Selected Notes on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Samuel, Job and Ezekiel

Origen of Alexandria (c. AD 230–250)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Selecta on Genesis

Preface

The holy apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered over the whole world. According to tradition, Thomas received Parthia by lot, Andrew Scythia, and John Asia. John stayed among the people there and died at Ephesus. Peter seems to have preached in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia and Asia to the Jews of the dispersion. At the end he came to Rome and was crucified head downward, since he himself asked to suffer in this way. What need is there to speak of Paul? He fulfilled the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem as far as Illyricum, and later was martyred at Rome under Nero.

Note 1

“And God said: Let the earth sprout plant of grass, sowing seed according to kind and according to likeness.” We should not pass over the fact that the wording, “God said: Let the earth sprout plant of grass, sowing seed according to kind and according to likeness,” might seem to be a grammatical error. “Sowing” does not fit easily with “plant of grass.” How then can it be understood without a grammatical error, since most people will suppose that “sowing” is said of “plant of grass”? It is possible to read it with a slight pause, at a mid-point mark, like this: “Let the earth sprout plant of grass.” Then, after the break, add “sowing seed according to kind.” So it would be: “Let the earth sprout plant of grass, according to kind sowing seed,” with “sowing seed” attached to “kind.”

“Increase and multiply.” Increase means growth in size. Multiplying means succession into a multitude through union.

“And God said: Let us make man according to our image and according to likeness.” First we must settle where the “according to the image” lies: in the body or in the soul. Let us first look at the arguments of those who hold the first view. Melito is one of them, and he left writings on God having a body. They find that members are ascribed to God: eyes of God looking upon the whole world, and his ears inclined to the petition of the righteous. “The Lord smelled a fragrant aroma.” “The mouth of the Lord spoke these things.” There are also God’s arm, hands, feet and fingers. So they say outright that these teach nothing other than the shape of God. “How,” they say, “was God seen by Abraham, and Moses, and the saints, if he had no form? And if he had a form, what character could it be but the human one?” And they collect countless sayings that name members of God. We must contend with them first from the wording. Against those who know nothing beyond the letter, we will set passages that contradict their assumption. From Zechariah: “Seven are the eyes of the Lord that look upon all the earth.” But if God has seven eyes and we have two, then we were not made according to his image.

Again, we have no wings, but about God it says in the ninety-first psalm, “Under his wings you will hope.” If he has wings and we are wingless creatures, then man was not made according to the image of God. And how can the heaven, which is spherical and always in motion, be God’s throne, as they suppose? And how is the earth the footstool of his feet? Let them explain it to us. Is the body from the knees to the soles that of the one who contains

all that lies between heaven and earth? The earth lies in the middle of the whole universe and is contained by him, as geometrical proofs show. So are God's soles with us, or with those on the opposite side of the earth? Do they fill our whole inhabited world, or take up somewhat more or somewhat less? Are his feet kept apart by the seas and rivers, or do they also tread upon the waters? And how is it that the one whose throne is a heaven so vast, and whose footstool is the earth, is found walking only in paradise, or appears to Moses only on the summit of Sinai? Whoever holds such opinions about God, will he not be called a fool?

Then, having said much to overturn such an opinion, he adds:

Someone who says that "according to the image" is not in the body but in the rational soul will offer a view that should not be despised, once he understands what powers the soul has. The power of knowing in a human being is able to judge and to do good, to act justly and to be strong, and in a word to accomplish every good. These powers were made in him by God according to the image. The Apostle shows clearly in the letter to the Corinthians that actions mark out the image, and not the shape of the body. He says: "Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, so let us also bear the image of the heavenly one." The one who lives according to the flesh and does the works of the flesh bears the image of the earthly. The one who by the Spirit puts to death the actions of the flesh bears the image of the heavenly. In another letter too, when he teaches how one must live, he adds to the commandments: "that you may become according to the image of the one who created [you]." The Lord is patient, and the patient person has the "according to the image of God." The Lord is righteous and holy, and the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Therefore the one who loves righteousness and holiness, who does and keeps the Savior's commandment, "Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate," and "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," becomes an image of God in every respect.

"And rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and all the cattle, and all the earth, and all the reptiles that creep on the earth." We should observe that in the list of the creation of living creatures, the sea monsters are one thing and the [creeping things of souls] another. And although man is now said to rule over the fish of the sea, the class of sea monsters and the class of wild beasts are passed over in silence. We must not suppose that these are left out for no reason, when it could have been written: "And let them rule over the fish, and the sea monsters of the sea, and the wild beasts of the earth, and the birds of the sky, and the cattle." Consider also whether, because of this silence, it is possible that not all living creatures came to be for the sake of man. Rather, only those he is said to rule did: the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle of the earth, and perhaps also the reptiles of the earth, because of the very necessary uses of medicines made from them. But these great sea monsters and the wild beasts of the earth did not come to be for man's sake. Otherwise their naming would have been added to the authority given to human beings.

We do not find in Scripture that the class of snakes is placed among the reptiles, but among the wild beasts. [The text here is unclear and the wording appears corrupt:] "For the serpent… legs above its feet, to leap with them on the earth. And these you may eat of them:

the locust and those like it, the akris and those like it, the attakes and those like it, and the ophiomachês and those like it. And every reptile among the winged creatures that has four feet is an abomination to you, and by these you will be made unclean." So man rules neither the great sea monsters nor the wild beasts, perhaps because from the beginning they were not made for his sake. Something similar to what is written here about what is under man's authority is said in the eighth Psalm: "You have subjected all things under his feet, sheep and all oxen, and moreover the cattle of the field; the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, that pass through the paths of the seas." Here too the sea monsters and the wild beasts are passed over in silence.

"And on the sixth day God completed his works which he made." Some people think it absurd that God should have completed the world over several days, like a builder who cannot finish a building without many days. They say that all things came to be at one time, and from this they build their argument. They think the list of the days, and of what happened in them, was given for the sake of order. For this argument they could plausibly use the verse: "He spoke, and they came to be; he commanded, and they were created."

"This is the book of the origin of heaven and earth, when it came to be, in the day when the Lord God made heaven and earth." The word "book" is not found in this place at all among the Hebrews. It is an error of a Hebrew scribe, who was misled by the same error that appears in Aquila: "This is the book of the offspring of Adam," and in the Seventy: "This is the book of the origin of men." For the scribe supposed that a "book" had been left out in this place too, and so he added it.

"And God planted a garden in Eden toward the east, and put there the man whom he had formed. And God made to spring up out of the earth every tree beautiful to look at and good for food." When we read this and rise above the myths and the literal sense, and ask what those trees are which God tends, we say that there are no trees perceptible to the senses in that place.

By the same author. In the translation the phrase "a garden in Eden" is set down, with the translator using the Hebrew word itself. The proper meaning of "Eden" is "sweet" or "delightful." The Hebrews have handed down that the place in which the Lord God planted the paradise, or garden, is called Eden. They say it is the middle of the world, like the pupil of the eye. For that reason they say the river Pheison is interpreted "mouth of the pupil," since the first river flows out of Eden. What they hand down is this: Eden, which means "delight," existed before the garden came to be, for the garden was planted in it.

"And the gold of that land is good." When our mouth is changed by virtue, and the soul gains mastery over good thoughts, then it feeds good doctrines. The word hinted at these things when it said "good gold." "And the name of the second river is Geon; this is the one that circles the whole land of Ethiopia." Ethiopia is in Hebrew Chous, which also means "darkening." So it is named from Ethiopia, that is, from Chous, because of the dark color of skin which he had beyond his other brothers.

"And he put him in the paradise." Those who are born again through divine baptism are put in the paradise, that is, in the Church, to work the spiritual works that are within. They receive a commandment to love all the brothers and to eat the coming fruit through endurance, as it was said: "From every tree that is in the paradise you shall freely eat." But a person breaks the commandment of the one who gave him new birth when he uses the reasonings of the serpent, loving some people as good and hating others as wicked. This is the tree of knowing good. Whoever tastes of it dies unhindered. It is not that God made the death, but that the man hated his neighbor. For God did not make death, nor does he delight in the destruction of the living. He is not moved by the passion of anger, nor does he devise some act of vengeance, nor is he changed to suit the condition each person deserves. Rather, he made all things in wisdom, having determined beforehand that they should be judged under a spiritual law. For this reason he says to Adam: "In the day that you eat, you shall die the death." In this way he assigned to each deed, whether good or bad, the fitting result that naturally follows it. It is not a matter of contrivance, as some suppose who are ignorant of the spiritual law.

"And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." What should we understand by the garments of skin? It is quite silly, like an old woman's tale, and unworthy of God, to suppose that God took skins from some animals, killed or dead some other way, and made the shapes of tunics by sewing the skins together like a cobbler. Others avoid this absurdity and say the garments of skin are nothing other than the bodies. That is plausible and can win agreement, but it is not clearly true. For if the garments of skin are flesh and bones, how does Adam say before this: "This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh"? Some, then, caught in these difficulties, declared that the garments of skin are the deadness with which Adam and Eve are clothed, having been put to death because of sin. But these people too cannot easily explain how God, and not sin, brings deadness on the one who transgressed. Besides, they are forced to say that flesh and bones are by their own nature not perishable, if our fathers received the deadness later, because of sin. And if paradise is some divine place, let them say how each of the bodily members, which were not created in vain, carried out its own function there. As for the word "nostril" in Aquila and Symmachus, or "face" in the Seventy, for the one who was formed and into whom God breathed the breath of life, we must say this: one should not cling to the letter of Scripture as if it were the truth, but should look for the treasure hidden in the letter.

"And he stationed the cherubim." It is not only the ministering spirits, sent out for the sake of those who are going to inherit salvation, who guard the way to the tree of life. Opposing powers also guard it, hindering those who wish to approach the tree of life.

"And Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out into the plain.'" In the Hebrew, what Cain said to Abel is not written. Aquila and his company showed this, and the Hebrews say that this saying is kept in a hidden (apocryphal) writing, and that it [is placed] here in the Septuagint version.

"And Cain said to the Lord God, 'My sin is too great for me to be forgiven.'" He did not judge rightly. He despised the divine law. He killed a brother, and on top of that he killed a righteous man. He lied. He asked for death, rejecting life and repentance.

"And he begot [a son] according to his own form and according to his own image." Against those who think that the image of God is one thing and the one made in the image another, we must say this: if Adam is one and his image another, then there is a third, in whose image Adam was made. They will use the text, "Lord, in your city you will despise their image," and the text, "Surely man walks about in an image." But we must ask how Adam's form differs from his image.

"And Enoch pleased God after he begot Methuselah." If he pleased God after he begot Methuselah, then according to Scripture he was not pleasing before this. Clearly he pleased God through repentance, when he begot "the sending away of death," which they [had] before he begot him.

"And God said, 'I will wipe out man, whom I made, from the face of the earth.'" He does not say simply "I will wipe out," but "from the earth." For what was made is not by nature wiped out entirely, since what was made was made in the image of God.

"These are the generations of Noah," and so on. If this had been written in the more ordinary way, "These are the generations of Noah" would have been followed by "Noah begot three sons." But as it is, his generation concerns righteousness. So "These are the generations" is put first, and then is added, "being a righteous man."

"Noah was well-pleasing to God. And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth." Earlier the text says: "Lamech lived a hundred and eighty-eight years, and fathered Noah. And after fathering Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and sixty-five years. All the days of Lamech came to seven hundred and fifty-three years, and he died." And it says, "Noah was five hundred years old, and he fathered three sons." In this we find a discrepancy of sixty-five years in Noah's age. But here the Scripture says that Noah was well-pleasing to God, as it is also written about Enoch. For when Enoch pleased God, then God also took him up. In the same way, then, the divine Scripture did not count to Noah the sixty-five years before he became well-pleasing. So too with Abraham: the sixty years before he knew God were not counted as life for him. The same is true of thirty years for Enoch, twenty years for Saul, forty years for Solomon, and seventeen years for Hezekiah. And a discrepancy of fifteen years is found concerning Methuselah as well.

"And the earth was corrupted before God, and the earth was filled with injustice. And the Lord God saw the earth, and it was corrupted, because all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." Injustice corrupts the earth, but righteousness saves it. And everyone who sins, as far as it depends on him, corrupts the earth. The earth did not become corrupted in the flood (for then it was washed clean of its corruption), but in injustice. What corrupted the way of God is not spirit but flesh. For "the mind of the flesh is enmity toward God," and "those who live in the flesh cannot please God."

"Two by two from all you shall bring into the ark, to feed with yourself. They shall be male and female." Because God wanted the people who entered the ark to remain pure from intercourse, he brings them in this way, and by the manner of their entering he commands them to spend their time in the ark. For it was not fitting, while their own kind were perishing, that these should be busy with marriage-beds and the begetting of children. But when the terrors had passed and need called for the earth to be filled with people again, he sends them out as married couples, saying: "Go out, you and your wife, and your sons, and the wives of your sons."

"And from all the clean animals bring in to yourself seven by seven, male and female; and from the animals that are not clean, two," and so on. Someone might ask how this was said to Noah as though he knew the difference between clean and unclean, when the law had not yet distinguished clean from unclean. So it is worth considering whether Noah knew these things not in the sense of "when Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature the things of the law," but from the natural law.

"Noah was six hundred years old, and the flood of water came upon the earth." Perhaps "of water" is added here to mark it off from a flood that is going to come by fire.

"And there went in to Noah into the ark two by two from all flesh." As to the literal text, someone might ask why it is not said that the unclean went in two by two and the clean seven by seven, but the clean are passed over in silence. But consider whether the answer lies in the words "from all flesh," where only the unclean are indicated by "from all flesh."

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." How had Noah increased and multiplied, when he had not yet fathered anyone after the flood? Perhaps, then, "Increase and multiply" should not be understood bodily. But if it is not bodily here, because of Noah, it is clear that it was in line with the intention of the spiritual law in the beginning as well.

"And the trembling and the fear of you shall be upon all the wild animals of the earth," and so on. Someone does violence to the literal text by claiming that every living creature is afraid when it sees a human being, even the wild animals in the wilderness. But perhaps it is better to understand the wicked powers as the wild beasts of the earth, and the other kinds likewise, as suffering fear from the righteous man, with trembling upon such beings. For the wicked powers fear the righteous man.

"Only, you shall not eat flesh with the life-blood in it. For I will also require your blood, the blood of your souls. From the hand of all the wild beasts I will require it." Since the wording on its face is unfitting, we must say that the "beasts" are opposing powers. The soul that sins dies, and the death of the one who has sinned will be required from the hand of those powers. It is also possible to take it of the cattle, since the Law commanded that a bull that gores be stoned.

"For in the image of God I made man." God says, "In the image of God I made man." The image of the invisible God is the Savior. So, according to the Scripture, the Savior is also God.

"Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan." Why, when the Scripture has said, "And the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth," did it add, "And Ham was the father of Canaan"? If it had to mention the sons, it should have mentioned all of them, and not Canaan alone. Canaan himself also became ungodly, as the history shows. So the Spirit, wishing to show the father's kinship with his son, in a way separates Ham from the godliness of his brothers by the addition, "Ham was the father of Canaan." All were sons of Noah by birth, but this one was not a son in character; he was the father of a child like himself. That is why it is stated so emphatically: "He was the father of Canaan." The Hebrew who said these things also brought forward a tradition of this kind, and added a proof for the tradition. According to it, Canaan was the first to see the shameful nakedness of his grandfather, and he reported it to his father alone, mocking the old man. Ham, who ought, like his brothers, not to have approached his father in an ungodly way, but rather to have rebuked the first one who saw and slandered, was himself persuaded. He went in, saw, and reported it to his brothers.

This too would seem a fable if the proof were not strong. For it says, "Noah awoke from his sleep and knew what his younger son had done to him." Ham was not his youngest son, but his second, since the order is "Shem, Ham and Japheth." If the Scripture had wanted to point out the youngest, it would have said Japheth. But since grandfathers always call their grandchildren, and their distant descendants, "sons," the Scripture says that Noah learned that the youngest of his descendants, Canaan, was the one who had done this. That this is how it stands, the divine saying immediately adds: "And he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.' " If someone wonders why Ham, who was himself ungodly, did not receive the same curse as his son, let him understand this: if it had been said to Ham, "He shall be a slave of slaves," his brothers would also have shared in the slavery, just as the brothers of Canaan became slaves under the curse, since Canaan was declared their slave.

"All flesh shall not die again." He promises that he will no longer bring a flood over the whole world, even though the mind of men is set on evil from youth. It is no longer so every day, as it was before the flood. He grants a small measure of pardon to the young because of how easily that age slips. Therefore he says, "I will not again curse the earth because of the works of men, because the mind of man is diligently set on evil from youth." That is to say, "I foresee that youth will be prone to slipping in the days to come. So do not be afraid. For this reason I will no longer bring complete destruction on you."

