Fragments: Against Porphyry, On Created Things, On Job, On Martyrs

Methodius of Olympus (c. AD 290–311)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Against Porphyry 1

Section 1 2

Section 2 4

Section 3 5

Section 4 6

Section 5 7

On Created Things 8

Section 1 9

Section 2 10

Section 3 11

Section 4 12

Section 5 13

Section 6 14

Section 7 15

Section 8 17

Section 9 18

Section 10 19

Section 11 20

Section 12 21

Fragments on Job **22**

Section 1 **23**

Section 2 **24**

Section 3 **25**

Section 4 **26**

Section 5 **27**

Section 6 **28**

Section 7 **29**

Section 8 **30**

Section 9 **31**

Section 10 **32**

Section 11 **33**

Section 12 **34**

Section 13 **35**

Section 14 **36**

Section 15 **37**

Section 16 **38**

Section 17 **39**

Section 18 **40**

Section 19 **41**

Section 20 **42**

Section 21 **43**

Section 22 **44**

Section 23 **45**

Section 24 **46**

Section 25 **47**

On Martyrs **48**

Section 1 **49**

Section 2 **50**

Against Porphyry

Section 1

The Son of God, Christ, came to live in the visible creation at the Father's command. He came to overthrow the power of the tyrannical demons and to rescue souls from bitter slavery. For human nature had been bewitched by the drinks of injustice and was filled with disorder and confusion. It was no longer able to run back to the remembrance of what was good for it.

So human nature was easily dragged off to idols. Evil had flooded over everything and spread through every generation. This came from the change that disobedience had brought upon our tents of flesh. Then the Lord Christ appeared in the life of men and dimmed the assaults of pleasure, with which the powers below had armed themselves to enslave our mind. In this way he showed that man is free from every evil.

For this reason the Lord Jesus put on flesh, became man, and was nailed to the cross as part of the plan. The demons had boasted that they were gods through that same flesh. They had hooked souls for death by deceitful methods. Now through that same flesh they would be overthrown and exposed as no gods at all.

He became man to stop their boasting from growing any further. Through a body they had alienated the rational race from the worship of the God who truly is, and had ruined it. Through a body, then, the Word made room for himself by unspeakable arts of wisdom, so that they would be proved destroyers of souls and not benefactors.

Now it was no great marvel for the Christ of God to terrify the opposing natures of the demons with the greatness of his unchanging power. But that would only have brought them pain, though they would rather have been beaten by one who was stronger. For this reason he arranged the way of salvation for all through a man. The life itself and the truth took up residence among men in bodily form. So men were able to run back to their true shape and to the enlightenment of the Word, away from the charms of sin. And the demons, defeated by one weaker than themselves and despised, would give up their boldness, bound in the fever of their rage like Typhon.

This above all is why the cross was brought in. It was set up as a trophy against injustice and as a thing of terror. So from then on man would no longer be liable to wrath. He had wrestled back the defeat that came through disobedience. He had lawfully conquered the

powers below, and by God's gifts had been shown free of every debt. For in this way the firstborn Word of God fenced man in with the weapons of righteousness, the man in whom he had taken up his tent. He overcame the powers that had enslaved us by the shape of the cross, as I said. He showed that the man who had been ruled by corruption was free, with his hands stretched out.

For this shape, if one must define it, is the strength of victory. It is God's coming down to man. It is a trophy against the material spirits. It is release from death. It is the starting point of the ascent to the true day, and a stairway for those who are eager to enjoy the light there. It is a machine by which those who are fit for the building of the church are lifted up from below, like a squared stone, to be fitted into the divine Word.

For this reason the kings of this world noticed that the shape of the cross is used to scatter every evil condition, and so they devised what are called in the Roman language "vexilla" (standards). So too the sea yields to this shape and offers itself to men for sailing. The whole creation, one might say, is clothed with this sign for freedom. Birds flying high suggest the cross-shape by the spread of their wings. And man himself, when he stretches out his hands, appears to be nothing other than this.

So the Lord took this very form, with which man had been adorned from his making, and mixed it with divinity. The purpose was that man should henceforth be an instrument and a temple of God, freed from all discord and disorder.

