we can more easily be lifted up to the authority of power than bent to the tenderness of piety, rightly he is commanded not to prepare a horn, but oil. For he who says, "Fill your horn with oil," indicated that the horn existed without oil. What is this, except that we can grow angry and rebuke even without deliberation, but we cannot be bent to mercy except through great meditation? As if he were saying: Fill with oil the zeal which you naturally have; for if you do not have it of yourself, you can have it from virtue. This is certainly said to him who is sent to anoint the Redeemer, so that he who is placed in the office of preaching may always strive to be rich in mercy.

25. By this horn the affection of the mind can be shown. This horn is certainly commanded to be filled, because the anointing of our Redeemer, that is, His sanctification, ought to be perfectly known before it can be sufficiently preached. The horn is therefore filled when the holiness of the Redeemer is well recognized. And he is anointed with a full horn when He is preached most excellently. For John, because he had come to anoint by preaching, as it were filled the horn by knowing, so that he might be able to anoint Him by speaking well. But if we wish to understand the filling well, let us hear what is said in the Gospel: "The word came upon John the son of Zacharias in the desert" (Luke 3:2). He therefore anointed Him with a full horn, who was first perfectly taught by the Word before he could speak of the divinity of the Word and the assumed nature of man. But coming, he had a calf in his hand; because, in order to become a worthy herald of the Redeemer, he slaughtered his own flesh to God through abstinence. By the name of calf the Lord Himself can also be designated. What then does it mean that the prophet carried a calf in his hand, except that he who wishes to show forth Jesus by preaching ought to imitate the sufferings of Him whom he preaches through the mortification of the flesh?

Indeed, to hold a calf in the hand is to show the likeness of Christ's passion in the power of one's works. For otherwise, he who comes to anoint the king is slain; because indeed the preacher of truth brings himself into danger of his own salvation, who tramples by wicked conduct the word that he preaches with his mouth. Samuel therefore, coming to anoint the king, carried a calf in his hand; because the forerunner of the Lord first showed himself admirable through the splendor of a heavenly way of life, and thus made known the good of so great a grace to those who did not know it.

26. But what does it mean that he is commanded to seek among the sons of Jesse, except that He was to be born from the ancient people and was to have no equal? He is therefore commanded to be sought, so that we might believe in Him with reason. And because He says of Himself: "No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44), it is rightly said to Samuel by the Father: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you. For he had anointed, as it were, one who was shown to him—he who heard from the one whom he had anointed: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). He is sent therefore to Bethlehem, because when Christ is sought according to the flesh, He is found born from the people of the Jews. He came also to Bethlehem, because the order of preachers strove first to convert Judea, and afterward preached the faith of the Redeemer to the Gentiles. But what does it mean that the elders of the city marvel, except that those who had attained the understanding of maturity were astonished at the preaching of so great a novelty? But marveling, they come to meet him, because they gladly hear the preaching of the truth. To come to meet preachers is to hear with desire the word of faith that they preach. What do they ask about his peaceful entrance?

What is a peaceful entrance, except when he has come with the presence of peace? This same peace He shows who says: "He Himself is our peace, who has made both one" (Eph. 2:14). What does it mean, then, that they ask about his peaceful entrance, except that the hearts of the elect Jews were waiting with desire for the promise of the fathers? As if wavering, those who were waiting might say: "Has the peace perhaps come, which foretold that it would come, so great a span of time running ahead? And because the new teachers relate that what the ancient fathers had promised has been fulfilled, they say: "It is peaceful. As if to say: We do not promise future things, but we show the present gifts of peace. In our entrance it is present; in our word it is not something future. Already the righteous Simeon saw, already he held and adored Him, saying: "Now you dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word in peace" (Luke 2:29). Already He appeared to the shepherds; already, with the long-awaited peace sent from heaven, the multitude of angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke 2:14). And because He had come not only to preach peace but also to persuade, he adds, saying: "I have come to sacrifice."