"And Noah began to be a man of the soil, and planted a vineyard, and drank of the wine, and was drunk, and was uncovered in his house." Noah did not know the nature of wine, that it makes drunk. The Scripture bears witness to this by saying "began," and "was uncovered."

Of the same author. Earthly wine strips the mind bare of the knowledge of intelligible things.

Of the same author. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was like that: like the wine that uncovered Noah.

Of the same author. Even if Noah was drunk and uncovered, it was nevertheless in his own house. For it belongs to a holy person not to be uncovered outside his own house.

"He was a giant hunter before the Lord God." The hunter is not now placed among the righteous. And watch whether it is not so at any other time either.

"Now the whole earth was one lip, and there was one voice for all." To those who do not understand the words "I and the Father are one," and who for that reason deny that the Son has his own distinct existence, we will bring forward the text, "The whole earth was one lip, and there was one voice for all." And if we ask what difference there is between lip and voice, we will say that the voice is assigned to the spoken language, and perhaps the lip to the thought; or else the other way round.

"Come, let us go down and confuse their tongue there, so that each one may not hear the voice of his neighbor." The confusing of tongues is a mark of evil. A mark of virtue is the time when the whole company of believers had one heart and one soul. If you keep watch in this way as you read the Scripture, you will find that wherever there is a multitude of numbers, wherever there is schism, division, disagreement and the like, these are marks of evil. But wherever there is unity and concord and great power in words, these are marks of virtue.

"And Terah lived seventy years, and he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran." Terah, when he was seventy years old, fathered the father of the nation that keeps the feast, [the "seven"], that is, the week. But I pause to ask whether he fathered the three as triplets. Otherwise, being seventy years old, he could not have become the father of all three by one woman. Yet the text does not show that he had more than one wife.

"And Abram went down into Egypt to live there as a stranger, because the famine had grown strong on the land." Abraham did not settle in Egypt as a resident; he stayed there as a foreigner, because the famine had grown strong on the land.

"Now the Canaanites and the Perizzites were then living in the land." The Canaanites lived in the land as settled residents, not as foreigners passing through. So the wicked settle in the land; they do not live in it as strangers.

"If you go to the left, I will go to the right; and if you go to the right, I will go to the left," and what follows. Although the choice was granted to Lot out of Abraham's gentleness, we should notice that the one who chose did not enjoy what he chose, while the one who yielded found that what was left to him was blessed.

And God said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you now are, to the north and the south, and the east and the sea, for all the land that you see I will give to you." Encouragement from God follows those who succeed in virtue. After Abraham had yielded the choice to his brother, and Lot had chosen the finest and most fruitful region, God appeared to Abraham and won over his soul with words of encouragement and kind promises. It was almost as if he said: "You despised this earth, the least of things and perceptible to the senses. I will give you the earth of the meek, the land in the country of the living." For he says, "Lift up" the eyes of your mind, "and look from the place where you now are." The righteous man's place is virtue, from which he watches eagerly for the things that are hoped for, and awaits what is laid up in the heavens. If it were not so, how much land could he be expected to see with bodily eyes? Or how far could he stare, turning his face round about in a circle?

"And they took the horse, all that belonged to Sodom." The Sodomites are now for the first time said to have the "horse," and this is said of them as wicked men.

"And one of those who had escaped came and reported it to Abram the Crosser." Abraham is called "the Crosser" because he crossed over from the land of the Chaldeans, passed through Mesopotamia, and came to the regions of the Canaanites. Aquila and his school also render the word as "Hebrew."

And he said to him: "Look up to heaven and count the stars, if you can number them. So shall your seed be." He says that the offspring of the holy man's soul would become so many and of such quality, in both number and brightness, because God worked with him. These offspring themselves display the divine blessing.

And he said: "Master and Lord, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" and what follows. It was not the way of the man whose faith was counted to him as righteousness to disbelieve, as someone might suppose. Rather, having believed earlier, he now asks also for knowledge about the things he had believed. God does not make a law for Abraham to sacrifice; rather, the most ancient people confirmed their oaths by such rites.

"In the fourth generation they will return here; for the sins of the Amorites have not yet been filled up, until now." The 400 years were granted so that Abraham's seed might multiply and the signs might take place. How then can it say, "The sins of the Amorites have not yet been filled up"? To show that they are driven out justly, because of sin. In the same way, when Scripture says, "I repented," it does not describe what God himself feels, and he does not feel what the words say. It shows instead how out of place the thing that happened was. And a little later: Long ago there were righteous men in Palestine, Melchizedek and many others. For Melchizedek would not simply have been a priest if there had been no one to obey him. So "not yet filled up" means "the holy man among them has not yet died out." They had not yet been filled up and made complete in their sins. For ten righteous men save a city, and at that time there were not just a few.

"They will afflict them four hundred years." Why does the Apostle name thirty extra years, covering the Covenant he made with Abraham, the journey from Egypt in the wilderness, and the giving of the law? What is said here does not conflict with what is written in Exodus. There it says, "After four hundred and thirty years the host of the Lord went out of Egypt," while here it says "after four hundred." But we must notice that it does not say they went out when the four hundred years had been completed, but "after four hundred years," and the thirty years make this clear.

"And her mistress was dishonored in her presence." The text deliberately does not make clear by whom, so that we might search and discover this: virtue is naturally dishonored when it has given birth to the preliminary studies. It is not necessarily dishonored by Abraham. It is dishonored either by the maidservant, or by those who rejoice in her offspring before the better things are born.

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham." Look up the meanings of the names, for they were named with real power by the Holy Spirit. And this too must be known: names indicate a state of character, a settled condition, and qualities. From these one can see what the person named is fitted for.

"Abraham said to God: Let this Ishmael live before you." Abraham was asking something exceptional for Ishmael. He was not content with "let him live," so he added "before you." For living before the Lord belongs only to the blessed and the holy.

"Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in days." Perhaps the phrase "advanced in days" is applied only to the righteous. [If that is so,] no wicked person has advanced.

"And Abraham drew near and said: Do not destroy a righteous man together with an ungodly one." This is a commendation of Abraham. It shows how firm his piety was, and that is why he was able to draw near. But "drew near" must not be understood in a bodily sense.

"Lot was sitting by the gate of Sodom." Lot was not inside Sodom but beside the gate. I would say that Abraham sat outside his tent, out of hospitality, watching for travelers even at an unusual hour (for it was midday). In the same way his relative, who imitated his ways, sat by the gate and urged passers-by to come in, even when evening had already come. He knew above all the ungodliness of those in Sodom, and that there was no rest for strangers there.

"And he pressed them, and they went into his house." Lot was not the kind of man Abraham was. So they were reluctant to turn aside to him, and they needed to be pressed.

"The men at the door of the house they struck with blindness." It is for their good that they are struck with blindness, since they used their sight badly. Blindness hinders them from sinning.

"And he overthrew all these cities, and all the surrounding region, and all who lived in the cities, and everything that grows from the earth." The Lord destroys not only the ungodly

but also their foods, which are Sodomite and harmful. Among these is the vine, about which it is written: "Their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and their branch from Gomorrah."

"And his wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." It did Lot's wife no good to have been taken hold of by the angels, even though she went out of Sodom, since she turned back.

"But Abimelech did not touch her." The words "did not touch" carry weight, as in "it is good for a man not to touch a woman." That means not only avoiding intercourse but also not being stirred by passion in any other way, whether by looking at a woman or touching her. In fact God did not allow Abimelech to touch her. Perhaps he does the same for everyone who is supremely [of sound mind], for such self-control is a gift from God.

"And Abraham said to his servants, 'Sit here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over as far as that place, and when we have worshipped we will return to you.'" He said this because he had reasoned that God is able to raise even from the dead.

"Abraham took the wood for the whole burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son." In the same way Christ, with his own cross on his shoulder, suffered outside the gate. He was not forced into the suffering by human strength. He went by his own will, and by the will of God, the Father.

"Look, Milcah also has borne sons to Nahor your brother: Uz the firstborn," and so on. Milcah is interpreted "kingdom" [or "queen"]. Uz: "one taking counsel." Nahor: "rest of light." Buz: "despised." Kemuel: "resurrection of God." Aram (the Syrians): "lofty." Chesed: "falsehood." Hazo: "seeing." Pildash: "fall of one in need," or "fall of poverty." Jidlaph: "abundance of [hand/time]," or "take a hand." Bethuel: "dwelling of God," or "daughter of God." Rebekah: "patience." Reumah: "expected vision." Tebah [or Tahash]: [something being chewed over, as with the cud]. Tahash: "silence." Maacah: "empty bowel."

"Look, I am standing by the spring of water." So we must make it our earnest aim to stand by the spring, so that the words "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water" may not fit us as well.

"And the young woman to whom I say, 'Lower your jar,'" and so on. This request is fitting for the elder of Abraham's household, and suits the man who ruled everything that was his. And notice his wisdom, and what kind of sign he sets.

"The man was watching her closely and kept silent, to find out whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not." From this we can learn that it is good for the one who prays not to pray with a voice that can be heard by the senses, but in the heart, to the one who searches hearts and kidneys.

"Isaac was traveling through the desert, by the well of vision." This is a fitting journey for the holy man. Because of his deep withdrawal from the world he travels through the desert, and because of his contemplation of the things of God he travels by the well of vision.

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening." Whoever is going to speak about divine things must go out from earthly things. This is what the text here calls "to meditate." It does not add with whom he spoke, and reasonably so, since this kind of conversation does not take place among human beings. It is either with God, or a person's own conversation with himself.

By the same author. The words "toward evening" are a symbol that a person can speak about the more divine things with real understanding only with difficulty, and only when he has reached old age.

"Abraham added and took a wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran," and so on. From the children of Keturah came very many nations. They settled the Troglodyte desert, Arabia Felix and the lands stretching on from it, including the land of Midian. The city of Midian lies next to the desert beyond Arabia, opposite Pharan, to the east of the Red Sea. From there comes the nation of the Midianites, named after Midian, son of Abraham and Keturah. So it is clear from this that Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was a descendant of Abraham and a relative of Moses.

By the same author. Keturah is interpreted "smaller" or "lower" [uncertain]. Jokshan: "release," or "he will release." Shuah: [strong people]. Sheba [or Shaban]: "turning away." Teman: "their failings," or "those being completed." Dedan: "sufficient judgment," or "singleness." Reuel: "strong friend," or "shepherding of God." Nebdeel: "serving God." Asshurim: "settled," or "those making straight." Letushim: "hammerers." Ephah: "needy," or "lacking." Epher: "dust," or "earthen," or "ashes." Hanoch: "your grace." Abida: "height of my father." Ephron: "dust," or "earthen," or "ashes." Shaar: "noon." Dumah: "silence." Mamre: "from vision." Massa: "lifting up." Ishmael: "hearing of God." Hadad: "measure being emptied." Nebaioth: "prophecy." Teman: "completion." Kedar: "darkening." Jetur: "banished." Naphish [Greek: Kaphes]: "refreshment." Mishma: "attention," or "hearing." Kedemah: "in front." Massam: "from spices [or sweetenings]." Havilah [Greek: Euilat]: "in labor." Shur: "wall."

"Settle in the land that I tell you, and live as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you." If someone lives as a foreigner in the place where God's command says he should settle, God is with him and blesses him. But if someone settles where he should not even live as a foreigner, God is not with him and will not bless him.

"Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my commands, my ordinances, and my laws." The law of Moses had not yet been written, yet Abraham kept what was commanded. He kept it as the nations do who do not have the law but do by nature the things of the law. They show the work of the law written in their hearts, and their conscience bears witness to them, as the Apostle says.

"And Isaac's servants dug in the valley of Gerar and found there a well of living water." Everyone who prays to be a child of Isaac should be eager to understand these wells and to dig them within himself.

"Moving on from there he dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it." By not resisting those who wronged him, he shows that he was truly without pretense. So God approved his patient endurance and appeared to him and promised him the land. He was not to lose heart because, as a foreign resident, he was exposed to those who wanted to do him wrong. In this he was fulfilling what is said on every occasion: ["if they persecute you"].

"And he said: 'The voice is the voice of Jacob.'" Isaac recognized the devout voice, which Esau could never have spoken: "What your God has delivered before me." Recognizing it, Isaac said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob."

"And he said: 'Behold, the smell of my son is like the smell of a full field which the Lord has blessed.'" Clearly this was not a smell perceived by the senses. For what smell could be compared to the smell of a field? Rather, it was probably the kind of fragrance the Apostle claimed to have when he said, "We are the fragrance of Christ to God in every place." I think that each virtue has its own fragrance, which helps to fill out the virtues. In the same way, on the opposite side, vices stink, as the one who said, "My bruises stank and festered." It is fitting for the Lord to bless the field of virtues that is fragrant to him.

"And he said to him: 'Behold, your brother Esau is threatening to kill you. Now then, child, listen to my voice: get up and run away to Mesopotamia.'" From this we learn that we must run away from those who plot against us and flee persecutions, even if we are counted worthy of visions as Jacob was. One may be comforted by seeing what followed for Jacob as he fled from Esau. He was counted worthy of visions and became the father of twelve tribes. And when he came back from the flight caused by persecution, he became Israel instead of Jacob.

"You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan." The daughters of Canaan are evil. They were evil not in Esau's eyes but in the eyes of Isaac, his father.

"And the Lord God, seeing that Leah was hated, opened her womb." He opens the womb for the birth of holy ones. According to the spiritual law, he opens the womb of a soul so that the one who is to be the mother of God's Word may bear him.

By the same author. For she, the elder in time, was the first to bear to God the synagogue and the multitude of the Jews.

"And Laban said to him: 'If I have found favor before you, I would have taken omens; for God has blessed me because of your coming.'" There is no divination in Jacob. But Laban says, "I would have taken omens," as one who was a stranger to Jacob's way of life, though he was not completely a stranger to it. To "I would have taken omens" he adds, "for God has blessed me because of your coming."

"And Jacob took for himself rods of storax, of walnut, and of plane." The three rods are symbols. They are either the three powers of the soul: the rational, the spirited, and the desiring. Or they are the three kinds of contemplation: of bodies, of bodiless things, and of the Holy Trinity. Or, in general terms, the practical life is meant by the walnut, the

contemplative life by the storax, and by the plane tree he hinted at this world and the contemplation of it. Stripping off its green means renouncing it. The green of the practical life is the love of pleasure. The green of contemplation is being occupied with bodies. As for the green in the other two interpretations, examine that for yourself.

The Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and to your family, and I will be with you." When Jacob had borne fruit and grown rich while living outside his family, then the Lord told him, "Return to the land of your father." We should understand the Lord to say something like this when we come to our departure, as we are about to go away to our fathers. He also gives a prize to the one who returns to the land of his father and to his family. I think the Lord was present to him in dreams.

"But your father deceived me and changed my wages ten lambs." Aquila said "ten in number"; Symmachus said "ten times in number." So, as the Hebrew says, Laban broke his agreements with Jacob ten times, because the offspring born in Jacob's name were very many and Laban begrudged him. The two other versions made this plain: "And you cheated me of my wages by ten ewe-lambs." But there is no mention at all of lambs that he had agreed to give me. Nowhere does it appear that he made such an agreement; it is clear from what Jacob himself says. In the same way, the text does not show Lamech killing anyone, but he is called to account, so that from the account the deed becomes clear. It is the same here. So Scripture often reveals, through someone explaining it, things it did not explain when they were done.

"Your sheep and your goats did not miscarry, and I did not eat the rams of your flocks." The boldness of a good shepherd shows in these words, and we should be zealous to imitate it. Let those in the flocks of sheep and goats bear spiritual fruit, and let us not devour the rich ones of the flock. And since his gods were not found, a covenant was made with the God-inspired Jacob; and the world, when it threw away its falsely named gods, became a friend of Christ.

Jacob said to his brothers, "Gather stones," and they gathered stones. In Ecclesiastes it is also written: "A time to cast stones, and a time to gather stones." They are gathered at the command of Jacob, who was a type of Christ, so that the building may be completed on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ our Lord himself as the cornerstone, built of living stones, when it becomes a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. "And Laban turned back and went to his own place." For the wicked man, because of his evil, his place is near. But for the one who travels by way of progress, since his place is far away, the labor is not small.

"And the angels of God met him." The Lord says, "I am the way." So angels of God meet the one who travels this way.

"And he commanded them, saying, 'This is what you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, I have lived with Laban.'" Out of respect he sincerely calls his elder

brother his lord. Moreover, a humble reply turns away anger. As a man he was afraid; but trusting God, he did not flee, but went on.

"And he crossed the ford of the Jabbok." The Jabbok is a river of Arabia, now called the Iambikes.

"And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him," and so on. Who else could the one called both man and God be, wrestling and contending with Jacob, than the holy Word of God, who spoke to the fathers in many parts and many ways, who is given the titles Lord and God? He also blessed Jacob and named him Israel, adding, "for you have prevailed with God." The men of that time saw the Word of God in this way, just as the apostles of our Lord said: "What was from the beginning, we have seen with our eyes, and we have looked at, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." Jacob also saw this Word and life, and goes on to say, "For I have seen God face to face."

"Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a coat of many colors." The coat of many colors is the best condition of soul, adorned with the virtues.

"And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his sons, they hated him, and could not speak anything peaceable to him." The one who hates is unable to speak anything peaceable to the one he hates. So let us put away hatred, so that we may be able to speak peaceable words.

"The Midianites sold Joseph into Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's eunuch, the chief cook." In this place Aquila and Symmachus give the name Potiphar as "Eutiphar," and in another place "Eutiphare." The interpretation of the present name is set beside the word itself; the explanation of the other will appear in what follows.

"But Onan, knowing that the offspring would not be his, whenever he went in to his brother's wife, poured it out on the ground." Everyone who sows into the flesh, and stores up the works of the flesh in the earth, is like Onan. That is why he is put to death by God.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man." Like someone shooting at a target, he stretched his ruling faculty toward its mark, and so he always hit it. Scripture uses this expression in many places.

"And the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian because of Joseph." Because the holy man was in the Egyptian's house, the house is blessed, along with the possessions and the field of the Egyptian. But this is not a spiritual blessing.

"And it happened after these things that the king of Egypt's chief cupbearer and chief baker sinned against their lord, the king of Egypt." I think that the phrase "They sinned against the king of Egypt" can be understood by analogy of the martyrs: they sin against the spiritual king of Egypt, but not against God. For they seem to sin against the law of the world, which is opposed to the law of God.

"For I was stolen away by theft from the land of the Hebrews, and here too I have done nothing." By the words "Here I have done nothing" he hints that he did nothing of the kind the native Egyptians do. And it was an Egyptian deed to lie with the master's wife.

"Joseph answered and said to him: This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days." It was also said earlier that the three branches are three days. So "three days" is presented both through branches and through baskets, since Providence made use of both, with examples fitting each man's own way of life, to set forth three days. You could find the same sort of thing in the rest of the Scriptures too: the same thing made clear through examples that seem different.

"And on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants." One of those before us observed that a person is worthless who honors the things of birth and welcomes the day of his own birth. We confirm that account, since we find something similar in the case of Herod, when Herodias' daughter danced and John's head was cut off. And nowhere is a righteous person shown celebrating a birthday.

"And after two years' time, Pharaoh saw a dream. He thought he was standing by the river," and so on. The person who trusts in things that flow away and are unstable thought he was standing on the river, from which the things that seem to bring prosperity come up, when his cattle are fat. But these are certainly devoured by worse ones. Compare the word "he thought" with the words "I thought we were binding sheaves." In the second dream he says, "As though the sun and the moon and the stars were bowing down to me." Again, the chief cupbearer says: "In my sleep there was a vine," and so on. And the chief baker says: "I thought I was carrying three baskets of bread on my head," and so on.

By the same author. The narrator of the text says, "He thought he was standing on the river," not beside the bank of the river. But Pharaoh says, "I thought I was standing beside the bank of the river," not on the river. Now the affairs of Egypt, that is, the affairs of the worldly, begin with better things, of which plenty is the symbol, and end in what is more bitter, of which famine is the type. The same can be seen in the account of the rich man. For the seven years of plenty were, so to speak, his: he received his good things in his lifetime, clothed in purple and fine linen and feasting splendidly every day. But it ends for him in the opposite, as he receives the evil things after his departure from here. You could see the same in those who travel the broad and roomy road, whose end is destruction, while those whose beginning is the narrow and pressed way have life as their end. Therefore: "Woe to those who are filled, for they will hunger; and to those who laugh, for they will weep." "Blessed are those who mourn and weep, for they will be comforted."

"And behold, seven cows were coming up as if out of the river," and so on. Pharaoh's dreams were of cows and ears of grain. The things by which the land is farmed, and what it produces, became for the king advance signs of plenty and of barrenness.

"Pharaoh woke up, and he slept and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears were coming up on one stalk, choice and good." Joseph saw not ears but sheaves, while the Egyp-

tian saw not sheaves but ears. Again, the chief cupbearer sees the three stems as three days, but the king sees the seven ears on one stalk as the connected seven years. So the one word "stalk" receives a different interpretation. If anyone ever explains Scripture differently, then, he should not be thought to be forcing it. One more thing is worth noting. In the years of plenty, seven ears come up on one stalk. In the famine there are seven ears, but no longer on one stalk. Another version says "on one reed."

"When morning came, his soul was troubled. He sent and called all the interpreters of Egypt and all its wise men." "Of all Egypt": how did he call the interpreters and the wise men? We must ask this at once with regard to the wording. We must also ask, with regard to the deeper meaning, whether Pharaoh needs Egyptian interpreters as though they were wiser. We say "of all Egypt" because it follows from "all the interpreters of Egypt and all its wise men."

"And Pharaoh told them his dream, and there was no one to report it to Pharaoh." I do not think they were completely silent. They said everything except the actual interpretation of the dreams. But someone will ask, "How did Pharaoh know whether the interpreters and wise men of Egypt were getting the dreams right or not?" To this the Hebrew used to say that Pharaoh, when he saw the dream, also saw its interpretation, but that this had slipped from his memory. So as he listened to each man speak, he could not recall what he knew he had seen. This is why he was astounded at Joseph and at once advanced him, entrusting to him all Egypt, its grain, and the safety of the Egyptians. For as soon as Joseph explained the dreams, Pharaoh was reminded that these were the same things that had been shown to him before.

"Joseph answered Pharaoh and said, 'Without God, no saving answer will be given to Pharaoh.'" Joseph is right to begin with God. Notice that to the woman he said, "And I will do this evil thing, and sin before God." And to the eunuchs in the prison he says, "Is not the interpretation of them through God?"

"And Pharaoh said to all his servants, 'Shall we [find] such a man, who has the Spirit of God in himself?'" Pharaoh saw that Joseph had made clear the solution of the dream, which had slipped from his memory. He saw that this was more than human, and so he said that Joseph had the Spirit of God in him.

By the same author. Pharaoh too was compelled to speak of one God. This agrees with what was said earlier about the solution of the dream.

"And a herald proclaimed before him." The Hebrew has "Abrech," which properly means "tender father." It is fitting that he called Joseph a tender father, since Joseph, though tender in age, showed the Egyptians a fatherly, saving leadership. The word indicates nothing other than bending the knee, for the herald's cry is plain.

"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name [Psonthomphanech]." This is interpreted as "the one to whom the future was revealed." Aquila has "[Saphamreano]." Symmachus has "[Daphthphane]," meaning "he revealed hidden things."

"And he gave him Asenath, daughter of Petephres, priest of Heliopolis, as his wife." "Putiphar" is the name of the father of the woman married to Joseph. Someone may suppose that this is a different man from the one who bought Joseph. The Hebrews, however, do not understand it that way. From an apocryphal writing they say he is the same man, who became both Joseph's master and his father-in-law. They also say that this Asenath accused her mother before her father of having plotted against Joseph, and said that her mother was not the one plotted against. He gave her in marriage to Joseph, and he was eager to show the Egyptians as well that no such wrong had been done against his house.

Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, "because God has made me forget all my toils and all those of my father." That God made him forget all his own toils is plainly a good thing. But whether Joseph also forgot everything that belonged to his father Jacob, and God did this to him as well, needs investigation. God does not make Joseph forget the words of Jacob and of his sons. Perhaps the word "toils" is meant to serve for both halves, so that it reads: "all my toils and all the toils of my father."

He called the name of the second Ephraim, "because God has made me grow in the land of my humiliation." In a mystical sense, spiritual Egypt is the land of the righteous man's humiliation. So the Apostle speaks of "the body of our humiliation." In the Psalms it says, "Our life has been humbled to the dust." And again, "You humbled us in a place of affliction."

Joseph was ruler of Egypt, and he sold to all the people of the land. When Joseph's brothers came, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. The sons of Jacob were not "peoples of the land," so he did not sell to them. He gave their silver back to them twice. It was fitting that the sons of Israel should receive their grain freely.

Of the same. The text is charming about these same men. When they buy, it calls them "sons of Israel." When they bow down to Joseph, it calls them "Joseph's brothers." But Benjamin bows down neither to Esau nor to Joseph. That is why the temple comes to stand in his portion.

"Yes, for we are in sin concerning our brother, because we overlooked the distress of his soul when he was begging us." The word "he was begging" comes from what the text passes over in silence, for it is nowhere recorded how he begged.

Reuben answered and said to them, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not wrong the boy'? And you did not listen to me. See, his blood is being required." Earlier it was said that Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites while Reuben was not there. After the sale Reuben went back to the pit and did not see Joseph in it, and he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there, and I, where am I to go?" He does not seem to have learned from

his brothers that Joseph had been sold. So perhaps he thought Joseph had been killed, and that is why he now says, "See, his blood is being required."

Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will rise and go, so that we may live." Perhaps he is prophesying that Benjamin was going to be with the tribe of Judah.

"I will take him; require him from my hand. If I do not bring him back to you," and so on. Judah reckoned that none of the things that can happen to a man would happen to Benjamin [as a man]. So he makes this promise to his father, in a prophetic way, I think.

"Take some of the fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down to the man gifts: resin, a little honey, incense, storax, terebinth, and nuts." Gifts are carried to Joseph from the fruits of the land, things Egypt does not have: resin, honey, incense, storax, terebinth, and nuts. Earlier too, "the camels were laden with incense, resin, and storax," but not with honey, terebinth, and nuts as well.

Of the same. The Midianites bring down three kinds of goods into Egypt along with Joseph. The sons of Jacob add three others to these and bring them to Joseph. Still, it is the seed of Abraham that brings both the first set and the second. It was fitting that the lesser goods should come from Abraham's illegitimate children and the greater from his legitimate ones, since Egypt had need of these.

They said, "We are being brought in because of the silver that was returned in our sacks at the beginning. It is so that he may bring false charges against us, attack us, and take us as slaves, along with our donkeys." It is implausible that men who thought themselves in such a predicament would worry about their donkeys, unless the passage is to be read allegorically.

He said to them, "Be at ease. Do not be afraid." It seems that the man in charge of Joseph's house said this, having been helped toward reverence for God by Joseph.

"Benjamin's portion was made greater than the portions of all, fivefold compared with theirs." It was made greater either because of Jerusalem, or as a type of the apostle Paul. And Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, divided the land among the other tribes.

"For God sent me ahead of you, to leave you a remnant." Since God sent Joseph ahead of his brothers into Egypt for the life of many, it is clear that in sending him to Egypt God made use of the zeal and the choice of his brothers for the plan concerning Joseph and the life of many. So there are times when God makes use of the sins of others, and plans what is his own for the salvation of other people.

"So now it was not you who sent me here, but God, and he made me like a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler of all the land of Egypt." The one who rules over bodily things and never yields to them could say, "God made me lord of all the land of Egypt."

"And do not spare the eyes of your possessions, for all the good things of Egypt will be yours." Whatever there is in the land that is called Egypt in a figurative sense, it does not belong to the Egyptians but to Israel. For this reason, at the exodus, the Hebrews also stripped the Egyptians and took vessels of gold and silver, and whatever good thing there was in Egypt.

"And I will bring you up to the end." This is a promise fitting for God: not only to bring up, but also to carry the one brought up through to the end.

Of the same. To those who look in the Pentateuch for the life after this one, we will say: since the one who said "I will bring you up" does not lie, he did bring him up later in this life, and after the exodus he brought him up, when afterward Joseph laid his own hands on the bodily eyes of Jacob. And God brought Israel up, leading him, after the end of his life, to the end that is with himself.

"And Jacob rose up from the well of the oath, and the sons of Israel took up Jacob their father." The one who came to the well of the oath is Israel, bringing with him, I think, Jacob and all that was his. But the one who rises from the well of the oath is Jacob; for it was not Israel who needed raising up, but Jacob. Then after this, it is not the sons of Jacob but the sons of Israel who have taken up Jacob their father, since he needed to be taken up.

Of the same. Pharaoh sent wagons to carry not Israel but Jacob. Jacob went into Egypt, but he did not go down. For it was to Israel that it was said, "Do not be afraid to go down into Egypt."

"Jacob went into Egypt, and all his seed with him." Here it is called the seed of Jacob, though earlier it was the sons of Israel. Still, if Jacob and all his seed went into Egypt, yet Er and Onan did not go in, then they were not the seed of Jacob.

"His daughters and the daughters of his daughters." It is clear that, since he had his daughters with him, he also brought along his sons-in-law. For he could not bear to send his daughters out of his house, lest they turn to idolatry.

Of the same. If Jacob has no daughters, how do his daughters go down into Egypt? So let it not be taken allegorically. The text goes on to say that thirty-three came from Leah, and that a daughter was named Dinah.

"And these are the names of the sons of Israel who went into Egypt." These names are of the sons not of Jacob but of Israel, and they went in, not down, into Egypt.

"The firstborn of Jacob, Reuben," and so on. Though he said above that these were the names of the sons of Israel, now he says that Reuben is the firstborn of Jacob.

Of the same. It should be noted that along with the sons born to Jacob in the land of Canaan, he also counts the sons of Joseph who were in Egypt. For this contributes to the later passage near the end, where he says: "Ephraim and Manasseh are mine, like Reuben and Simeon."

"And Israel said to Joseph, 'I will die from now on, since I have seen your face, for you are still alive.'" It is a wonder that one who lived in Egypt was not harmed by the Egyptians and remained in a life according to God. That is why Jacob, marveling, said to Joseph, "For you are still alive."

"Your servants have been shepherds of sheep from childhood until now." ... "And they said to Pharaoh, 'We have come to live as foreigners in the land.'" They speak boldly to Pharaoh about being shepherds. Then, so that Pharaoh would not be disturbed, they say, "We have come to live as foreigners in the land."

And Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Let them live in the land of Goshen." In the Tetrapla, from which the copy was also taken over to agree with the sequence in the Hebrew and the other editions, it is shown that the Septuagint has in some places been rearranged, so that what came first became last and what came last became first. This is what happened here, and for that reason we have set out the proper order. It is this: "We your servants will live in the land of Goshen" is joined to "And Pharaoh said to Joseph: Let them live in the land of Goshen." Then: "And if you know that there are among them..." and so on.

"And if you know that there are capable men among them, appoint them rulers over my cattle." Pharaoh wants to appoint the capable men of Israel as rulers over Egyptian cattle. But if anyone in Israel is a capable man, let him flee the wish that lies behind such an offer. "And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from him." Having blessed a righteous man, he would not have gone out from him. We must ask whether anyone who blessed a holy person ever went away from him. Here Jacob goes out as the one who has blessed; but earlier Jacob goes in as the one who has obtained blessings.

"And Joseph brought all the silver into Pharaoh's house." And where else should all the silver of Egypt and Canaan have been, if not in Pharaoh's house?

"And they brought their cattle to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and the sheep, and the oxen, and the donkeys." Joseph does this not out of harshness, but so that the people would not wear themselves out feeding the animals, and so that afterward they might receive the animals back as a favor from Pharaoh. "And nothing is left to us before our lord except our own body and our land." Of sinners it is said, "because they are flesh." So here too the Egyptians, being flesh, say that what is left to them is not a soul, but their own body and their land. We should understand that this is what all who are strangers to God would say.

"So that we may not die before you, and the land be laid waste, acquire us and our land." The Egyptians want to live before Pharaoh, not before God.

By the same author. The Egyptians want to become Pharaoh's possession, as the saints are God's.

"For the famine had prevailed over them." Clearly this means the Egyptians; for it is never said of Israel that the famine prevailed over them.

"And Jacob, having strengthened himself, sat on the bed." He sat after being strengthened so that he could speak the God-inspired words. For I think Jacob was the one who was troubled, but Israel was the one who was strengthened, who also blessed the sons of Joseph, and what follows. In that passage the name Jacob is not used in connection with the boys.

"And he said to me: Behold, I will increase you and multiply you." Either the ungodly man does not increase, or he does not increase from God. You may say the same about the word "multiply." For it is God who says these things when he blesses.

"Ephraim and Manasseh are mine; they shall be mine like Reuben and Simeon." Ephraim is like Reuben, for both are firstborn. Manasseh is like Simeon, for each was second son to his mother. "And the offspring whom you father after these shall be under the name of their brothers; they shall be called in their inheritances." He means that Joseph's other children, who will be born later, will be placed in the distribution of the inheritance under the tribes named after their brothers.

"And Israel, seeing the sons of Joseph, said: Who are these to you?" and what follows. The phrase "Israel, seeing the sons of Joseph" will seem to contradict "Jacob's eyes were heavy with old age," unless perhaps the eyes' inability to see and Israel's seeing the offspring of Joseph are the same thing, since God had shown him what was going to happen.