Once man had been tuned to godliness and had fitted into himself the pure melody of truth, through which he took in the divinity, he was fastened to the tree of life like strings and tension pegs. After that it is no longer possible for him to fall into disharmony and ruin.

Section 2

... For this was within his power. It belongs to power to contract in what is few and to be made small, and to pour out in what is great and to be made great. But if he were able to stretch along with great things and be made equal to them, yet unable to be made small in small things and to contract, it would not be power.

If you say that one thing is possible to a power and another impossible, you strike out its claim to be a power at all, since it is weak in the things it cannot do. Nor, in that case, would it have any superiority of deity over things that change. For human beings and animals that crawl on the ground act in the things they are able to do, and fail in the things they cannot. For this reason the Son of God was received in a human being all the more, because this was not impossible for him. By power he suffered while remaining beyond suffering, and he died while securing immortality for the mortal.

When one body is struck or cut by another body, it is struck or cut only as far as the thing that strikes or cuts reaches. The blow happens because the body underneath pushes back against the one striking, so that both the one acting and the one acted upon are equally affected. Certainly, if the thing being cut does not resist the cutting thing with a little firmness, the cutting thing will not be able to cut.

When the body underneath does not stand against the swing of the sword but gives way to it, the action accomplishes nothing. The same is true of finer bodies such as fire or air, for in these the thrust of more solid bodies is spent and has no effect. Now if stone, iron, wood or anything else that people use to kill one another cannot wound or divide fire or air, because it is of a yielding and finer nature, how much more did Wisdom remain unwounded and unable to suffer? Wisdom was harmed by nothing from anyone, even though it was present with a body that was being cut and nailed. After God who begot it, it is better and purer than every nature.

Section 3

Some people think that God also, measuring him by the standard of their own disposition, considers the same things praiseworthy or blameworthy as the worthless do, as though he used the opinions of human beings as a rule and measure. They fail to understand, because of the ignorance in them, that all creation is lacking in the beauty of God.

For he draws all things to life by his own Word, out of the whole of every substance and nature. If he wills the good, he is himself the good and remains in himself. If it is the beautiful that he loves, then he, who alone is beautiful, looks to himself, and counts as nothing the things human beings admire. For that must truly be called most beautiful and praiseworthy which God himself judges to be beautiful, even if everyone despises and mocks it. It is not what human beings suppose.

So if through this very form he wished to set souls free from the passions that destroy through anger, putting the crowds of demons to shame, then we ought to accept it and not speak ill of it. We should see that it was given as a liberation and a release from the chains that were forged for us by disobedience.

For the Word suffered in the flesh, nailed to the cross, in order to stretch out the human being who had been numbed by error. By the tree of life he raised him up to the divine greatness above, from which he had earlier been driven out. By this form the passions are dulled, since he became the suffering of sufferings through suffering, and the death of death through dying. He was not overpowered by death, nor pained by suffering.

For no suffering at all unsettled him, and death did not harm him. In the one who could suffer he remained beyond suffering, and in the mortal he was immortal. He took hold of everything, the air, the middle and the heights, and mixed the mortal with immortal deity. Death was completely defeated, as the flesh was raised up on the cross as an imprint of incorruption.

Section 4

Repentance blots out every sin when it allows no delay after the soul's fall has happened, and does not put the passion off to some later time. For then the evil will have no way to leave a trace in us, since it is torn out the moment it takes hold, like a plant that has only just been planted.

Section 5

Our own evil is truly unlikeness to God and ignorance of him. And how great, on the other hand, is the good of being made like him! It is clear that the good which is truly our own is turning to the incorruptible and divine, and faith in him. The evil is ignorance of him and carelessness toward him, if it is true that what grows in us and out of us is our own, and that these things produce wickedness.