27. What is it for a priest to sacrifice, except to join the hearts of the elect to our Redeemer through love? As if he were saying: You wish to know whether he has come, but it does not

profit to be known unless it profits to be loved. I have come therefore to sacrifice to the Lord. Hence it is that Paul expels those in whom he could not sacrifice, saying: "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22). But to those invited to the sacrifice it is said: "Sanctify yourselves, and come. The Jews therefore cannot come with us to the sacrifice of faith, because they refuse to judge the Lord Jesus from the Scriptures, but out of hatred alone they flee from hearing his preaching. Whence the Lord complains through himself, saying: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse, because they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24). What then is the meaning of what is said: "Sanctify yourselves, and come"? But for hearers to be sanctified is to prepare the secret place of a pure mind for hearing. For them to be sanctified is indeed to cast hatred from the heart, and to prepare purity of intention for hearing the word of preaching. Therefore the sanctified are commanded to come, because coming profits nothing for those who do not have purity of intention in hearing.

And because the Holy Spirit speaks through holy teachers, he says: "Come with me" — as if to say: Attend to the one speaking in such a way that you believe the one hearing is with you, because I speak in such a way that I hear, since I myself am the one who speaks and governs the speaking. And because at the beginning of the nascent Church many of the Jews both heard devoutly and believed faithfully, it is rightly said that Jesse and his sons were sanctified by Samuel and invited to the sacrifice.

28. But among the seven sons of Jesse, the king is not found. For what are the seven sons of Jesse, if not all the perfect ones of the Synagogue? They come to the prophet, but none of them is chosen, because the chosen preacher both looks upon the perfect sons of the Synagogue and believes none of them to be the Redeemer of the human race. He therefore brings forward all the older sons, so that when we look upon all the perfect ones, we may consider the excellence of the Redeemer. Among whom indeed, unless the little one is brought forward, the king is not revealed by the Lord, because surely when we compare great men to our Redeemer, how greatly His dignity surpasses theirs is seen. He is therefore not found among the others, because they are mere men. Therefore the boy who tends the sheep is sought in the pastures, because He submits Himself to the Father in obedience even unto death; yet who shall declare His generation (Isa. 53:8)? He is called the little one because the grace of His humility is commended. He is therefore called the little one, who is declared by the Psalmist to have been made lower than the angels (Ps. 8). But the little one tends the sheep, because through humility He is lowly, and through majesty He is exalted. Here He labors and hungers, but there He feeds the angels from the glory of His majesty.

For while all receive from the fullness of His glory, they are, as it were, satisfied in those most blessed pastures by the boy. The little one is also declared to be the shepherd, because over the assumption of His flesh the heavenly citizens rejoice ineffably. For that ineffable joy of the blessed citizens is, as it were, the food of the sheep. He is therefore commanded to be brought forward urgently; until He comes, the reclining at table must necessarily

be postponed. For they would have reclined at table before He came, if the people had believed in another. Therefore He had to be awaited, who was the singular and unique food of blessed souls. Whence He also says of Himself: I am the living bread which came down from heaven (John 6:51). But because He who ascended is the same one who descended (Eph. 4:10), He is sent there so that He may be brought forward. For to send to the pastures is to extend the mind above the angels even to the equality of the eternal Father. And to find Him is to believe Him equal to the supreme Father in all things. But he brings Him forward who already declares that He came for the Redemption of the human race through the humanity He assumed. For he had sent and brought Him forward—he to whom one is sent in His type—when he said: He who comes from heaven is above all (John 3:31). Isaiah was bringing forward the little one tending the sheep when he said:

A little child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty, Father of the age to come, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). But because the faith of a teacher profits only himself for salvation and not also his hearers, He is commanded to be sent and brought forward, so that each one may have faith in Him through which he may deserve to be saved. For each one must go and bring Him, because they must firmly believe Him to be equal to the eternal Father through His divinity, and a partaker of our nature through His humanity.

29. Of whose description it is also said: ”He was ruddy, and beautiful in appearance, and fair of face. Ruddy indeed, because he was wounded by the lance; ruddy, because he was reddened by his Passion. Whence also it is said to him through the prophet: ”Why is your garment red? (Isa. 63:2). He was indeed ruddy, who colored the brightness of such great innocence with the redness of his precious blood. He was also beautiful in appearance, because by rising again he put on the beauty of immortality, and looked upon us mortals with great love. For as if promising the beauty of his appearance to his disciples, he says: ”I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice” (John 16:22). Hence also promising, he says: ”I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be. What is the beauty of the face, but the glory of his majesty? For his face is perfect knowledge. Paul also, recalling this, says: ”We see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also have been known” (1 Cor. 13:12). What then is the beauty of the face, but the splendor of eternal divinity? This beauty is now believed, not seen; then it will not be believed, but seen, because the apostle says:

”When he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Whence also to Moses, seeking that same beauty of the face, he replied: ”You shall see my back” (Exod. 33:23). Whatever we can now contemplate of his divinity is not the beauty itself, but a veil over the beauty. We behold the back, so that we may follow; but when by following we arrive at him, we behold the front, that is, the beauty of his face. He was therefore ruddy in this world, beautiful in paradise, and eternally fair of face in heaven. And this threefold beauty can also be recognized in his manner of life in this present world. He

was indeed ruddy, because he ardently loved those for whom he laid down his life. He was beautiful in appearance, because he knew all things. Fair of face, because he did all things well. But what is that beauty of appearance? "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Matt. 11:27). Peter also, marveling at this, says: "Now we know that you know all things, and it is not necessary for anyone to question you" (John 16:30). The crowds who beheld him bear witness to the beauty of his face, who say: "He has done all things well; he has made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark 7:37). Hence also others, marveling, say: "What manner of man is this, that the winds and the sea obey him? (Matt. 8:27).

What then is the beauty of the face, but the beauty of holiness? What likewise is the beauty of the face, but the splendor of his incomparable way of life? Because in everything he did, he shone with the incomparable light of grace. The Psalmist, marveling at this beauty of face, says: "You are beautiful in form beyond the sons of men; grace is poured forth upon your lips" (Ps. 44:3). Paul, proclaiming this, says: "Who, being the splendor of his glory and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins, sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having been made so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did he ever say: 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'? (Heb. 1:3). Concerning him, therefore, it is rightly commanded to the prophet: "Arise, and anoint him, for this is he."

30. Peter the apostle also, not only a prophet but the greatest patriarch, saw the indescribable light poured from above, the overshadowing cloud, the Father crying out: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Pet. 1:17). There it is said: "He himself is." Here it is said: "This is my beloved Son." There, because he was being shown in types, he is perceived as more absent, when it is said: "He himself is." Here, however, because his glory was now revealed, he is perceived as more present, because he says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He therefore is to be anointed, he is to be praised, and to be soothed with perpetual acclamations. But who could worthily suffice to praise him, when one cannot suffice even to behold the glory that one praises? What does it mean that Peter falls when he hears the voice resounding with words of such great proclamation? But he was a little one; he was still seeing what he was not sufficient to see. He was seeing, and because by seeing he was falling, this signifies that he could not attain to that which he deserved to see. No one can say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Because therefore Peter had not yet received that fullness of the Spirit, he was unable, as a little one, to proclaim Jesus. Therefore he is first commanded to rise and to tell the vision to no one until he had risen from the dead. For after the resurrection he was about to receive the Holy Spirit. Whence it is written: "The Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39). Peter therefore ought not to tell the vision before the resurrection, since indeed he saw well, but before he had the Spirit, he did not understand.

31. What then is it that the Lord says to Samuel: ”Rise, and anoint him”? What is it that he is commanded to rise in order to anoint, unless that he who eagerly desires to proclaim the sublimity of the Lord must be greatly lifted up to heavenly things? But how upright was Peter, who was raised up to behold such great things? Yet if he still awaits a higher state of perfection, who would not fear to undertake the office of so great a preaching? If the Lord admonishes a prophet to rise, does he dare to preach the Lord who lies fallen through the lapse of wickedness? For this is why every preacher is commanded through Isaiah: ”Go up onto a high mountain, you who evangelize Zion” (Isa. 40:9). The high mountain is the perfection of teaching and of works. Let him therefore rise who is commanded to anoint the king; let him stretch himself toward lofty things. Let him rise in lofty work, let him rise in lofty contemplation, let him rise in the wisdom of the word, let him rise in the power of charity. Indeed, he who is anointed through preaching is so great that he can scarcely be reached even from the heights. And perhaps Paul was able to anoint him because he says: ”Our conversation is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). He was able to anoint him because he had raised himself to the secrets of the third heaven and heard hidden words in paradise.