"And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim." This is because the prophets followed along, understanding what they were prophesying. Indeed, afterward the tribe of Ephraim took the lead over the ten tribes. For from Ephraim descended the blessed Joshua son of Nun, who is mentioned in Numbers and was a true type of Christ. For this reason Joseph's blessing is carried over to him.

"May God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh." And he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. You will use this text well on the point that in prayer the more honored person stands in front. "Bending down you lay down like a lion and like a lion's cub." "You lay down" signifies the death that came by the plan of salvation. Christ is a lion to those who have become completely wild like beasts, but to those who are still beginners he is a cub.

Notes on Genesis

Note 7

“I am bringing rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. And I will wipe out every living thing that I made from the face of the earth, from man to beast.” Why did he destroy the multitudes of people with the flood? He wanted to wipe out the race of Cain. But the tribe of the godly had become mixed with it, and so it shared in the punishment. Wishing to make a kind of new beginning for life, he preserved Noah and his sons with their wives. Noah was godly and righteous, sprung from the piety of his kinsmen, and he hated the mixing in of lawlessness. He did not do these things, as some say, out of anger and regret. For these are human passions, and the divine nature is free from passions. Besides, regret belongs to those who learn the nature of things only after experience. Then, learning by experience that they planned wrongly, they regret it. But God sees what will happen after many generations as if it had already happened. Since he sees ahead and knows beforehand, he governs everything accordingly. Why then does he regret, when he arranges everything according to his own foreknowledge? So when it is said of God, regret is a change in his plan. “I regret,” he says, “that I made Saul king.” This means: I decided to stop him and appoint another.

So it is here too: “I considered that I had made man.” He decided to destroy the human race. But since he loves humanity, he kept Noah as seed for the race. And since he created the kinds of animals without reason for human use, these were destroyed along with humans, except those kept safe in the ark with Noah. For God the Master commanded that two of each kind of the animals considered unclean be saved, and seven of the clean. He was going to permit people to eat meat, and those he was raising would offer sacrifices of reverence to him. So he ordered that more of the clean animals be preserved: three pairs for the increase of the kind, and the one left over for sacrifice. For right after [the ending] of the punishment, Noah offered a thank offering to God, “from all the clean cattle and from all the clean birds,” it says. So it is clear that this is why God ordered seven of each clean kind to be brought into the ark: so that Noah, by offering the one animal from each kind, would not destroy the pairs.

“And the Lord God shut the ark from outside.” The security of the door, once shut, needed a more than human power.

Note 19

“And he overthrew these cities and all the surrounding region and all who lived in the cities.” “And his wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” The Lord destroys not only the ungodly but also their foods, which are Sodomite and harmful. Among these is the vine, about which it is written: “Their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and their branch from Gomorrah.” As soon as Lot was brought safely to the city, the fire was brought on the cities, a sign of the end that is coming. She did not become simply a pillar, but especially a pillar of salt, because of the words, “You are the salt of the earth.” You can also apply to the pillar of salt the words, “But if the salt becomes foolish?” Lot did not go up to the mountain at once, as he had been told, but first went to Zoar, because he had no confidence in himself about going up to the mountain.

Note 23

“Land of four hundred didrachmas.” Note that four hundred is the price of a tomb, because the four and the hundred are harmful numbers. If you search the Scriptures for similar cases, you will find them.

Note 37

“Shall we really come, I and your mother and your brothers, to bow down to you on the ground?” Clearly Joseph’s mother had died before the dreams. So might we say that Mary and Joseph are foretold as going to bow down to Christ?

Note 43

(8) Verse 22. “And he said to them, ‘Peace be to you [or: God be gracious to you], do not be afraid.’” This man seems to have been helped toward true reverence for God by Joseph.

Note 46

(9) Verse 34. “We are men who raise livestock.” “Every shepherd of sheep is an abomination to the Egyptians,” but not to the Hebrews. So if he stands over us as a shepherd, he is an abomination to the Egyptians. But if he is a hired hand, he may even be a friend to the Egyptians.

Selecta on Exodus

Note 1

“And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And when you go away, you will not go away empty.” This promise had been given beforehand to Abraham, when God said, “After these things they will come out from here with their belongings.”

Note 2

“And Pharaoh’s heart grew strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had commanded them. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh’s heart has become heavy, so that he will not send the people away.’ ” The phrase “Pharaoh’s heart has become heavy,” spoken by the Lord after Aaron’s rod turned into a serpent and swallowed up the rods of the magicians, deserves a closer look. Is it something different from “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened,” which is said many times, and from “grew strong”? For this too is said: “And Pharaoh’s heart grew strong, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had spoken.” It seems to me that a heart which yields to divine things is softened. It does not have the strength to stand against the divine, and it is not weighed down or dragged below to earth and matter. But a heart which strains against the divine will and opposes it is hardened and pushes back like a stone. It throws off the word, and in arrogance resists it with a falsely named strength. Such a heart, dragged down by wickedness, which tends downward, must necessarily become heavy. Yet these things do not happen to the heart in the same sense, even though growing strong and becoming heavy both happen to one and the same wicked heart. For in one case, as it is said somewhere, the heart becomes stony and is hardened. In the other, it does not give way to the divine nature as to something stronger. Rather, it takes its stand to fight against God, and so is said to be strong.

Note 3

“And Moses said to him, ‘As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord, and the thunders will stop, and the hail, and there will be no more rain.’” For the Maker of all has nature yielding to his command.

Note 4

From the same author. It should be noted that Moses does not work all his wonders with the rod, but also with his hands and with a word, so that the many would not suppose that the rod accomplished them through magical deceptions.

Note 5

“Let each one take a sheep for the households of the families,” and what follows. He says they are to take the sheep from the tenth day and keep it until the fourteenth. They are to name it, saying, “This sheep is sacrificed for so-and-so and so-and-so,” with no more than ten names. On the fourteenth it is sacrificed between the evenings, as the fifteenth begins. So from the taking to the sacrifice there are five days, when the light of the moon is full.

Note 6

“You shall have a perfect male sheep, a year old.” Christ is the sheep of a year. For the year shows that he lacks nothing and has nothing deficient.

Note 7

"And the whole multitude of the congregation of the sons of Israel shall slaughter it toward evening." We are commanded to slaughter the sheep toward evening, because our true sheep, the Savior, also came into the world at the last hour.

Note 8

“And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, in the houses,” and what follows. We sacrifice, and we anoint our houses with the blood. I mean the body, if the anointing is faith in him, through which I believe that the power of the destroyer is made ineffective. After we have been anointed, that is, have believed in Christ, then we are commanded to come to the eating. The meat is to be neither raw nor boiled in water, but roasted with fire.

Note 9

“Everyone who eats leaven, that soul will be destroyed out of Israel.” A person will be destroyed on account of leaven! The God of all, who gives the laws, destroys the man with leaven in his house on the day of unleavened bread just as he destroys the adulterer, the fornicator and the corrupter of boys. Is this in keeping with God? Is this in keeping with the heavenly law? But I would answer that if you have the leaven of wickedness, and do not destroy every trace of the leaven of evil from your ruling faculty (for this is your true house), then the God of all lays down by law that you be destroyed, because you did not throw the old leaven out of yourself. For when you come into the season of new things, you must become new and keep nothing that is old. “The old things have passed away,” and so on. See how the feast of unleavened bread had to be kept in the month of new things.

Note 10

"You shall touch the lintel and both doorposts with some of the blood that is by the door." The lintel, as one of those before us has explained, stands for the rational part of the soul; the two doorposts stand for the spirited part and the desiring part.

Note 11

By the same author. We do not drive out the destroyer by some device once he has got inside. Rather, so that he may not slip in at all, we set up a guard by means of the law. The guard and the security is this: the lintel and the doorposts of the entrance are marked with the blood of the lamb.

Note 12

“And it happened at midnight that the Lord struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt.” God brings these deadly plagues through angels. So too in the books of Kingdoms we learn how in a single night the angel destroyed 185 thousand of the Assyrians.

Note 13

"This is the law of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it. And every household servant, and anyone bought with money, you shall circumcise him, and then he shall eat of it," and so on. Following what has been set out, this is a third law, which the Lord spoke again in addition to the two laws. Pay attention to the precision of Scripture: the Lord did not give this law about the Passover at the beginning. For if he had said, while they were still in Egypt, before Israel departed from Egypt, "No foreigner shall eat of it. And every household servant, and anyone bought with money, you shall circumcise, and then he shall eat of it," the great mixed crowd that came out of Egypt would not have come out. So he kept this law back, so that after those who wished had come out, another law might be given. And a little later. If we interpret these things allegorically with reference to our soul, we shall say that the household-born are the words that have grown up with us and been cultivated in us, which begin to take their stand from notions born in us. The bought-with-silver are all those that come to us from outside, from teaching and from lessons. He says, then, that all are to be circumcised and cleansed, both the household-born and the bought. But we must receive no foreigner, that is, we must not admit a foreign teaching. For he does not admit a foreigner who wishes to profane the feast of the Lord. And a little later. If you eat the words of God in the Church, but also eat in a synagogue of the Jews, you transgress the commandment that says, "It shall be eaten in one house." And if you share in the words of God in one house, the Church, and then leave it and suppose you are sharing in God in a heretical assembly, when the commandment says, "It shall be eaten in one house," you are not eating in one house. Understand, then, that the Church is the one house. So never eat of the lamb once you have gone outside the Church.

Note 14

"And you shall not carry any of the meat out of the house." A word of the Church must not be carried as an envoy outside the Church, just as the meat is not to be carried outside the house. I mean into a synagogue of Jews or of heretics. For that is like throwing pearls before pigs.

Note 15

"No uncircumcised person shall eat of it." Every offspring of the soul that is intelligible, and passes beyond material things (and the material things are the female ones), must be circumcised and cleansed, so that in this way a person may share in the meat of the Passover. The proselyte also becomes like one native to the land. For God does not prefer well-born seed; he welcomes the choice of the will.

Note 16

From the same. By “uncircumcised in the flesh” he means the person who has not cut away fleshly things, just as “uncircumcised in the eyes” means the person who looks at what he should not. From the same. See to it that none of you is uncircumcised in heart, that none has failed to be circumcised with the circumcisions that the Word teaches we should undergo. Which ones are these? Some people are reproached as being uncircumcised in the ears, and all who have not been circumcised in their hearing are unclean. A person is uncircumcised in the lips when he does not cut away hostile and unclean words. In the same way one can speak of someone as uncircumcised in the flesh, the one who has not cut away fleshly practices. One can also speak of someone as uncircumcised in the eyes, the one who sees what he should not and does not cleanse his power of sight. And a person is uncircumcised in the flesh when he does what he should not do.

Note 17

“Then the sons of Israel set out from Sokchoth and camped at Othom, beside the wilderness.” In Numbers it is written that the sons of Israel encamped “from Boutha to the mouth of Iroth, which is opposite Beelsepron, next to Borra.”

Note 18

“And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the cavalry of the Egyptians, and third-men [tristatai] over them all.” These are either men able to fight against three, or men who in the battle line stand in the third rank, behind the front-rank man and the second-rank man. Others say that they built large chariots for use against the enemy, big enough to hold three, so that one drove and the other two fought. Or it may mean men who rode on three horses; for the ancients in wars, when they went out as charioteers, rode on two or three horses. Or he calls the “third-man” the one who, when the king is seated, stands third, or has the third seat. Such was David beside Saul, as you will find in the first book of Kingdoms.

Note 19

"There God set before him ordinances and judgments, and there he tested him." When God tests, he tests for a person's benefit, not to do him harm. This is why it was said, "God cannot be tested by evils." The word adds this a little later: "If you listen carefully to the Lord your God, I will not bring on you any of the disease that I brought on the Egyptians." So the one who bears trials nobly is crowned. The case of the devil is different: he tests in order to put to death those who obey him. God tests without being ignorant of what will happen, but he gives the person freedom to do what he wishes, because of free will.

Note 20

"This is the word which the Lord spoke: Sabbaths, a holy rest to the Lord, tomorrow." I am recording what has been said about the sabbath. First, according to the plain wording, so that people may see what the letter means. Second, according to the higher sense, in which I would say that a sabbath day has come upon the righteous person who has put an end to the works of the world, who glorifies God and is at leisure for him; who does not depart from the place where Christ stands; who does not light a fire that burns, in that he does not sin at all; and who does not lift burdens. Every sin is a heavier burden than a mountain. This is why the Psalmist said, "Like a heavy load they have weighed heavily on me." There would also be another recording of the sabbath, according to which "a sabbath rest remains for the people of God," a rest that is sacred and holy. The one who has done all his works is judged worthy of that sabbath, giving his leisure to nothing but the contemplation of truth and wisdom. We have set these things alongside because Moses here makes mention of keeping the sabbath.

Note 21

“And you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it.” Christ is likened to a rock because he cannot be shaken or moved. For the divine and supreme nature is firmly fixed in what is good.

Note 22

"For I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, who repays the sins of fathers upon children, to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, and who shows mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." Whom has this saying not troubled? If the father sinned, and the son, and the third and fourth generation receive back the sin, then some people accuse even the God who gave the laws. Others do not accuse him, but sincerely hope for something of this kind, and expect that the sons will receive back their fathers' sins. The Jews think this, and they do not set up any other god. The Samaritans suppose it, since they too believe they share in the one God. Those from the heresies are not pleased that a God who repays the sins of fathers into the lap of their children could be good or just. They say that the God of the law is neither just nor good, since he repays the sins of the fathers on the sons, and that there is some god greater than he. But the man of the Church neither hears these words in a bodily way, as a Jew does, nor invents another god, as a heretic does. He stands between the two and says: "These things are rightly written, but I do not know the meaning of what is written." So let all of you lift up your minds and ask that he reveal to you how it is that the one who repays the sins of fathers upon children is good. Who are the fathers? Bring the Scriptures as witnesses; let the sacred words be examined. The Savior and Lord Jesus Christ says to those who sin: "You are from your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth." So then, if anyone sins, he is from the father, the devil, and for this reason the devil's sin is repaid upon the son.

But that one is the first sinner, the one who suggested the sin to me. I am the second sinner, since I did not throw out his purpose but accepted his working. I ought to stand armed with the full armor of God and hold the shield of faith, so that all the burning arrows of the evil one are put out on the shield of my faith. So if I sin, I am doing the devil's work. He has cast into my heart the thought that I should commit this sin or that one. First I accept his arrow, and when I have accepted it, then I accept him as well. For it is written this way about Judas: Satan did not enter into him first. First the devil cast into the heart of Judas Simon Iscariot the thought of betraying him, and then, after the morsel, Satan entered into him. So I have a father: if I am holy, God; but if I am a sinner, I have the devil as my father. And also, let us say, the one who immediately worked in me, Antichrist, or some angel of the devil, or a demon, whose working I accepted. In short, I have countless fathers

if I become a sinner. Likewise, if I become righteous, God is my father, as the Savior says: "Little children, I am with you a little while longer." And again: "Daughter, your faith has saved you." And again: "Child, your sins are forgiven." In this way I know of other fathers too, according to what is written to Abraham: "You will go away to your fathers." This does not mean his fathers according to the flesh, for they were not faithful and not holy, as is clear from the history written about them. For if his father had been holy, it would not have been said to him, "Go out from your land, and from your kindred, and from your father's house."

For the word has a bodily sense and it has a spiritual sense. If you have understood who the fathers are, then see what follows: because you have sinned, you receive your repayment from the devil, or from one of the spirits under him, since you accepted his working. So having become a son of those, you receive what is due to you from the good God who is visiting you. For he is not visiting your father; he is visiting you, and he says to you, "Listen, daughter, and see, and incline your ear," and so on. And he gives to you as one who is good. For he visits you, the son of the wicked father, and repays the sins. "So I will visit your lawless deeds with a rod," says he to you who are holy; "and I will visit their injustices with whips." Why? So that "I may not scatter my mercy away from them." For when God abandons someone, he no longer punishes him or whips him. For he does not "whip" everyone, but "every son whom the Lord receives." And it is said in the prophet about those who are completely sinful: "I will not visit your daughters when they commit fornication, nor your brides when they commit adultery." For all this time, from the creation and the foundation of the world, the devil has been sinning, and there is neither fire nor whip for him. For he is not worthy of the punishments that come from God. For the devil cannot say, "Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger," and so on. So let each one who is aware of his own sins pray to be punished. For it is good to have done nothing worthy of punishment. But if we have done something worthy of punishment, let us be punished in such a way that we receive our due here, and after this find rest in the bosom of Abraham.

Note 23

“And these are my ordinances, which you shall set before them. If you acquire a Hebrew servant,” and so on. It is necessary to examine what a law is, and what a command, and what ordinances, and judgments, and testimonies, and commandments. An ordinance, then, is what is said here: “If you acquire a Hebrew servant,” and the rest that is said about him. A judgment is, for example, that if a priest’s daughter commits adultery, she is burned with fire. Commandments are such as, “You shall have no other gods.” A command is, “Go down and testify to the people, and let them wash their garments.” Testimonies are such as, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today.”