On Created Things

Section 1

Concerning the saying "do not throw what is holy to the dogs, nor your pearls before the pigs": Xenon takes the "pearls" to be the more mystical teachings of the God-given religion. The "pigs" he takes to be those who, in ungodliness and every kind of pleasure, still wallow in the mire like pigs. He said that Christ spoke this to forbid casting the divine teachings to such people, because they cannot bear them, being already held fast by ungodliness and savage pleasures. The great Methodius says: If the "pearls" must be understood as the solemn and divine teachings, and the "pigs" as those who live with ungodliness and pleasures, so that the apostolic preaching which stirs people to godliness and faith in Christ must be hidden from them, then see what follows. You are saying that the apostles' preaching has turned no Christian away from his former ungodliness. For the apostles would never have cast the mysteries of Christ before people who, through unbelief, are like pigs.

Either these teachings were cast before all the Greeks and the other unbelievers by Christ's disciples and were preached to them, and turned them from ungodliness to faith in Christ, as we who believe also confess. In that case the words "do not throw your pearls before the pigs" can no longer be understood as was said. Or, if the saying is understood as was said, we must claim that no unbeliever, whom we compare to pigs, has come to faith in Christ and freedom from ungodliness through the apostolic teachings, which light up souls like pearls. But that is blasphemy.

So the "pearls" here must not be taken as the more mystical teachings, nor the "pigs" as the ungodly, nor should "do not throw your pearls before the pigs" be taken to mean "do not cast the mystical, perfecting teachings of faith in Christ before the ungodly and unbelieving." Rather, the "pearls" are to be understood as the virtues, with which the soul is adorned as with costly pearls. And "not casting them before the pigs" means not casting the virtues themselves, such as purity, self-control, justice and truth, before the lustful pleasures. For these are like pigs, lest they devour the virtues and so make the soul live a swinish life, tossed about by many passions.

Section 2

Origen, whom he calls the Centaur, said that the universe is co-eternal with God, who alone is wise and in need of nothing. For he claimed: If God is not a craftsman without things crafted, or a maker without things made, nor almighty without things he rules (for a craftsman must be called so because of what he has crafted, a maker because of what he has made, and the Almighty because of what is ruled), then these things must have been made by God from the beginning, and there was no time when they did not exist. For if there was a time when the things made did not exist, then, since without things made there is no maker, see what ungodly consequence follows.

It would also follow that God, who is unchangeable and unalterable, is altered and changed. For if he made the universe later, it is clear that he changed from not making to making. But that is absurd, in view of what was said before. So it is not possible to say that the universe is not without beginning and co-eternal with God.

Section 3

The holy man, questioning through another speaker, says to him: Do you consider God to be the source of wisdom and glory and, in short, of every virtue, and so by his very being and not by acquisition? He answers: Yes. And what more? Is he not wholly perfect through himself, and in need of nothing? True. For it is impossible that what needs nothing should be needy of nothing because of something else? Impossible. For everything that is so because of another must be called deficient and incomplete? Necessarily. For that which exists through itself, being its own fullness and remaining in itself, is the only thing to be judged perfect? You speak most truly.

But would you say that what is neither through itself nor its own fullness is in need of nothing? By no means. Then God will not be considered perfect because of anything else. For what is perfect because of something else must in itself be imperfect. Necessarily.

Then God himself will be reckoned perfect through himself, and not through anything else? Quite right. The world is one thing in relation to God, and God another in relation to the world? Entirely. So we must not say that God is perfect, or craftsman, or almighty, because of the world? No. So that God would be found perfect through himself and not through the world, and that although [the world] is changeable. Fittingly.

“What about this? Do we call a rich man rich because of his wealth?” “Correct.” “And do we call a wise man wise by sharing in essential wisdom, since he is not himself wisdom?” “Yes.” “Well then, God is other than the world. Should we call him rich, benefactor and creator on account of the world?” “Away with the thought! Certainly not.” “Then he is his own wealth, and he is rich and powerful through himself?” “It seems so.”

“Then even before the world, he was altogether in need of nothing, and was Father, Almighty and Creator, so that he was these things through himself and not through something other than himself?” “Necessarily.”