Because, therefore, the Lord Jesus ought to be preached sublimely by the sublime, the prophet is commanded to rise, because he is ordered to anoint the one through whom Christ himself is signified. Lofty indeed, nay most lofty, is this virtue of perfect conduct, yet it is perfectly accomplished by many. Great indeed is this sublimity, yet holy Church possesses many who are sublime. For from the time she rejected the Synagogue, she raised up holy Church to an innumerable height of virtue. Rightly therefore it is said: ”And the Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day forward. The day indeed is faith in the Redeemer, in which holy Church is illuminated and the rejected Synagogue is cast down in wondrous blindness. On that day, therefore, the Holy Spirit is directed upon David, because his grace is taken from the Synagogue and given to the elect of holy Church. For he is directed because he abandons those and takes up these. But he is directed on the day because he who is not illuminated in faith in the Redeemer cannot have the Spirit directing himself within him. The Spirit, therefore, is directed on the day because he is given to those who possess the light of faith. Moreover, he is directed upon David because only holy Church receives him, which is the body of the Redeemer.

But since, with God as author, we have completed the things we proposed to treat from the Book of Kings, the supreme and almighty Spirit must be entreated that he who brought forth his words through whomever he willed may grant both to the writer and to the reader the disposition of virtue. Amen.

Introduction

Commentaries on the Book of 1 Kings INTRODUCTION.

1. After the books of Moses and Joshua and Judges, the first book of Kings is shown to be the eighth or ninth in the canon of the Holy Scriptures. Because this book, like most volumes of sacred eloquence, has not yet been expounded by the doctors of Holy Church, some simpler persons judge it not to be mystical, and think it says nothing lofty through the spirit, inasmuch as it seems to narrate plainer things through the letter. But if they were to read what the holy doctors have said in other books of explanations, they would discover how immense is the depth of this history as well. For often in their expositions, what is here said to be plain according to the letter is declared to be very lofty according to spiritual understanding, and they openly indicate that they understand sacred history far more sublimely than what they read on its outward surface. For it is plain that Elkanah, a man of Ephrath, is described as having had two wives (1 Kings 1:1–2); that Eli the priest, while he was weakened by affection from the duty of correcting his sons, fell from his seat and died with a broken neck (ibid., 4:18); that King Saul refused to obey God in the destruction of the Amalekites (1 Kings 15:9), but not long after lost both his life and his kingdom (1 Kings 31:5).

But these evidently plain matters, as they satisfy simpler minds, the holy doctors, in order to perceive them with worthy sublimity, sought their understanding not in the simplicity of the letter but in the flight of allegory. For this is why, when Saint Augustine (City of God, Book XVII, ch. 4) read of Elkanah's two wives in the history, perceiving spiritual height in the plainness of the reading, he explained that the one bore the type of the Synagogue, while the other bore the figure of Holy Church. Saint Jerome likewise (Against the Pelagians, Book I, ch. 8; and Against Jovinian, Book I, ch. 10) explained that the death of Eli the priest and of Saul was placed in sacred history not only so that their punishment might terrify disobedient leaders, but also so that, while the rejection of the old and transgressing rulers is read, the destruction of the ancient law and priesthood might be signified. Therefore the sacred history of Kings is not to be believed empty of spiritual mysteries because it has not been expounded in sequence by the venerable fathers, but is all the higher and deeper because, like the vastness of an immense river, it could only be drawn from in exposition in

some small part, and with their vessels filled, it flows on by the force of its fullness to fill others daily.

Therefore, while they drew certain things from this sacred history for the strength of their works, but passed over its fullness unexamined in the secret of its sublimity, what else did they appear to do but take something from the immense river to offer to the thirsting minds of the faithful?

2. We indeed follow the custom of these men in the present work as well, we who approach this vast history for the sake of opening up its understanding, yet do not dare to undertake the exposition of its entirety — differing from the aforementioned venerable Fathers in this respect, namely that we do not select in scattered fashion and from diverse places what we are about to expound, since they did not take up some part of this sacred history in order, but rather took up scattered testimonies which they might expound for the instruction of the faithful. Therefore, trusting in the help of almighty God, we propose to explain from the beginning of the book up to the anointing of King David, so that by this brief portion which is seen we may test whether we ought to proceed further in expounding. For very many, when they propose immoderate undertakings, can never become the executors of their own proposal — especially since the expositor of sacred eloquence bears the manner of a man standing on a high watchtower, while sacred Scripture bears the likeness of a vaster forest. This man, situated on high, even if with keen sight he surveys the vastness of the woodland, nevertheless, while he looks upon the summits of mountains, the edges of hills, and the tall tops of trees meeting together in a certain level equality, he does not notice how great the valleys, how extended the plains that lie hidden in between.