Note 24

“Six years he shall serve you; but in the seventh year he shall go out free, without payment.” The release in the seventh year, and also the rest from works on the sabbath, signify the freedom we have by grace through Christ.

Note 25

"His master shall bring him to the court of God." Aquila and Symmachus said, "to the gods." They call the judges gods, and the "court of God" is the verdict of these judges.

Note 26

“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. Keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time of the month of the new [grain]. For in it you came out of Egypt. You shall not appear before me empty. And you shall keep a feast of the harvest of the firstfruits of your works.” So the feasts of God, since they have spirit in them, are spiritual. No one who is earthly keeps the spiritual feasts in a spiritual way. “For what harmony is there between righteousness and lawlessness?” (I will not go on to the rest.) An earthly person cannot keep spiritual feasts, just as a spiritual person cannot keep an earthly feast. And after a little: What is the month of the new? You will say it means the fruits we can see. But the month of the new has not yet arrived, since the year, let us say, is still late. And if there should ever be a year in which the land does not bear its fruits, can we then keep the feast in the month of the new, as God commanded those who keep the feast to do? So the feast would have to be kept year by year. I am also puzzled again about the second law, the one about the second feast. For it says, “the feast of the harvest of the firstfruits.” If someone sows, and the fruits do not come first but last, he could not keep the feast of the beginning of the harvest of the firstfruits. For you must have produce in order to be able to keep the feast. And what if I have no land? How could I keep this feast, when the text says, “And you shall keep a feast of the harvest of the firstfruits of your works, of whatever you sow in your field”? I did not sow; I am a builder. I did not sow; I am a weaver. I have no field. How can I keep the second feast? And the same holds for the third: “And the feast of completion at the going out of the year.”

Note 27

And after other things: What does the word want to tell us when it commands us to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the month of the new? Put off the old man with his practices. And so that you may keep the feast in the month of the new, become new yourself, so that the month of the feast of the new may also be your month. For this month belongs to the new, and not to the old. How, then, must you too become new? The apostle Paul, understanding the feasts, and the feast of the new, says, “Having put off the old man with his practices, and having put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.” So in order to keep the feast in the month of the new, you must become new and put away all oldness. Then what feast do you keep first? That it is the feast of unleavened bread, learn from the Apostle: “For our Passover, he says, Christ has been sacrificed for us. So let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” And gather together at the same time what has been laid down about the feast of unleavened bread, and you will see the senselessness of those who cling to the letter as though it were the spiritual meaning, and who despise the spiritual interpreters as though they were of no use.

Note 28

"You shall not appear before me empty." Know that every person is either empty or full. If someone does not have the Holy Spirit, has no knowledge of the Creator, has not received Jesus Christ as life, does not know the Father in heaven, does not live according to the Word and the heavenly law, is not self-controlled and does not act justly, such a person is empty. But if he has made room for God who said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God," he is not empty but full.

Note 29

“Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the Lord your God.” I would say this is what the text means. What we do is either female or male. If what we do is female, it is bodily or fleshly. For when we sow to the flesh, we make the offspring of the soul female, not male: limp, soft and material. But if we look at the things that are eternal and set our mind on the better things, and bear the fruits of the Spirit, then all our offspring are male. So what is brought before God, what will be seen by the eye of the Creator, is male and not female. For God does not think it worthy to look at what is female and bodily.

Notes on Exodus

Note 15

Verse 25. “There God set down for him statutes and judgments, and there he tested him.” God tests for our benefit. For he cannot be tested by evils himself. He tests so that, if they obey him, they may obtain good things and be set free from evils.

Note 20

Verse 4. “You shall not make for yourself an idol.” An idol is one thing, and a likeness is another. It is a likeness if you make the likeness of a fish, a four-footed animal or a wild beast, whether by craftsmanship or by painting. An idol is whatever the soul forms in its imagination and makes out of things that do not exist, as an original invention. For example, a creature mixed together from a man and a horse. Verse 4 (continued). “Whatever is in heaven above, and whatever is on the earth below, and whatever is in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them.” To bow down is one thing, and to serve is another. The one who gives himself to these things with his whole soul does not only bow down but also serves them. But the one who pretends, and acts out of custom, does not serve them, yet he bows down. You will find such people in the book of Numbers, who were gratifying women and bowing down to idols.

Note 28

Verse 30. Since it is fitting for the high priest to carry around, both in front and behind, like a shield, a watchful and protective care, lest some opposing counsel from the spirits of wickedness wound his reason, throw into confusion the trustworthiness of his judgments, and, by mixing in evil, make the disclosure and the truth fall away.

Note 31

Verse 1. “And the Lord spoke to Moses.” The all-wise God kept Moses for a full forty days to give the law, though he was able to give the law in three days. But he did so in order that the time of Moses’ absence might expose the ungodliness hidden in the depth of the Jews’ hearts.

Selecta on Leviticus

Note 1

“And he called Moses back.” It is named Leviticus because what concerns the priesthood and the sacrifices, and whatever commands of that kind God gave, are set out in this book of Leviticus. Exodus also contains laws from God. But how the priests were consecrated by anointing, how the tent was constructed and received its fitted assembly, and many other things, Leviticus records. If it also contains some other matters, that is no surprise, for the title “Leviticus” indicates what is most important in it.

Note 2

By the same author. Those who do not look rightly at the teaching on sacrifices either despise it as a cheap legislation that contains nothing worthy of the Creator, or else they ungodly condemn the Creator himself for legislating cheap things. But the one who has understood what David said and what the Apostle said can see that teachings worthy of God lie hidden in these things. David says, “Uncover my eyes, and I will contemplate the wonders out of your law.” The Apostle cries out, “The law is spiritual.”

Note 3

“A man from among you, if he brings gifts to the Lord.” We have observed in many places in the Scriptures that “gifts” is said of living animals, while “sacrifices” is said of things without life, as in what is said in Genesis: “And God looked at Abel and at his gifts, but he did not pay attention to Cain and his sacrifices.” This also needs to be said: of living things it says, “A man from among you, if he brings gifts”; but of lifeless things, “if a soul.” The soul stands for the lifeless thing. The result is that, of the irrational animal, only the rational part is left, and, with the lifeless thing overcome by the fire, only the living part remains.

Note 4

“They pour out the blood at the altar.” The altar on which the whole burnt offerings are sacrificed is called the altar of burnt offering. The inner altar is the altar of incense.

Note 5

By the same author. Because the Jews, who had grown used to sacrifices in Egypt, delighted in them, as the making of the calf in the wilderness also testifies, God allowed them to offer these to himself. In this way he bridled their unruly impulses toward many gods and toward sacrificing to demons.

Note 6

"But if one soul sins unwillingly." Whatever evil someone does is unwilling. It should be noted that Scripture calls the unwilling act of ignorance a sin. The blessed Paul also recalls certain other things when he says, "For the law had a shadow of the things to come."

Note 7

From the same. “If a soul sins unintentionally,” it says, “and does not do some of all the commands of the Lord,” this is in keeping with nature. For perhaps there are even some commands of the Lord that one ought not to do, according to the saying, “I gave them statutes that were not good.” So a soul sins unintentionally when, under the pretext of piety, it keeps what it should not keep. Such a soul needs a sacrifice for forgiveness. The one who acts on purpose does not need a sacrifice. An example is the man who became a Jew in order to win Jews, and who circumcised Timothy.

Note 8

"The soul that touches anything unclean, or anything that has died of itself." By "that which has died of itself" he means the person who has died to God, with whom one must not even eat, for whoever touches him is unclean. This also is unclean: what has been hunted down by our adversary the devil. The unclean beasts could be those who have come to the word but remain beast-like, and who have sinned unto death, and have not become worthy to be saved even along with the beasts, according to the saying, "You will save men and beasts, O Lord."

Note 9

“Everyone who touches them will be made holy.” Some say that “will be made holy” means “will be defiled.” I think this is not because of the sacrifice but because of the boldness of the one who touches. For Haggai says, “Whoever touches will be defiled.”

Note 10

From the same. We say that the sacrifices were rather a source of food for the priests, and a shadow of true piety. The gain from sacrificing is twofold: honor is offered to God, and a person would not worship what he himself sacrifices, nor think it to be God.

Note 11

“And you shall not die.” The word seems to threaten death to priests who drink wine and strong drink when they go into the tent. For bishops who pray on behalf of the people must turn away from drunkenness, not only that of wine but also that of worldly affairs and human reasonings. He does not forbid this as though wine were improper in itself. He forbids it because he knew the lack of self-control in the Israelites: whenever they started drinking, they went on to excess. So when they enter the holy things, they should keep the soul sober and exact, and the remembrance of God fine and clear.

Note 12

"Why did you not eat the sin offering in the holy place?" He shows that if the priests do not eat, the sacrifice is left incomplete and the sin remains. For some of the blood should have been brought in, and they themselves should have eaten.

Note 13

“If today they have offered their sin offerings.” Since it happened, he says, that Nadab and Abihu died for offending God, at the very time when they should have eaten the people’s sin offering so that what the people had sinned might be forgiven, how shall we, who today are convicted in our sins, win forgiveness by eating? For the priest must first make atonement for himself.

Note 14

"These are the animals you shall eat." Wild beasts are in no way clean, for all are unclean according to the law which says, "Everything that goes on its paws among all the wild beasts shall be unclean to you." In a general sense, all the cruelest of men could be called wild beasts, about whom the prophet says, "When evildoers draw near against me to eat my flesh," and so on.

Note 15

"Every animal that has a divided hoof." The divided hoof stands for the person who lives devoutly in this present age and hastens toward the age to come. As for the dividing of the hoof and the cleaving of the claws, it stands for the person who cuts away what is superfluous and dead from his hands, that is, his actions, and from his feet, that is, his manner of life. In addition, as for chewing the cud, it means not only taking in spiritual food but also recalling it and meditating on it continually.

Note 16

"This is the law concerning the animals and the birds and every living creature." He gives much attention to clean and unclean. First he teaches that the soul is to be holy. For if what is natural, made as it is by God's command, can be unclean, how much more can what comes from a wicked choice and has not come about by God's command? If someone considers unclean what God made, how much more what stands opposed to God's will and does the very thing he forbade?

Note 17

“If a scar appears on a person, in the skin of his flesh.” This is applied to certain blemishes of the soul. When bodily wounds have been healed, a mark of what the place suffered sometimes remains, which we call a scar. In the same way a soul that has taken the wound of sin, even if it receives healing, sometimes keeps what is left behind like a scar. We must also understand how it is cleansed from this, or how it is not cleansed.

Note 18

“For a man or woman on whom there is a stroke of leprosy.” We should observe the difference in wording. In some cases the text says, “If it appears on anyone, in the skin of his flesh,” or “For a man or woman on whom there is a stroke of leprosy among them.” In others it says, “If flesh has a sore in its skin,” or “If flesh has a burn of fire in its skin.” These are wounds.

Note 19

"His garments shall be loosened." By this the text hints that the one whose soul has been made leprous must not hide his sins or cover them up. Just as the garments of a man who is loosened do not cover his shame, so the law wants him to be exposed to all, and not to become a whitewashed tomb. To have the mouth covered means to have no boldness to open the mouth. To go outside the camp means no longer to dwell together with the choirs of the saints.

Note 20

"And they shall slay the one bird in an earthen vessel." The little bird is sacrificed in an earthen vessel, with living water put into it beforehand, so that the cleansing may come by water and blood, which came out from the side of the Savior. By "cedar wood" he means the wood of our salvation. The scarlet thread spun was a type of the precious blood, by which the whole world is cleansed. I take the hyssop to be the warmth that comes through the Spirit, and the scarlet cord to show the Word's union with flesh.

Note 21

"He shall shave his head and his beard." He shaves the head with respect to the principal and chief points of doctrine. With respect to the beard, which is the symbol of the man, he puts away the sins of the man. With respect to the eyebrows, he puts away all conceit, and, if I may coin a word, all "eyebrow-raising" pride. He says these things are symbols: having grown on and sprouted from the soul, they are called hairs of deadness.

Note 22

“He shall take two lambs without blemish, a year old.” The text divides what is offered into three. One is the release from sins previously committed. Another is that the whole is offered to God. The other is what is offered on behalf of the one being cleansed, concerning what has been done by him. Perhaps the three tenths of fine flour are also taken so that one tenth goes with the lamb that is slain, the second with the other, and the third with the sheep. So at the fifth cleansing he has not meal but fine flour, which is a symbol of the material for pure bread, and it is mixed with oil. This oil is taken as nourishing light, serving the need for light and not for fire. He also has, apart from the oil taken for mixing the fine flour, oil by itself, which is offered through the priest, being the measure of a cotyle. And it seems to me that the words “The priest who cleanses the man shall set the man who is being cleansed” very much require a priest, and that this happens before the Lord.

Note 23

"And the one whose house it is shall come and tell the priest." We say that the lawgiver did not mean that someone must go to the priest to accuse his own house. He meant rather that he goes to ask a physician for a remedy for what has happened. So we say that the synagogue of the Jews has been made leprous. The person who reports stands for the choir of the holy prophets. They report to the great High Priest, that is, before his indignation, the sufferings of the Jews' folly. They do this not from hatred or enmity but out of reverence for the benefactor. They acknowledge the Jews' offenses, and yet they call upon him to have mercy.

Notes on Leviticus

Note 4

Verse 27. “If a soul sins unintentionally,” he says, “and does not do some of all the commandments of the Lord which it ought to do.” (12) But if it is according to nature. Perhaps there are some commandments of the Lord which one ought not to do, as in the saying, “They gave them commandments that were not good.” So a soul sins unintentionally when, under pretext of piety, it keeps what it should not keep. And it needs a sacrifice for forgiveness, though the one who acts on purpose does not need a sacrifice. An example is the man who became a Jew in order to win Jews, and who circumcised Timothy.

Verse 28. This shows that even the thing that is offered is itself called “sin.” That is how we should understand the saying, “They will eat the sins of my people.” So if the one who sins seems to sacrifice the sin itself by repenting, he ought not to fall into the same things again, since the sin comes to life again. In this way it is possible to call Christ “sin,” because he was slain for the sin of all.

Note 12

Verse 2. “A woman who, if she is seeded, and bears a male child.” The words “if she is seeded,” placed before “and bears a male,” will seem superfluous. But I wonder whether he said the whole thing prophetically. Mary bore a male child without having been seeded. He may have said it so that she would not be thought unclean for having borne the Savior. Yet even if the words “if she is seeded” had not been put first, Mary could still be understood as not unclean. For she is not simply a woman but a virgin.

Note 13

Verse 45. “And the leper, in whom is the plague, his garments shall be loosened, and his head uncovered.” Why does he command that the leper’s head be uncovered and his garments loosened? So that he may be recognized, and so that those who come near do not share in the uncleanness. In the same way the Apostle said about those who sin: “Keep yourselves away from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” And again: “If anyone who is called a brother is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or a drunkard, or abusive, or a robber, do not eat with such a person.”

Note 23

Verse 2. “These are the feasts of the Lord.” Every joyful day on which certain things are prescribed to be done, as on a holy day, distinct from the other days, is called a feast. But not every one is a festal assembly. A festal assembly is so called, according to the name, when people gather in one place from every direction. So a festal assembly is also a feast, but a feast is not necessarily also a festal assembly. For example, Sabbaths and New Moons are feasts. But Unleavened Bread, the days of Weeks, and Tabernacles are not only feasts but also festal assemblies.

Verse 40. “And branches of palms.” Through these we can understand that God again, in Christ, gives us the delights of paradise. The boughs of evergreen plants signify in themselves the continuance of grace and the unfading nature of hope.

Note 27

Verse 15. “But if the one who sanctified it redeems his house, he shall add to it a fifth of the silver of the valuation, and it shall be his.” Suppose someone sanctions to God not the value of a house or a field but the things themselves. He shall pay the value with the fifth when he redeems them, and he shall keep the possessions. But he shall not sell them to others. And even if he sells them, the buyer will hold them only until the Jubilee, and after that they shall belong to God.

Verse 16. “But if from the field.” The one who has bought a field by purchase will not take it back for himself. Instead, having paid the fruit of it to God in due proportion, he will give the field back in the Jubilee to the one who sold it.

Selecta on Numbers

Note 1

"Our eyes see nothing but the manna." It was named "Man" because the Hebrews, seeing a strange sight for the first time, said to one another in their native language, "Man," that is, "What is this?" They would not have said that if it had been customary, as some of the Gentiles say, for the nature of those places to produce such things from ancient times. And even now, if a little comes down, it is for the sake of remembrance.

Note 2

“And they did not add.” The words “to prophesy” are missing. He means that they no longer prophesied. They prophesy only once, so that they would not be made equal to Moses. But so that it might be known that they had received a share, they all prophesy together. For in Christ the Spirit is one, and there is one working through all.