“For suppose God were known as Almighty because of the world and not through himself, being other than the world. (Forgive me, I am forced to say this.) Then in himself he would be incomplete, and in need of the very things over which he is Almighty and Creator.” “Exactly.” “Then we must not accept the deadly error of those who say that God is Almighty and Creator because of the changeable things he rules and creates, rather than through himself.”

Section 4

“Consider it this way too. You said: if the world was made later, though he existed before it, then God, who is beyond suffering and change, must have changed. For one who first makes nothing and later makes something must change and be altered, passing from not making to making.” “Yes, I said that.” “Did God ever stop making the world, or not?” “He stopped. For otherwise it would not yet have been completed.” “True.”

“If, then, passing from not making to making counts as a change in God, does not passing from making to not making count as well?” “Necessarily.” “Would you say he has been changed because he is not making today, compared with when he was making?” “Not at all.” “Then neither, when he was making the world, must he have been changed from what he was when he was not making. And so we are not forced to say that the universe must exist alongside him, since we are not forced to say that he changed. Nor is it eternal with him for that reason.”

Section 5

"Tell me this also. Would you call something 'generated' if it has no beginning of generation?" "Certainly not. If it is not subject to a beginning of generation, it is necessarily ungenerated. But if it has come into being, you grant that it came into being by some cause. For it is altogether impossible to come into being without a cause?" "Impossible."

"Then shall we say that the world, and everything in it, which came into being later and did not exist before, came to be through anyone other than God as its maker?" "Clearly, through God." "For it is impossible that what is bounded by a beginning of generation should be equally unbounded with the unbounded?" "Impossible."

Section 6

“So let us discuss it again from the beginning, Centaur. Do you say that things came to be by divine knowledge, or not?” “Fellow,” they will say, “not at all.” “Then do you say they came from elements, or matter, or foundations, or whatever you want to call them (it makes no difference)? These existed without being generated and were moving about in disorder, and God separated them all out, like a good painter who makes one image out of many colors?”

“Not that either. For they will do everything to avoid admitting it against themselves. If they granted that matter had a beginning of separation and reshaping, they would be forced by the argument to say that God had in every respect begun to arrange and put in order the matter that was previously shapeless.”

Section 7

"Come then, since we have reached this point in the discussion (I say it with God's help), suppose there is a statue, a beautiful one, standing on a base. Let those who look at its well-proportioned beauty quarrel with one another, some trying to say that in one respect it is generated and in another respect ungenerated."

"For I would ask them: For what reason do you call it ungenerated? Is it because of the craftsman, so that he may never be thought to have been idle in his work? Or is it because of the statue itself? If because of the craftsman, how can it be ungenerated if it is being made by the craftsman? For if it stands altogether in need of his skill, being worked in bronze to receive whatever form the maker wishes, how will it be ungenerated, when it is being acted upon and worked? But if instead the statue is said to be complete and ungenerated through itself, and to have no need of skill, then, following their deadly doctrine, they must admit that it came about by chance."

"But perhaps they will not accept this argument either, and will answer more sharply. They will say that the statue is not ungenerated, but is generated while always having no beginning of generation, so that the craftsman may be said to rule over his work without beginning. Then, my friends, we will say to them: if no time or age can be found before it, when the statue was not complete, tell us what the craftsman gave it, or what he did to it."

For if the statue is without need and has no beginning of coming to be, then on your view the craftsman will turn out never to have made anything while still being a maker. The argument seems to have run around again to the same place: you must admit that things happen by themselves. For if the craftsman is said to have moved the statue even for the briefest instant, it falls under a beginning. At that point he began to move and adorn what was before unadorned and unmoving. So the world, [on your view], both was and will be the same continually and forever. For we must liken the craftsman to God and the statue to the world.

How then, you fools, do you think that creation, which is endless together with its Creator, has no need of the Creator? What is endless together with another, and has no beginning of coming to be, must also be equally unbegotten and equal in power. And what is unbegotten,

shown to be complete in itself and unchangeable, will also be without need and incorruptible. If that is so, then by your own account the world is no longer changeable.

Section 8

He says that the church is so named from having turned aside from pleasures.