But if he begins to traverse what seemed brief to him, he suddenly recognizes that very many more things remained which he had not seen — he who had thought he had seen the whole. Hence the immoderate traveler is often deceived, so that he completes his journey all the more dangerously, inasmuch as the wandering of night overtakes him on the road when the day is spent — he who had not thought he would use up even a part of the day in what seemed the space of a short journey. Just so, indeed, when we consider the understanding of sacred history at a certain summit of its meanings, by the grace of almighty God we gaze upon, as it were, the tall treetops of a darker forest from a certain height. But because when those same meanings begin to be considered and brought forth more subtly, they generate others still more manifold — just as on the surface, as it seems, of the entire woodland surveyed, the hollows of valleys and the extended spaces of the plain lie hidden, which are not seen. Therefore we walk more safely if we so measure what we see that we also consider that what we shall see as we proceed must still be traversed. And so, while we propose to explain a small part of this vast history, according to the measure of our weakness we end our journey's course nearby, distrusting alike the slenderness of our talent and terrified by the profundity of the sacred volume.

3. But first I thought it right not so much to instruct as to beseech the reader not to weigh the substance of sacred history by the emptiness of my exposition, because divine utterances

must never be estimated by the measure of their commentators. For they are not to be despised because they are not examined with subtlety, nor are they lofty and venerable because they are expounded eloquently and subtly. For the skill that is held in such esteem among the wise of this world is valued only as much as brilliant minds can exalt it. But Holy Scripture, because it is divinely inspired, surpasses even the most brilliant human minds by as much as those brilliant men themselves are inferior to God, and they perceive nothing in that spiritual sublimity except what is revealed to them by the goodness of divine condescension. Therefore no one is so perfect in knowledge of it that he cannot advance further, because every advance of man is inferior to the height of the divinity that inspired it. Hence also it is said of the Lord through the Psalmist: 'Who covers His upper chambers in the waters' (Ps. 103:3). For if by the name of waters those deep understandings of the angels above are designated, while God is said to cover the height of sacred utterance in the waters, it is abundantly clear that man is always inferior to that of which only its lower parts are revealed to him.

Hence also it is commanded through Moses that the remainder of the lamb be burned with fire (Exod. 12:10), because indeed the sacred Scriptures, which were set forth for the purpose of knowing the Redeemer, are to be venerated on account of the dignity of their sublimity even when they are not understood. And so, even if no weight is given to what is said by me, nevertheless weight must be given to the fact that this Holy Scripture, which is unworthily expounded by me, speaks many good and sublime things to the one to whom Almighty God has willed to open its secrets. For Holy Scripture has been so wonderfully fashioned by Almighty God that even though it may appear to have been expounded in manifold ways, it still does not lack secrets by which it keeps hidden things concealed, because it is almost never expounded in such a way that there do not remain in it many more things to be expounded daily. By this incomprehensibility of it, Almighty God has surely provided for human changeableness with great dispensation; for it has been so wondrously arranged that what is known cannot grow cheap, so that once known it remains unknown, and is read all the more gladly because it is learned anew each day; and while it continually reveals fresh things, it delights all the more sweetly.

4. The History of the Kings, therefore, because it was composed by the same Spirit by which the other volumes of Holy Scripture are also recognized, ought not to be believed to be lesser in its mysteries than those to which it is not inferior in the title of authority. For all its writers are reported to have been prophets, who, when they narrate historical things, signify spiritual things; they speak of outward things and hint at inward things; they set forth earthly things so that they may pursue heavenly things. Whence also the first and second book of this same history are ascribed to the prophet Samuel for this reason: that from the title of the author it may be perceived that the history he writes is not so much history as prophecy — the letter is simple and true, but exceedingly lofty and profound in the multiplicity of its hidden meanings. We, however, from so great a weight, take up according to the measure of our smallness what we are able to bear. For although it is pleasant on the surface of the letter, deeper in the types of allegory, useful for instructing morals, and clear

in presenting examples, nevertheless in individual passages to assert the historical sense, to set forth the typological, to bring together the moral, and to propose examples — from this I shrink; although some things I shall expound under one sense, with the Lord's help, and others under several.