Note 3

“And the people did not move on until Miriam was [shut away / cleansed].” The tent stayed seven days in the place in honor of Mary, so that she, being in such a condition, would not have to follow along. “Send men for yourself,” and so on. He commands that some be sent, showing that they were now drawing near to Palestine, [having made clear that the way out of Egypt had been easier for the Hebrews]. And having exposed their unbelief, he assigns the wilderness as a tomb to those whose minds remained hard. For the death of the ungodly is preferable to wandering in life.

Note 4

“And Moses named Ause the son of Nave, Jesus.” It should be noted that the son of Nave became a type of Christ. Christ freed the most pitiable people from their wandering and led them up into heaven, not into a land that devours its inhabitants.

Note 5

“Surely they will not see the land which I swore to their fathers.” Notice that some of those who came out of the land of Egypt did enter the land of promise, for God did not forbid this. He destroyed in the wilderness only those who were twenty years old and above, of those who came out of Egypt and made the calf. He spared the young, who were related to them, whose time of life had not yet reached twenty years. Much more did he spare the infants and small children, up to the age of adolescence.

Note 6

From the same. This is a type of the truth: “Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom.”

Note 7

"Take up the bronze fire-pans." Just as the bronze serpent was a sign of their unbelief, so also were the fire-pans of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, which were put around the altar as a covering.

Note 8

“And to the sons of Levi, see, I have given every tithe in Israel.” It was reasonable that the firstfruits be assigned to the priests, since the tribe of Levi does not inherit and does not receive an allotment as the others do. This allotment, a share with the altar, is what brings about the priests’ lack of possessions. The people gave tithes to the Levites, and the Levites gave to the priests. “Shall we not bring water out of this rock for you?” Moses did not give glory to God before the people, and so he was prevented from crossing over with them. And lest they honor him in death with the worship that belongs to God, when they had honored him while he lived, God made the place [of his] tomb unseen.

Note 9

“Now this assembly will lick up all who are around us.” This took its illustration from the calf. As the calf has the green grass in its mouth, so the holy people, fighting with their lips, have their weapons in their mouths, through their prayers. Balak knew that this had plainly happened in the earlier wars, and he wanted to fight with weapons of the lips too. So he calls Balaam, who had as his weapons curses on his lips, the weapons of the opposing power. For the holy angels work together with the righteous toward saving and good deeds. The evil demons work together with impious, sinful people toward wicked deeds that harm people’s salvation. The holy fight with the words of prayers, but the impious and sinful with the words of magic.

Note 10

From the same. The history, taken in terms of the events as they appear to the senses, is also full of great benefit. From the history before us we learn many things. We learn that it is possible to fight with words, and that great matters are managed and set right through words. The holy fight with the words of prayers; the impious fight with the words of magic.

Note 11

From the same. The opposing power never does a good work, but works only the worst things. And the evil that it works, it cannot restore to something better, for it does not have the standing of the better. But for the better power all things are possible. For our God causes pain and then restores again, but he has no evil to work. He is good not only by disposition but also by his very being.

Note 12

From the same. Among human practices there are also oracles that are carried out, and sacrifices, and certain gifts offered to demons, so that those who wish may divine by means of these offerings. Each such practice is an oracle, for it is not a true prediction.

Note 13

"And [the Lord] came to him." In truth a divine power came to Balaam, though he had not called it. It came, then, to turn away the demons that Balaam was calling, and to arrange the divine predictions.

Note 14

“And the angel of God stood up to oppose him on the road.” The angel who opposes Balaam on the road: could this be the one of whom God said to Moses, “My angel goes before you, guarding you on the way”?

Note 15

"Go with these men." God had not allowed Balaam to go to Balak. But since Balaam wanted to go, God permits it. He commands him to say only what is revealed to him, and the angel, appearing and frightening him, confirms this. "Build me seven altars." Works are also done through another body, both on the better side and on the worse. Examples are what happened in Egypt through Moses and Aaron and the enchanters. But when the divine power is measured against the opposing power face to face, in the sight of those who were in doubt, the divine power wins. So Moses' rod swallowed up the rods of the enchanters.

Note 16

Of the same. Balaam used to serve with these same sacrifices and call up the demons. For sacrifices of this kind were being offered to the demons throughout the world. This is why God demanded sacrifices of the first people. Offering to God would put an end to offering to demons, even though the sacrifices were chiefly symbols.

Note 17

Of the same. When the Savior became man, he sent his disciples to untie the donkey. That is, to free it from the bonds with which the opposing power, the spiritual Balaam, had bound it. They untied it and led it to Jesus. They laid their garments on the donkey, that is, the virtues of the Gospel. The Savior sat on it and entered the holy city.

Note 18

"And Balak took Balaam to the top of Phogor." Balak supposed that Balaam's craft was limited by place. So he took him to the top of Phogor, thinking that Balaam the magician had power from there to curse the people of God. Phogor is interpreted "seasoning," or "skin of the mouth." That is, the peak of the love of pleasure and the deadness of speech. From these Balaam tried to curse the people of God.

Note 19

Of the same. There are two peaks, that is, the peak of the highest virtue and the peak of evil. Moses went up to the top of virtue, and Balaam to the top of evil.

Note 20

“He did not go, as he was accustomed, to meet the omens.” This Balaam is a symbol of the people from the nations. They used to follow omens, but they learned that it is [insatiable] to the Lord, and did not do it again. Balaam is also interpreted “vain people,” and “son of Beor” is interpreted “made of leather.” “Vain” describes the nations as they were before. “Beor” describes the one who was in vanity and in deadness, clearly as he was before.

Note 21

"The man who truly sees." I who was once Balaam, the vain people, have opened the inner eyes of my mind. I have seen the spiritual Israel of old and the plan of God concerning him, and I am counted worthy of [the gift] of the Holy Spirit. The words "The man who truly sees says," and what follows, do not suit the Balaam of former times. They suit the Balaam of now. "How fair are your houses, Jacob, your tents, Israel." The name Jacob does not belong to the one who dwells there but to the house. The name Israel belongs to the one who dwells there. For "Jacob" belongs to the bodily thing.

Note 22

"Like shady groves." The groves are spiritual. They give shade to the place where rational beings are fruitful and thick with leaves of active virtue. The gardens beside a river are spiritual. They are a place where rational beings are planted, watered either by the contemplation of created things or by the contemplation of the holy Trinity.

Note 23

Of the same. Those who live in tents are among those who travel on the road. Outside this world there is a great road and many tents. Those who settle in a place are not among the travelers but among those who stand still.

Note 24

“Like cedars beside waters.” The spiritual cedars, planted beside the waters, are rational souls, watered by the knowledge of the truth.

Note 25

“And he will rule over many nations.” A lord is one who gives orders with authority, and a slave is one who obeys like a slave. A lord is one who acquires by his own labors, and by his lordship has become free of passion. A slave is one who is ruled by passion, in need of what is better, and requires the oversight of his own lord. There are many lords, but blessed are those who have our Lord Jesus Christ as Lord.

Note 26

"And his kingdom of Gog will be exalted." "Kingdom of Gog" is interpreted "gifts." On one understanding, the gifts are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. On another, it refers to "Let the one on the housetop not come down into his house." So it is a kingdom of such a state of soul.

Note 27

“God led him out of Egypt.” This applies both to the Savior, according to “Out of Egypt I called my son,” and to Israel. The one he casts out, the other he calls.

Note 28

Of the same. The oracle that the Lord would come into Egypt pointed to the carrying away of our Savior Jesus Christ, which was to take place together with his parents. This world too is compared to Egypt.

Note 29

"His glory is like that of a one-horned beast." Christ is the one-horned one in a spiritual sense, by attribute, and from him come many one-horned ones. For from the one Jesus Christ many have come to share in being christs. Some also say that the deer is one-horned.

Note 30

“He will eat the nations of his enemies.” This is about Christ. We ourselves were once nations of his enemies. So Christ eats us, as the essential virtue feeding on us, just as he says, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.”

Note 31

“And he will crush their fat to the marrow.” He says this refers to the time when he changes the fleshly condition into a spiritual one through actual deeds.

Note 32

“Those who bless you have been blessed.” Here he indicates two kinds of people: believers and unbelievers in relation to Christ. And after a few lines: In these words, then, both the attempt of those who opposed Israel and the evil craft of sorcery are overthrown.

Note 33

"And the people were defiled by committing fornication." The plan that the Hebrews should commit fornication and worship Baal-peor came from the diviner. This is why Moses says: "These things happened to the sons of Israel by the word of Balaam, to turn them away and make them disregard the word of the Lord on account of Baal-peor."

Note 34

“And the border toward Libya will be yours.” He promised Abraham the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. Why, then, did he not give it to them? For the numbers show that a smaller amount was given. I think he would have given it, if they had been faithful like the man who received the promises. This is only reasonable. For often he threatened evils and did not bring them, because people repented, as in the case of the Ninevites.

Note 35

“Except that wives shall be taken from the people of their father.” God therefore commands that, apart from the tribes of Judah and Levi, marriage is not permitted from one tribe to another. The purpose is that the Savior should not be shown to be a stranger, coming from above: “a king and priest after the order of Melchizedek.”

Notes on Numbers

Note 11

Verse 7. “Now the manna was like coriander seed.” As for “like coriander seed,” the others read “bdellium.” Another says “from honey.” Aquila and Symmachus read “oil of mastic,” or “of mastic into fat.”

Note 12

Verses 1, 2, 10, 15. Miriam spoke abusively against Moses and was made leprous. She was put outside the camp and sat there seven days. This happened to put fear into the people. For if he did not spare his own sister, he would not spare anyone else.

Note 14

Verse 36. “And the men...” Those who find fault with the land have, by their own reasoning, shown God to be a liar (in a pious sense), since he praises Palestine.

Note 22

Verse 2. “And Balak saw...” “Nations heard and were angry.” Among these words is also this: “The rulers of the Moabites—trembling seized them.”

Verse 4. For they brought the fee for this, as for a diviner, to bring him.

Note 23

Verse 7. “And taking up his parable...” In some places the divine Scripture prefers and puts first what is symbolic over the historical narrative, in its own subject matter.

Note 24

Verse 7. “And he will rule over many nations.” There are many lords and many gods. But blessed are those who have our Lord Jesus Christ as Lord, for they will rule over many lords.

Verse 17. “And a man will rise from Israel.” They say that Balaam had pupils in his craft, who had studied magic under him. They say that, because of the reputation he had, they wrote down his prophecies and left them behind, among which is this: “A star will rise.” Or perhaps the Magi received this from their fathers’ tradition and succession, and so came to Bethlehem.

Selecta on Deuteronomy

Note 1

“Moses spoke to all the sons of Israel according to everything the Lord commanded him.” God was revealing the power, and the prophet used his own tongue to set forth what had been made known. So the prophetic voice is called a “movement,” since it presents what God has said.

Note 2

"And I said to you at that time." Moses does not say "I told you" without reason. Since Joshua son of Nun was going to succeed him after he departed, Moses says the matter is not out of place but fitting. For he says he first encouraged them, and, as you agreed, appointed judges. So you should also obey Joshua son of Nun, who succeeds me by prophetic grace and as a guide.

Note 3

“I will not be able to carry you alone.” And of those who go ahead.

Note 4

“I gave to Reuben and to Gad.” The lesser ones reach the promise sooner, while the more upright receive it later. The former received their inheritance first, under Moses; the latter later, under Joshua. But this is said of all the righteous, not of ordinary people. For as the Apostle says: “All these, though they were commended through faith, did not receive the promise, since God had foreseen something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect apart from us.”

Note 5

"The sound of words which you heard," and so on. He does not mean that the voice was visible, or that God has a voice by nature, for that would belong to a composite nature. The trumpets and the voices, in the way God himself knows, were produced from the continuous working of visible elements, I mean the fire and the darkness. So a voice is heard and not seen. Yet in the case of God's wonders the voice is in fact seen.

Note 6

“And he swore that I should not cross this Jordan.” Moses did not give glory to God before the people, and he was prevented from crossing over with them. This was so that they would not honor him in death, with the kind of worship given to gods, when they had honored him while he lived. For this reason, when he died, God made his tomb unseen.

Note 7

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today." God does not permit those who worship him to be joined to demons. He commands those who have once come to know him to keep clear of any attachment to them. He provokes the peoples to jealousy over their falling away, and he announces beforehand the punishments that are coming on them because of the wickedness of their practices.

Note 8

“Out of the house of slavery.” For in truth bodily and material things are a house of slavery, just as, by contrast, their opposite is a house of freedom.

Note 9

“For you are the fewest of all the nations.” This was well said to those who belong to the portion of God: “You are the fewest of all the nations.” It is closely related to the saying, “Few are those who are saved,” and to the saying, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate.”

Note 10

"That man will not live on bread alone, but on every word," and so on. Again, the manna was the Word, even though Exodus calls it bread. For it says, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is the word which the Lord has commanded." This is also why the manna "was fine, like white coriander seed, like frost on the ground." The Word, of whom that manna was a symbol, is fine in his own nature. He passes through all spirits that are intelligent, pure and most subtle. Wisdom too is "an intelligent spirit, holy, only-begotten, manifold, subtle," and so on. It was also like coriander seed in being white. They say that the whole nature of coriander, all the way through, has the character of seed. Even when the coriander seed is chopped up, its power does not vanish, as though it could no longer be sown. The Word is like this all the way through. Every part of him is by nature fit to be cultivated in good and fair ground, that is, in the soul. The manna is white, for the Word is light and bright. In that respect he is white to the one who understands him and is nourished by him. It is also like frost. For he is compacted, nowhere soggy or flowing away, but firm. He is indeed the Word of heaven, and he reports to us the things of heaven.

Note 11

"For the Lord your God will bring you into a good and spacious land." Christ did not promise to give us these things, but the kingdom of the heavens, and a good and everlasting land. Christ is the torrent of that land, watering it with the streams of wisdom. The torrents flow through the plains, through humble and fruitful people, and through the high mountains, which stretch up to the heavens by the height of their contemplation. There is the grain, which steadies the heart of a man, and the barley, which feeds those of lesser strength. There is the true vine, Christ. There is the oil that makes the heads of the holy shine. Likewise there are pomegranates, which carry sweetness within and put on the severity of a disciplined life outside. There is the fig tree, not the fruitless one that is full of leaves, but the one rich in the sweetness of the Spirit. There is the desirable sweetness of the Savior's throat, and the lips of the bride in the Song, dripping honeycomb. There are the holy stones, which have been rolled over the earth and yield nothing under trials, taking on the nature of iron. There are the mines of bronze, from which they made the spiritual armor. And the sum of all these things is to bless God without ceasing.

Note 12

By the same author. He says that in the promised land one will not have to toil and suffer over clay and brickmaking, but will have stones, and very hard ones, not easily broken down, enough for building and lasting a long time. He says this because he wants their thinking to turn away from Egypt. By calling the land “good” he showed that it is fruitful; by calling it “large” he showed its size and breadth. “Where there are torrents of water” (this is not so in Egypt) “and springs of the deeps”; this is a special mark of the land of promise. He added also “through the mountains.” Egypt has none of this. It is not adorned with vines either, and has no abundance of oil. But the land of promise has everything in rich supply.

Note 13

"Take heed to yourself, lest you forget the Lord your God." After promising good things, he rouses them to sober watchfulness: they must remember their benefactor, and not grow insolent from being full, nor look down on the one who gave them these gifts, and who brought them out of slavery in Egypt into freedom.

Note 14

"You shall not do so to the Lord your God." He blames people for sacrificing their own children to the gods of the nations, as cruel and inhuman, and as abominable. Those who urge us to sacrifice to the gods of the nations we must not only turn away from, but also refuse to lend our ear to their words.

Note 15

"You shall not add to it, nor take away from it." When people sin, speaking generally, they sin in two ways: either by going beyond the commandments or by emptying them out. When we do not conduct our lives with knowledge, and do not know the measures of righteousness, we stumble. And sometimes we go beyond the rule, under the illusion of doing something better, and fall away from what was set before us.

Note 16

By the same author. So those who do not do everything commanded, and those who do something more, are lawbreakers.

Note 17

“Every animal that divides the hoof and brings up the cud.” The dividing of the hoof shows the path by which we go toward every one of the good pursuits. The chewing of the cud is turning the words of the God-inspired Scripture up and down, and, as it were, chewing them over and breaking down the hidden insights by close investigation.

Note 18

“All that have fins and scales among them, you shall eat.” Of the winged creatures, I think, he wants those that have spurs above the feet, lower than the knees, to be clean; those that do not, unclean. “You shall keep a feast of tabernacles for yourself seven days.”