Section 9

The saint says: In what we agreed earlier, we said there are two creative powers. One works from things that do not exist, by bare will and without delay. At the very moment of willing, it accomplishes by itself whatever it wishes to make. This is the Father. The other adorns and varies what has already come into being, in imitation of the first. This is the Son, the all-powerful and mighty hand of the Father, by which he sets in order the matter he has made from nothing.

Section 10

The saint says that the book of Job is Moses'.

Section 11

Concerning “In the beginning he made heaven and earth,” he says: One would not be wrong to call Wisdom herself the beginning. For in one of the members of the divine chorus she is recorded as speaking of herself this way: “The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways, for his works; before the age he founded me.”

For it was fitting and consistent that everything that has come into being should be younger than she, since all things came to be through her. Consider whether this also agrees with the words, according to the evangelist, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this one was in the beginning with God.”

We must say that the beginning from which the most upright Word sprang is the Father and Maker of all, in whom the Word was. By “this one was in the beginning with God,” he seems to indicate the authority of the Word, which he had with the Father even before the world came into being, when he says “the beginning.” So after his own beginningless beginning, the Father, the Word himself becomes the beginning of everything else, the one through whom all things are made.

Section 12

Origen, after spinning many tales about the eternity of the universe, adds this: “Neither, then, as some say, did man, who did not exist before, first come into the world when he was formed with Adam. Nor did the world begin to be made six days before Adam came into being.”

But if anyone should care to disagree with these things, let him first say whether the time since the world’s origin, according to the book of Moses, will not be easily counted by those who take it that way. For the prophetic voice cries out here too: “From age to age you are. For a thousand years in your eyes are like yesterday, which has passed, and like a watch in the night.” If a thousand years are confined to one day in God’s eyes, then from the world’s origin until the rest [. . .] until us, about six days are completed. (The six-thousandth

year, they say, extends from Adam to here, for they say judgment will come in the seventh, the seven-thousandth year.) So all the days, counted from us back to the “beginning” in which God made heaven and earth, come to thirteen. Before these, by their own folly, [nothing earlier existed, and God would in no way have been stripped] of being Father and Almighty. But if there are only thirteen days in God’s eyes since the world’s origin, how does the wisdom in Sirach say, “The sand of the seas, and the drops of rain, and the days of eternity, who will count them?” Origen says these things in earnest, and see what silly games he plays.

Fragments on Job

Section 1

Job 9:2. He says a man can be righteous in comparison with other men. But set beside the Lord of all, “how will a mortal be righteous?” God does not judge as a tyrant. He persuades the one being judged and brings him to be willing to accept his verdict. In fact, when we are judged we shall see the Lord pleading our case with us before the Father, and saying: O man, “what profit is there in my blood, in my going down to corruption?” Come, what have you done that is worthy of this, or of the rest?

Section 2

Job 9:5. The “mountains” are Moses and the prophets: “I lifted up my psalms to the mountains.” Christ makes the first covenant old, “and they do not know it” – the Jews, to whom it was said: “If you believed Moses, you would believe me.” The same one also overthrew the mountains of Jerusalem that stood only as far as the letter, and the sanctuary. The same one also dims the sun and the stars by his own brightness.

Section 3

Job 9:7. “He who counts the multitudes of the stars.” It is reported that during the three hours in which the sun failed, stars appeared as in the night.

Section 4

Job 9:10. What I have said before, he says, is not yet great and not yet unsearchable, since those things are visible.

Section 5

Job 25:1. He did not say “or fear of him,” but “or fear from him.” The fear of him is our own work, coming from what is up to us. But the fear from him is “grace and gift,” his own, making up what we lack. The same holds for the words “Add faith to us.” For what we lack, he says, is what comes from your gift, not what is up to us.

Section 6

Job 25:3. Let no one think, he says, that God will keep putting off the punishments of the unrighteous to the very end. Even if for now he is patient, he comes upon them unexpectedly, like men lying in ambush. And it is impossible for any of the ungodly to escape the divine justice.

Section 7

Job 25:4. He is defending God on the question why he allowed the pirates [that is, the tempters] to tempt us. And he says that a man could not have been righteous if he had no opponent to contend against.