Especially since I have decided to devote effort to writing in these times, in which, while the old anxiety of worldly concern is immersed in the hearts of certain churchmen, they judge new efforts at writing to be superfluous for the reason that they are well aware that the old works of the venerable doctors abound. They would indeed need to be refuted by reason, were they not to display the mark of calumny with brazen face. For those who despise new things as new also disdain through satiety of worldly cares those old things which they approve. Scripture indeed sets forth these many persons under the designation of one, saying: "The soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb" (Prov. 27:7). For the honeycomb contains new honey. As if therefore it were saying: While the care for earthly things is fed too immoderately, the soul does not rejoice in that fresh sweetness of the Scriptures which is accustomed to greatly please. But since they find no commentaries of the ancients on this sacred history, they would act more rightly if they were to embrace the work of our labor with that charity with which it is expended for the benefit of the little ones of holy Church, and instead of the trouble of reproaches, bring the aid of prayers to us who labor in so great a depth of Scripture as in the deepest sea.

From this indeed they make the fruit of our toil their own, because while they love out of kindness, they turn it to their own accumulation of eternal reward — both because for so long a time so closed and unexpounded a Scripture is brought to common understanding, and because the little ones of holy Church, while they receive the splendor of the new religion within the coverings of the Old Scripture, are aided in the advancement of their devotion.

5. But because diverse testimonies of this history are found expounded in the various works of the holy Fathers, the reader should note that sometimes I follow their meaning in my treatment, but sometimes I labor to explain the history differently, so that the work I undertake in hope of divine inspiration may be both strengthened by the authority of the ancient Fathers and in no way tedious to the reader, since amid the old things he already knows, it also presents to him new things he did not know. To this manner of pronouncing judgments I am sometimes led by necessity, because even the venerable Fathers, if they had expounded in continuous order everything they touched upon in part, could by no means have maintained the sequence of discourse they appeared to observe. Therefore, when I pass over the interpretations of the holy Fathers, I do so sometimes from necessity, sometimes from convenience, because I both remove tedium from the reader, and when I discuss everything in continuous order, many things arise from the middle that do not permit me to follow their opinions. In this work I earnestly ask the reader not to weigh my words by comparison with the eloquent orators of holy Church, but to judge the meaning of the thoughts according to the principles of ecclesiastical discipline, because even if, in accordance with God's prohi-

bition, I do not know how to plant a grove in His house (Deut. 16:21), nevertheless I in no way abandon the rule by which holy Scripture is faithfully expounded.

But also, where the skilled reader finds something less pleasing, let him consider that, when I, like a foreign sailor, venture upon the storms of a great sea — that is, the spiritual history, deep with lofty meanings — it is not very blameworthy if the helm of speech is not guided beautifully, when foaming crests of waves crash in, which often force even the most skilled pilot to release the tiller. Just so indeed, a devoted plowman entering upon wooded land to cultivate it does not lay out straight lines of furrows unless he first cuts through them repeatedly with the plowshare drawn back, because no ease of skill follows if no habit of cultivation is seen to precede that same skill of plowing. But neither should anyone judge the plainness of the history by this estimation, because very often we reach the secrets of spiritual meanings with all the more difficulty the farther away we see the location of the hidden entrances in the plainer letter; and we cannot touch its heights precisely because the step from which we think to touch the heights is lower. For what is the understanding of divinity, if not a certain ineffable summit of the highest elevation? And because almighty God is known through the Scriptures, what is that same sacred Scripture but a kind of stairway that is climbed so that that sublimity may be reached?

Whenever, therefore, the history is plainer but the meaning deeper, what else is it but that that sublimity has such a step from which it cannot easily be reached? If, then, the reader perceives something unfitting even in the explanation of the plainer history, he will be able to grant pardon all the more kindly, the more reasonably he recognizes that when we stretch beyond from the plain surface that is seen toward those sublime heights, we easily falter. The earlier portions of the book, therefore, because they contain both the mysteries of holy Church and demonstrate the character of a chosen man established in the pursuit of a good life, I expound under both senses separately, so that when we recognize in the deeds of the ancients the principles of the new faith, we may also draw from them the edification of our own way of life. And because in the salvation of the faithful, faith is prior to works, I set forth the typological meaning first, as a solid foundation, upon which the fabric of the entire undertaken work may be laid or may follow in its moral or historical exposition.

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.