Note 19

We find in the Scriptures both the name “feast” and the name “festal assembly,” as in the prophet who says, “What will you do on the day of the festal assembly and on the day of the feast of the Lord?” We must ask what the difference is between a feast and a festal assembly. Every joyful day, so to speak, on which certain special things are commanded to be done as on a holy day, differently from the other days, is called a feast. But not every one is a festal assembly. That name belongs to the time when the Hebrews gather from every quarter to one place. So by this reckoning a festal assembly is a feast, but a feast is not necessarily a festal assembly. For example, sabbaths and new moons are feasts. But the days of Unleavened Bread, the days of Weeks, and Tabernacles are not only feasts but also festal assemblies, since then every male is commanded to appear before the Lord your God in the place he will choose.

Note 20

"You shall not move your neighbor's boundaries." In many places "neighbor" is used of every human being.

Note 21

By the same author. For one must neither take more than one's share from those nearby, nor stir up trouble over the boundaries of the fathers, as if they were not well set. This would be the cause of all confusion: the neighbors would feel wronged, and those who set the boundaries would be despised. Some say that "neighbor" means every person.

Note 22

“But if an unjust witness rises up against a person.” This was the law for the weak Israelites. But the Lord, who gave this law, says to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye,’ ” and so on, “but I say to you, do not resist the evil one.”

Note 23

By the same author. These things apply to what is perceptible and to the affairs of this world. But as for the sins we have committed, God needs no one. For he himself is overseer of all, and judge.

Note 24

“Who is the man who is afraid?” The person who is bent on earthly things, who builds a house and plants vineyards, and is overcome by fleshly pleasures, will certainly be fearful and without strength.

Note 25

"If anyone has a disobedient son." He does not intend that such children be put to death simply for embittering their parents. It is only when both parents agree against the child. For if the father is angry and rushes to kill the son, the mother holds him back. And if she herself is provoked, the father will not allow it. So it will rarely happen that parents agree against their own child. God commands that when both agree against the child, then he is to be stoned. The ones who stone him are not those who begot him, but the rest.

Note 26

"You shall not sow your vineyard with a different kind of seed." This is so that the ground does not become too weak, and so fail to yield a full return either of the seed or of the fruit of the vine, but each crop is grown by itself.

Note 27

“You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.” Do not yoke together the proud and hard-working part of the soul with the part that loves pleasure and is subject to passions.

Note 28

By the same author. Isaiah writes again: “Blessed are those who sow beside every water.” What water is it, beside which one must sow the good seed? It would be the baptism of salvation, the washing of rebirth. Sow upon the mystery of the washing, and you become blessed. There the ox and the donkey tread: the ox is the clean one, the Israelite, and the donkey is the unclean one by birth, the one from the nations. Both animals are a symbol of the word proclaimed to the nations. So, he says, the ox and the donkey tread this water, where we wish to sow.

Note 29

“But if there is a girl, a virgin, betrothed to a man.” He calls a woman who is already betrothed by this name. The same was said of Joseph and the Mother of God.

Note 30

“And even to eternity.” These people also are born of fornication, from the daughters of Lot. They are not only barred from the assembly of Israel until the tenth generation, but even forever. In this way he wants the hostility toward them to be everlasting. According to the meaning and the true cause given in the divine Scripture, it was because they hired Balaam to curse the Hebrews. They also put forward their own women and daughters, all who were fair to look at and beautiful in appearance, from their race, so as to give them to the Israelites for fornication. In this way they brought on the Hebrews a most grievous fornication, which was to fall away from God and be initiated into Baal-peor. And that is what happened.

Note 31

"You shall not take a millstone or an upper millstone as a pledge." He says that a single stone cannot crush the grain, for a mill is made as a pair, male and female. Now the Jews have only one covenant. In the same way every heresy that seems to hold to this new covenant alone does not grind in this mill, so as to taste the heavenly bread. For, he says, unless the grain is crushed and ground, they remain without food. Starting from this, I myself explain the law before us: "You shall not take a millstone as a pledge." That is, you shall not profane the old covenant, and you shall not push it out of your house. "Nor an upper millstone." That is, the new one. "For this man takes a life as a pledge." That is, the soul is fed by these, enjoying food for the mind.

Note 32

"They shall flog him by number, forty." We have always observed that the number forty is a number of affliction. So the great Moses fasted forty days, and Elijah after him. Our Savior also, when he was tempted by the devil, did not eat for forty days and forty nights. And the great flood came upon the earth when God sent rain for forty days and forty nights. "You shall not put iron to them." We must ask why he does not allow iron to touch the stones that were used to build the altar. Yet afterward, for the building of the temple, he commands that uncut stones be gathered and built up. If it is improper for iron to touch a stone fitted for building, how then were the pillars made? How were the planks and their capitals worked? Or how were the things made of bronze, gold or silver produced without iron? How could that be? From this it is clear that he does not forbid iron to touch stones in an absolute sense. What then is the reason? We offer an answer without insisting on it. Iron is hard. So it is forbidden to put something hard against something hard and to strike them together, for great evils are usually born from the meeting and clashing of hard things. Or else the law drives murder as far as possible from the human heart, and very rightly. For if iron must not be put to the stone that is being built into the altar or the temple, how much more must we forbid seizing iron and murdering one's neighbor?

Note 33

"These shall stand to bless the people." We should observe that those appointed to bless were born of the free wives, relatives of Jacob. Those set apart to curse from Mount Gebal were from the maidservants, except Reuben and Zebulun. Reuben is placed with those who curse, since he was cursed by his father. As for Levi, though he too was cursed, he was ransomed by the priestly dignity, for blessing the people is above all the priest's task. Simeon, too, since he lived in the midst of the tribe of Judah and had become as it were a part of it, is therefore counted wherever Judah is.

Note 34

“And this is the blessing with which Moses blessed.” The prophecies from Jacob were neither all blessings nor all curses, but those from Moses are all blessings.

Note 35

“And he hastened down from Mount Paran.” That is, he no longer gave oracles to Israel but to those from the nations, and he established the law. For this is the meaning of “he hastened down from Mount Paran,” or “he ceased,” as another text has it: he will eagerly leave the shadow behind and reveal the truth to us.

Note 36

"With tens of thousands of Kades." Here "Kades" does not mean the place but the holy ones, for in the Hebrew language Kades means "the holy."

Note 37

“And he spared his people.” That is, by his coming he saved those who were once not a people but are now God’s people, those who had not received mercy but have now received mercy. The apostle Peter says, “In this the love of God was revealed among us.” And holy John says in his catholic epistle that “God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” And the blessed Paul says, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.” So he spared the people.

Note 38

“And all the sanctified ones are under your hands.” For he rules over all, as king of heaven and earth. They stand before him as before a king, serve him as God, and worship him as Maker, and they are under him, for “he himself has put all things under his feet.”

Note 39

“The rulers of the peoples gathered together.” These are the divinely inspired disciples, as David also says in their person: “He subjected peoples to us, and nations under our feet.” And again: “The rulers of the peoples were gathered together with the God of Abraham.” So this shows the calling of the nations, since God was going to rule over Israel and the nations together. The Son is called “beloved,” for “This,” he says, “is my beloved Son.” And for this reason the Father rules over us and reigns.

Notes on Deuteronomy

Note 1

Verse 31. “As a man [carries or feeds a child].” Aquila translated it: “As a nurse lifts up her son, he carried him.” Origen, in his homilies on Jeremiah, says: “He went about with you and came down with you, making our weakness his own. He was like a teacher who lisps along with little children, like a father tenderly nursing his own sons and daughters. He took on their ways and led them little by little to more perfect and higher things.”

Note 3

Verse 18. “And I commanded you.” He says this to the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Verses 27 and 28. He gives Moses more than Aaron: to see the land with his own eyes. But he does not give him entry. He lays this penalty on him for his lack of faith. By it he removes both men from life outside the promised land, though they were able to reach it, since the end is given through faith. This is also a symbol for the law, which could not bring anyone to perfection or restore the promise, because “the righteous shall live by faith.” Yet this is also an honor: to know God’s judgment and to know one’s own death beforehand. By the same author. He sets Jesus forward. Jesus was already made holy by following Moses and by [constant attendance] on him. But he was about to receive through Moses the ruling spirit, so that he might also [establish people as his own in Moses’ place]. In the same way Elisha was present in the spirit of Elijah to do Elijah’s work, for those who work in the same spirit must accomplish the same things. As he says in Numbers: “Take to yourself Jesus, son of Nave, a man who has the Spirit of God in himself, and you shall lay your hands on him.” So too the apostles had the life-giving Spirit from the Lord’s breathing on them, and they receive the ruling spirit sent down from heaven. This is not one spirit inside another, one upon the other, but an activity within the same Spirit, just as Paul teaches.

Note 4

Verse 12. “And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words.” By the same author, on the same verse. Another says: It is clear that a person sees and hears thoughts with the eyes of the mind. “The sound of words”: here he has stated what belongs to nature, that the ear receives the voice. As far as the strict letter goes, only the Decalogue was written on the tablets, and the rest Moses taught by God’s command.

Note 14

Verse 19. “All the creeping things of the birds shall be unclean.” Of the birds, I think, he wants those that have spurs below the knees, above the feet, to be clean, and those that do not to be unclean. So the law rules out the eagle, the griffon, the sea eagle, and also the vulture. Such birds fly high. They love to exult in the highest places and hate what is below. “The young of the vulture,” it says, “fly on high.” Such, in a way, is the person who has raised his brow too high and carries a mind lifted up within himself. He is accustomed to look down on a gentle and moderate way of thinking, and he is least willing to be carried along with the lowly. Along with these the law also condemns the kite and its like. By these it clearly indicates the kind of people who know how to seize and are skilled in doing harm. The kite is the original type of these, [but not of the other kind, the very black and deep one]. Those who run toward wickedness are somehow dark, not plain to everyone, and [unprofitable] to the many, though they bring misery on themselves. Those who are sick with accursed boastfulness always have a desire to get more than others. [Whatever comes by chance cannot satisfy them, nor can their many-sided schemes of wrongdoing and inventions.] So they snatch even this insatiably. For this reason he joins to it immediately: “And the sparrow, and the gull.” These are insatiable, I think, always gathering whatever falls in their way. Then he says: “the hawk and its like, and the night raven, and the [diving bird], and the ibis, and the [προσφορίων], and the pelican, and the swan.” He would also register against themselves these: the cruel, who plot savagely against others and fasten without restraint on whatever they happen to be able to get.

Note 20

...one who is broken, and who has given his mind over to the desires of the flesh, could be pictured by betrothal to a woman. For when they come near the voice of the army's herald, they withdraw from the holy and most warlike multitude. The herald speaks out ahead of time what such trapped men would likely be thinking and saying. Is it not true to suppose this of them? Loving [ease], they are accustomed in persecutions to cherish freedom from toil, and [to hold back from] following the zeal that comes from love for God. They reason that if they should suffer anything while contending, they will lose their houses, their possessions, and the things they honor and desire.

Verse 8. "Who is the man who is afraid and fainthearted?" By the same author. The man who is devoted to earthly things, who builds houses and plants vineyards, and who is overcome by the pleasures of loving the flesh, will surely be cowardly and without strength.

Verse 10. "But if you approach a city to make war on it." This is like the saying, "And into whatever city you enter, inquire who in it is worthy." The words "with peace" are like the apostle's saying: "The servant of the Lord must not quarrel."

Verse 13. "And you shall strike every male of it with the slaughter of the sword." By the same author. The sword of the Spirit would be the word of God. It is the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God, with which the inspired disciples killed every male of the opposing power, as with Simon and Elymas the magicians, and they overthrew the strong teachings of such men. But they spared the women, who are souls able to say: "Because of fear of you, Lord, we conceived in the womb until [we came] upon the earth." They spared the little children in the same way, to whom Paul also writes: "Little children, do not be children in your minds, but be children in malice." The text says also: "Spare the cattle." For "the righteous man pities the lives of his [cattle]." By cattle he hints at those who are less reasoning. Cornelius also was cattle, according to the vision of the four-footed creatures that appeared to Peter.

Note 22

Verse 6. “You shall not take the mother with the children.” The reason is that the young cannot feed themselves if the mother is taken.

Note 23

Verse 3. “No Ammonite shall enter.” Why does the law forbid mixing with the Moabites and Ammonites, not for a set time but forever? First, because of their unlawful root, for they were born of an unlawful union. Second, because of the ungodliness they led the Israelites to share in, when they made their women attractive and through them caught the Israelites in the worship of idols. But the law commands that the Edomite and the Egyptian be received after the third generation: the one as a brother, the other as a benefactor who helped at the right time. For when famine struck, their fathers went into Egypt and were fed. So the law teaches us not to forget even an old kindness.

Verse 14. What does it mean, “Because the Lord your God walks about in your camp”? He knows that the air, when filled with foul smells, often breeds plague. So he commanded them, while encamped, to bury the waste they passed. And so that they would not disobey and suffer harm, he added, out of necessity: “Because the Lord your God walks about in your camp.” He also teaches the reason: “to [rescue] you, and to hand your enemy over before your face.” Through this he teaches them to do nothing unlawful. For he adds: “And your camp shall be holy, and nothing shameful shall be found in you.”

Verse 12. “And let there be a place for you,” he says, “outside the camp, and you shall go out there.”

Verse 13. “And you shall have a peg on your belt. And when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it, and turning back you shall cover your shame.”

Verse 14. “Because the Lord your God walks about in the camp to rescue you and to hand your enemy over into your hands. And your camp shall be holy, and no shameful thing will be seen in you.” Those who want to act like men against their spiritual enemies ought to refuse every kind of uncleanness. But we all stumble in many ways. Human nature is sick, and prone to slip into error. As the Psalmist says, no one understands his transgressions. [The sense of the next words is uncertain:] “Suppose one of the impurities born in us were almost to break out among you, and we, being sick, were caught in something outside the law and outside a life fitting for the holy.” For the law of sin dwells in the members of the flesh. First, then, let the faults that come from our weakness not be committed openly and in plain view, nor before the eyes of many. Let them be done, as it were, outside, unnoticed, as

far from the camp as possible. Then let them be covered over by corrections. As it is written, "The wise will cover their own shame." When we stop our offenses, and by leanings toward better things in a way set the mind in order to choose what is profitable, we remove our stumblings from the midst. We overcome the ugly sin with the sweet fragrance of what follows, and we shall enter again into the camp of the saints, that is, into the church of the firstborn. This is fulfilled in Christ, if we take up his cross with a keen and well-girded mind. For the statement that we are to have a peg on our belt, that is, the wood, hints at this indirectly. So we make the bodily things a pattern of the spiritual. For we are not [to remain] in impurities, [and to ...] before the eyes of God who made us, when we go to the latrines [the Greek of this sentence is corrupt]. We must therefore bury impurities, "because the Lord walks about in the camp." For Christ dwells in us and walks about in us.

Note 24

Verse 6. “You shall not take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for in that way he is pledging a soul.” Another comment on the same verse: a mill or an upper millstone is not a soul. But it helps in making bread, by which people above all live. Note this, because of the blood. For it was said about the blood, “The blood of the body is its soul.” So these words must be understood in a loose sense. For neither the blood nor the mill is the soul. They are things that contribute to living.

Note 27

Verse 15. “And he shall set it in a hidden place.” It was likely that some, out of fear of punishment, would take pains to go unnoticed and practice ungodliness in a corner and in secret. So, to bring greater fear and threat on those who do this, he puts under curses those who commit sin without a witness. Such are those who put on a false show of reverence but bury their passions inside, and in the movement of the mind rave wildly after every kind of absurdity. These are the ones who set up their idols in a hidden place.

Verse 17. “Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor’s boundaries.” The one who shakes a person found within the true knowledge of God and a godly way of life, and unsettles him from it, also moves his neighbor’s boundaries. And what follows makes this clear.

Verse 18. “Cursed is the one who leads a blind man astray on the road.” From the same author. Such also are those who draw people from idol worship, and those from the circumcision, into abominable heresies. These people are blind and have not yet had the light of truth and the knowledge of God. The heretics deceive and mislead them by showing them another road in place of the apostolic one.

Verse 19. “Cursed is whoever turns aside the judgment of a stranger, an orphan and a widow.” He puts under the same curse those who likewise turn aside the judgment of a stranger, an orphan and a widow, saying the same thing again in another way. For if the plain wording has its benefit, the spiritual insight has something higher still. The “strangers” are those who come from the nations into the holy Church of God. The “orphans,” properly speaking, are those who have renounced their own father, Satan, but have not yet put on Jesus. They are still counted among the catechumens. In the same way these are also “widows.” They have turned away from the one who sowed in them the seeds of destruction, but they are not yet joined to Christ as a pure virgin, in the words of the divine Apostle. So those who turn aside the judgment of these people, and do not hand over to them the mystery of godliness unadulterated, are under a curse. And anyone who goes through the other points diligently will be able to see them spiritually, while the plain interpretation is kept safe.

Verse 26. “Cursed is every man who does not abide in all the words of the law.” The words “in all,” found in the Septuagint, are confirmed by the Samaritan copy, in which we found

the word “chol,” which means “to all” or “all things.” The Apostle agrees with this when he says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.” So those of the circumcision are shown to be under a curse, because they do not do all things.