Section 8

Job 25:6. Methodius of Sidē takes this as said of Christ, and says: Hear him when he says, "But I am a worm and not a man." He says "worm," not because of any evil, but because of his humility, or also, he says, because a worm is not born from a union of two, but from matter lying nearby.

Section 9

Job 27:2. Job is convinced that he suffers by God's judgment. When he says, "As the Lord lives, who has judged me so," he confesses that the wisdom concerning God's judgments cannot be grasped, not only by himself but by any human being. He also confesses that the earthly place, defiled by sins, is not able to receive knowledge of God's counsel. He says this to his friends, who thought they had discovered the reason why he was suffering these things.

Section 10

Job 27:3. Methodius takes “the divine Spirit,” given by God to all people, whether righteous or unrighteous, to be the conscience. It pricks the soul over its sins and does not agree with what is done against right reason. Concerning this, he says, John also speaks in his letter: “If our conscience does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God.” What then, he asks, is the thing condemned? For the conscience does not condemn itself, but the soul that sins. Concerning this Solomon also said, “For your incorruptible Spirit is in all things.”

Section 11

Job 28:14. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, went down into the abyss, and having gone down was not held. So the “abyss said, It is not in me,” for he is in heaven. And the sea said, “It is not with me.” This sea is the life of human beings, in which come the shipwrecks of virtue. So if you want wisdom to be with you, even if you are on the sea, tread on the waves. Stretch out your hand to Wisdom, and she will make you walk on top of the waves.

Section 12

Job 29:3. That is, for the safety of “my head,” that is, of the mind. For as the head is the chief part in the body, so the mind is the chief part of our soul.

Section 13

Job 29:5. When I had, being righteous, he says, the material that was useful to me, I practiced virtue. For I used everything well.

Section 14

Job 38:1. The Lord does not speak to people from the beginning. When a soul has been prepared through many things, has been helped by other people and by its own prayer and diligence, has been trained, and has climbed to as great a height as human nature can reach, then the Lord speaks. He reveals his own words to those who have climbed so far. This is how he dealt with Job, for he kept the word back for him like a crown. Let us also look into the phrase "through a whirlwind and clouds." For it never appears that God spoke through a whirlwind to any of the people before. Now a whirlwind produces a storm. A very great storm had come upon Job. The whole devil had fallen on him, having asked this of God. The speech of his friends was a storm for Job too. In such a storm he stood firm and endured. As a man of understanding, he had gained a helmsman's skill, and he did not suffer shipwreck "concerning the faith." For this reason the one who addressed him speaks through a whirlwind, as a symbol of the storm that had overtaken him, in which he also shone out. If Job's affairs had stayed in that condition, so that he was left suffering these things and departed from life, the Lord would have spoken to him through a whirlwind only. But as it is, his circumstances changed from storm to calm, and he received back the health of his body. For this reason the one who addresses him speaks not only through a whirlwind, but also through clouds.

Section 15

Job 38:2. Because the tempter has been defeated, the judge of the contest is proud of his own athlete. He speaks as to one who has been beaten: “Who is this who hides?” To whom does it fit to say this? Job did not hide; he was godly and holy. But the one he rebukes wants to hide, and supposes that his “plan” is hidden from God. Yet he himself acts as one who hides. For Adam also, when he sinned, thought he could hide from the face of the Lord.

Section 16

Job 38:3. It is said as if to the devil: You are a noble fellow! “Gird up your loins like a man, and I will question you.” Do you not believe that I am wiser than you, but think that you are a great mind? For the devil is spoken of in this way by Isaiah: “I will bring it upon the great mind, the ruler of the Assyrians.” So he says to him, “Gird up your loins like a man.” But he does not gird himself. “I will question you, and you answer me.” But he cannot answer him. “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”

Section 17

Job 38:4. Do you quarrel with me? Do you take your stand against me? Do you contend against my athletes? “Where were you when I was working at the earth?” Who were you then? He says, you had already fallen. For indeed at the beginning of the making of the world, he says, “darkness was over the abyss.” This darkness was not darkness that was created. It began to be darkness by choice, through the loss of light.

Section 18

Job 38:5. Not “the measure” but “the measures,” so that he may point out the differences in the earth: one part bears one thing, another bears something else, and another something different again.

Section 19

Job 38:6. This blessed father came as far as this point, and here he stops his commentary, so that he found “a cornerstone.” This can also be understood of the only-begotten Son of God, who became flesh for our sake, in line with the saying in the Psalms: “The stone which the builders rejected” (the teachers of the Jews), “this became the head of the corner.” For by the good pleasure of the Father he came on earth and joined together in himself the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, just as the cornerstone binds both walls together.

Section 20

Job 38:7. A “great voice” is one that speaks great things, as in the apostle’s words: “See with what large letters I have written to you,” that is, to those to whom he points out such great matters.

Section 21

Job 38:16. [Again he has turned his speech to the sea. He does not mean that the sea has a spring; he means that it does not run dry, as if it had a spring.] Many have gone down into the abyss, but they went down to be prisoners, not to walk about in it. Jesus alone walked in the abyss as a free man, where there are no footprints of those who walk. [For he chose death, though he was not liable to it, so that he might ransom those held under death.] And he says to those in chains, “Come out,” [and to those in darkness, “Be uncovered,” with which the following words also agree].

Section 22

(Job 40:3) [Do not think that what you have endured was decided by me without reason, and do not reject my judgment. We should remember this saying as useful whenever God decides that we should suffer something: to lose a child, to lose a position of power, to fall sick in the body, or to undergo any such thing. None of these things can happen to us unless God decides it. Since none of them comes about apart from God's judgment, the sufferer is told, "Do not reject my judgment," that is, do not deny what I decided concerning you.] Do not suppose, he says, that what you have endured was decided by me without reason. I decided it with foresight of what is good for you. I added the divine declaration to the trials for no other reason than that you might appear righteous, that is, that you might be shown to be what you were.

Section 23

(Job 40:10) Learn like an athlete about the dragon, your opponent. (“Beasts” are the opposing powers, concerning whom the prophet prayed, saying, “Do not hand over to the beasts a soul that confesses you.” “Beasts” are the opposing powers, over whom you, O man, have received authority, if you serve God, to tread upon asps and basilisks.)

Section 24

(Job 40:16–17) [These things are fuel and food for fire. He lodges especially among those who are worthy of the fire, under the soft, feeble and fruitless souls, which are fuel for fire. . . . Either he means that some great demons, and others lower down in wickedness, live together with him; or that he attacks small and great men alike, creeping under all of them in the same way. For "shoots" are offshoots; so he says "as under the shade of trees." In this way he rests among these. "And the branches of the chaste tree." For many people, even after practicing purity, have often come to belong to his portion, like the foolish virgins; for there are also some who live in purity with him.]

Section 25

(Job 40:21–22) So that the dragon may hiss no more. [He says this because he was urged by the demons not to throw them into the abyss. Or he says it because the dragon had said to the Lord, “All these things I will save for you.” Or it means that you cannot subdue him so far that he chooses to stop fighting you.] — [The “bracelet” is an adornment of the hand, that is, the good work. So whoever has such a bracelet will pierce the lip of the dragon, the devil who stands opposed, and he will be put to shame, having nothing to say against him.]

On Martyrs

Section 1

Martyrdom is so wonderful and so greatly admired that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God, honored it by bearing witness, “not counting equality with God something to be grasped,” so that by this gift also he might crown the human being for whose sake he came down.

Section 2

The beginning of every good action has its existence in our own will, but its completion is in God.

Sources. Greek text: D.G. Nathanael Bonwetsch's edition (Methodius, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'Sche Buchhandlung, 1917), digitised by Open Greek and Latin and the First Thousand Years of Greek project (CC BY-SA 4.0). The English is a new translation made by SermonIndex with AI directly from the Greek, as a first reading version; it has not been checked line by line by a person and may contain mistakes. No older English translation was used. Where the digital Greek is flagged as damaged, the English is a best reading. Released under CC BY-SA 4.0.