Note 33

Verse 6. “Let Reuben live, and not die.” Jacob, when he was dying, cursed Reuben, saying, “Do not boil over like water.” Moses, in blessing, says, “Let Reuben live, and not die.” Both are right. The father cursed him because he had gone in to his concubine, and by this he was instructing and warning what followed. And Moses blesses him justly afterward, because Reuben alone spared Joseph when his brothers wanted to kill him. It would have been out of place for a curse to go forward against one who had sinned, and yet for no blessing to be given to one who had done right.

Selecta on Joshua

Note 1

"You, and all this people." He promised to give what he had foretold to those who keep the law. It was not given to Joshua son of Nun for himself. For the Israelites did not keep it, and so did not receive it, as what follows shows.

Note 2

“Every place on which you set foot.” The men of Ai stood against them because of the lawlessness of Achar. And in another way: God handed the nations over into their hands, but they did not destroy them utterly, and these nations became a stake for them.

Note 3

“And they entered the house of a woman, a prostitute, whose name was Rahab.” The spies entrust their own safety to a prostitute, and quite reasonably. For it is shown from what the prostitute says that she alone was faithful and feared God. For this reason her family too is saved through her.

Note 4

By the same author. Rahab is interpreted “breadth.” She is a symbol of the Church from the nations, who says, “The place is too narrow for me; make room for me, that I may live.”

Note 5

By the same author. She is saved not by her hospitality alone, but first of all by her faith and her disposition toward God.

Note 6

"And she hid them in the flax stalks." She hid them in the stalks of flax which she had on the roof, preparing them to make linen, as though the men were worthy of a high priest's garment. For flax stalks produce the linen from which the priestly garment is made.

Note 7

“And she let them down through the window.” It should be known that her house was in the wall. The new things are sisters of the old: for it is like what happened with Paul, when they let him down in a basket through the wall.

Note 8

By the same author. The Apostle was saved a second time from enemies in the same way, as he says in his second Letter to the Corinthians: “And through a window I was let down in a basket through the wall, and escaped.” Again in the Acts: “They were also watching the gates day and night, so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.”

Note 9

"And they stayed there three days." It was not that the journey took three days, for the Jordan is very near Jericho, but because of the spies' careful investigation. For it says, "Those who pursued them searched all the roads and did not find them."

Note 10

“Forty thousand men, lightly armed.” It should be noted that the number four, whether of units, or hundreds, or any larger number, is associated with affliction.

Note 11

"Make yourself knives of stone from a sharp-cut rock." We must ask why those born in the wilderness were not circumcised. We must also ask why a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath in Moses' time was stoned by God's command. A very great multitude stayed uncircumcised in the wilderness and was not even blamed for it. Yet God had declared that the soul not circumcised on the eighth day should be destroyed, [and no longer had he laid down this same penalty for those who break the Sabbath]. Already from this it is clear that circumcision and the Sabbath are not good in themselves. They were useful for a time. We should also know that God wanted them to be recognized by circumcision, as a sign. [Since they would not bear to be made visible by faith], he marked them as a sheep without reason is marked with a brand. Even if it wanders off, its owner finds it easily. In the same way he wanted the Jews, when they mixed with the nations, to be recognized by circumcision. The proof is this: they were circumcised in Egypt. But in the wilderness they were alone, separated from the Egyptians and from the other nations around Palestine, and they stayed uncircumcised. When they crossed the Jordan and were about to be in the midst of the nations, they were commanded again to be circumcised. That is why Scripture says "a second time" that they were circumcised, not at eight days old but already grown men, and some of them leaning toward old age. The stone knife shows us the Lord, who gave us the circumcision of the understanding, the circumcision of mind and heart. This is why the Apostle also spoke to us of the circumcision of Christ, not consisting in the stripping off of our flesh.

Note 12

"I am the commander-in-chief of the power of the Lord; I have come now." We should remember what happened when they made the calf. God said to Moses, "Lead this people up, for I will not go up with them, because the people are stiff-necked. And see, I will send my angel before your face. So take heed to yourself, and do not disobey." Moses said to him, "If you do not go up with us, do not lead me up from here." By saying this he persuaded him, and God was with the people until Moses' death. After Moses died, he appears and speaks with Jesus son of Nave. After this oversight of the people [was committed] to Moses' disciple, he then hands [the people] over to the commander-in-chief Michael. This Michael was ruler of the people, as another angel is shown saying in Daniel.

Note 13

"Going and sounding trumpets." These trumpets are a symbol of what happens on the last day. For he says, "The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." The priests circling the city for six days would be a sign of this: through the six days of the present age, all the saints sound the trumpet and proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who are willing to repent.

Note 14

“And Jesus said to the sons of Israel, ‘Shout.’” The shout is probably the giving of glory in words, a voice of praise to God. It fights against the error of the people of Jericho, and it wins a victory that no one expected, one full of wonder.

Note 15

"Thus did Ozan." This shows that it was not Jesus son of Nave who wrote these things, but someone else, many generations later. Rightly understood, this is true, and it does not contradict what we said earlier. Jesus wrote what happened in his own time, or what was revealed to him, just as Moses wrote what belonged to his own times. After this, Solomon the wise built the temple. Then the people sank into great impiety, and God left the temple desolate, so that Deuteronomy was scarcely found, thrown aside wherever it happened to land. For this reason the people went into the Babylonian captivity. Ezra, who was most skilled in the law and spoke the whole Old Testament from memory, wrote down the law and some other things that had happened or been revealed. These things were foretold long ago, and afterward they came to pass. What we have just mentioned is surely of this kind.

Note 16

“I am still strong today, as when Moses sent me.” So the holy man is strong in both kinds of words. He is strong in the old mysteries and in the new. This is what it means to be strong under Moses and under Jesus.

Notes on Joshua

Note 3

Verse 14. “And all the people set out from their tents.” That is, [like the filling of a threshing floor]. For [the water] was not only made firm, as in the Red Sea, but was heaped up like a pile of wheat. This is evidently a type of the apostles.

Note 6

Verses 15–16. “Shout, for the Lord has given you the city.” Why did he command that Jericho be put under the ban? It was the first city they captured after crossing the river. So just as he commanded them to offer the firstfruits of the crops, he ordered them to offer the choicest of the spoils as first offerings. Besides this, through these laws he trains them to keep the laws that are necessary. He also showed them his own power by arranging for them to take the first city without weapons or siege engines, and he brought it down by the sound of the trumpets alone. So when they are defeated in battle, they would know that they themselves gave the occasion for the defeat, by despising the divine laws.

Note 8

Verse 2. “And you shall plunder the livestock for yourself.” This is because it was not necessary, as at Jericho, for everything to be devoted to destruction.

Verse 26. “And Joshua stretched out the spear, and his hand.” Joshua kept his hand stretched out so that the men in the ambush, when they saw it, would take the city first.

Notes on Judges

Note 15

Verse 19. “And God split open the wound in the jaw, and water came out of it.” That is: by the blow of the jawbone he split the ground, and waters came out.

Note 20

Verse 21. “And the sons of Benjamin came out.” Why were they defeated, even though they went out against them justly? Evidently because of earlier causes. The psalm also says: “When I take the appointed time, I will judge uprightly.” Then he says that after they were defeated once and a second time, the anger passed over to the wrongdoers, and the Israelites won a just judgment. It is worth marveling at the multitude of the Israelites. They attacked the Benjaminites justly and were defeated, yet they thought nothing evil against God. Rather, they did not stop weeping beforehand until they had exacted justice on the wrongdoers. They did not blame God, but said, “But this is enough.” They begged to learn the way [to proceed]. The saying “Benjamin is a ravening wolf; in the morning he will eat, and in the [evening] he will distribute food” is fulfilled here. For though he had won earlier, he became the final meal of the people.

Fragments on 1 Samuel

Note 1

1 Sam. 3:11–21. The divine Scripture was about to foretell the destruction of the sons of Eli, and that the ark of God would be taken by the Philistines. So it first soothes the hearing, lest anyone think God is harsh. For this reason, as I said, it records that the wickedness and sin of Eli's sons were not lessened by the threat and by the prediction [made against them], but rather increased.

Note 2

1 Sam. 4:13. Eli was devout in himself. His great anxiety was not first of all for the safety of his children but for the ark, that it might never fall into the hands of the Philistines. And that is exactly what happened.

Note 3

1 Sam. 5:3. This was so that the Philistines would know that God had not been defeated by the Israelites, and that they had not conquered him by their own power. It was the sins and ungodliness of the Jews that brought about the defeat. And Dagon fell before the ark, not in order to worship, for he was not worthy, but in order to be shattered. And so it happened.

Note 4

1 Sam. 15:9–11. In human beings, “hand,” “foot,” “eye,” “ear” and whatever else is so named are signs of the parts of our body. In God, “hand” means the power to create, “eye” the power to oversee, “ear” the power to hear, and “foot” his presence when he is doing something. In the same way, God’s “anger” is the name for discipline against those who offend, and is not a passion in God. And “repentance” is the shift of God’s arrangement from one matter to another. What we do when we repent is flee the things we repented of and pursue others that are better. This is what is called God’s repentance. Why is it put this way? Because the prophets had to speak about God in a rather bodily manner to people of very dull mind, so that it could be received. For those who thought the images they carved and cast were gods, and who were indeed irrational, how could they have taken in what is said about God through spiritual thoughts and words? And again: if God foresees all things, he does not become angry because of what he knows. So anger or repentance is not a passion of God. The work of anger is punishment, and likewise the work of repentance is a departure from the former matter and a shift to another arrangement. The same is said about the sword: [a sword is “sharpened”], and Solomon speaks of a “hand” of iron: “to rescue you from the hand of iron,” and, as David says, of a sword: “into the hands of the sword.”

In the same way God’s anger is said to be “angry,” and sin is said, in David, to have a “face.” God’s wrath too is said to have a “face,” as in the thirty-seventh Psalm, and the rivers are said to clap with their hands. But rivers have no hands, and sins have no face. So, because things are said about God in bodily terms (as the ancients could take them in), let us not suppose that God has a body or that he is filled with passions. {It is the easy turning of the human mind that explains this. For it is we ourselves who bring about, in our own case, the changes in God’s dealings that rightly come upon us, showing by our deeds that we are unworthy of the honor God gave us. So God condemned Saul. He wished to hand the rule to David and to keep the kingdom for his offspring, because of the one who would be born of him according to the flesh, the King of all creation. He used human words, speaking to human beings, and said, “I have repented that I anointed Saul king.” That means: “I wish to give the rule of the kingdom to another, and to take from this man his power.” The words “I have repented,” said on account of Saul, mean this: he made himself so unworthy of the kingdom that, if I had a nature that repents, I would have changed my mind about

him. Why then was he anointed? Because at that time he was worthy. But he turned, and became unworthy again.

Note 5

From this is shown what I said before: God's "repentance" means a change in God's plan of dealing, from one course of action to another. {The passage shows that even when a prophet, a righteous man, pleads on behalf of others, he is heard only if the one he pleads for shows his repentance by action. For the prayer of the righteous man is effective in this way, as it is worked out through the one who sinned. So for the matter to be brought to its end, both must come together: the prayer of the righteous man and the work of the one who repents.

Note 6

Esau was red, like a skin [text corrupt], having deadness from it and raging murderously against Jacob. But David was red with beautiful eyes, so that the [text corrupt: the keen-sightedness] of David might [be shown].

Note 7

How could he be a man of valor, how could he be shrewd in speech, how could he be a warrior, when he was still tending sheep? So the speaker did not speak from himself. He foretold what was to come as though it were already present, and he testified of David what he was going to be. But as for “the Lord is with him” and “good in appearance,” these were true from childhood and remained: the one by nature, the other by grace.

Note 8

Saul was powerful and had a crowd of helpers to do evil against David, while only two were being hunted, Samuel and David. So God's grace made Saul prophesy, not only what concerned himself but also what was in David's favor. It also cast him down naked, signifying in advance that he would be stripped of the kingdom.

Note 9

Here “common” does not mean the unclean but those that are not holy, in contrast with the holy loaves set out on the table. For the table always held six loaves, changed regularly, on behalf of the twelve tribes of Israel. They called these the loaves “of the presence.” So each loaf was offered for two tribes, and the six together for the twelve tribes. What good came of this? The tribes of Israel were joined together in harmony. What better thing was foreshadowed? The blessed apostles were sent out by the Savior two by two to preach first among the tribes of Israel, so that six pairs made up the number of the twelve disciples. {”Lay bread” is so called not because those who are not holy are profane, but because they are being compared [with the holy ones].

Note 10

1 Samuel 21:5–6. “Today it will be made holy because of the vessels.” He said this rather obscurely, but it means the following. “My young men have been made holy and have kept away from a woman both yesterday and the day before.” This is what his saying that the young men were purified amounts to. If they had not been, they would certainly have been made holy by eating the bread of the presentation. The priest believed what was said and gave David some of the loaves, which no one but the priests alone was allowed to eat. This belongs to prophecy that speaks through deeds. The royal tribe, that is Judah, was one tribe and the priestly tribe another. [The text here is unclear: “I mean the one with which they were going to be joined.”] The priestly dignity and the royal were to be joined and made one at the coming of our Savior from David, [who is both priest] and king together, according to the order of Melchizedek.

Note 11

1 Samuel 21:7. “The Neessar.” This shows either that Doeg the Edomite stayed there because of sin, being [attended to] and confessing before the Lord, or that, being demon-possessed like Saul, he was not [really] pasturing the mules.

Note 12

1 Samuel 21:7. Saul bears the type of the evil spirit. Israel had begun by saying then, “We have no king.” For the people of old despised the Lord who was their king, [and so] Saul was given to them as ruler. [The Greek here is repetitive and probably corrupt.]

Note 13

1 Samuel 25:22. No one urinates standing and against a wall unless he is at leisure. So this phrase describes the carefree man who expects to suffer nothing, if he belongs to Nabal.

Note 14

1 Samuel 28:11–12. The woman with the ventriloquist spirit did not bring Samuel up, for that is impossible. Nor did the one who came up speak the truth. Who this was, and by what power he came up, you should investigate.

Note 15

2 Samuel 5:6–8. David was besieging Jebus. Jebus was the name of what is now Jerusalem, when it was under foreigners. The Jebusites knew that David was a lover of the poor. So they set blind and lame men on the wall above to insult him. But when David took Jerusalem, he was so far from treating these disabled people badly that he laid down a law for his soldiers, with death as the penalty, if anyone tried to kill a blind or lame man. For he says, “Everyone who strikes a lame or blind Jebusite, let him touch him with the dagger,” that is, let him be put to death. For even though they hated David’s soul, they received mercy. Therefore he is thought worthy of honor from all [the text is unclear here], while those who insulted David, and whom he spared, say: “The lame and the blind shall not enter the house of the Lord.”

Note 16

2 Samuel 5:14. Note that Nathan, David's son, was born to him after he captured Jerusalem and settled there. This is the Nathan whose line the blessed Luke traces, while the blessed Matthew traces the line of his brother Solomon. So from this, I mean from the sons of David mentioned here, one evangelist gives one genealogy and the other gives another.

Note 17

2 Samuel 16:10–12. So from this too it is shown that what God does not do, but permits to happen, is said to have been done by him. It is agreed, then, that Absalom's uprising, Shimei's abuse, and his throwing stones at David were not God's work. David's words show more plainly what I mean: "Let him curse, because the Lord has told him to, so that he may see my humiliation. And the Lord will repay me good in place of his cursing on this day." For it is clear that what was happening did not please God. And what did not please him, he would not have commanded to be done.

Note 18

If Saul, in his zeal for Israel and Judah, tried to destroy the Gibeonites, with whom Joshua son of Nun and all the people had made a covenant, and for that reason seven of Saul's descendants, born of his daughters, were put to death, why were the tribes not held to blame? Why did people who had done no wrong pay the penalty? That seems unjust. Unless someone says that Saul, being king, was unable to stand against his fellow citizens and the tribe of Judah, and so could not keep the covenant the fathers had made with the Gibeonites. I would add to this that it was God's own ordering that the whole family of Saul should be wiped out, everyone who at any time might be suspected of claiming the royal dignity and so of rising up against David and his sons. The words "the Gibeonites exposed them to the sun before the Lord on the mountain" mean that they killed them and did not bury them, but left them lying under the sun. "And they were loosened," it says, "and Dan son of Joash, one of the descendants of the giants, took them." He surely means that the giant took up the bodies that had been laid out under the sun, already broken down by the heat of the sun. {The story about the Gibeonites remains unknown. [Here] we might say that when Saul was encamped at Gabee to make war, he routed the foreigners and destroyed the Gibeonites along with them. The account is in the thirty-second, thirty-third and thirty-seventh [chapters] of First Kingdoms, where it says, "and he fought all his enemies on every side," and so on. What the text says is this: Saul did wrong against [them], and from that same [act] came the vengeance for the injustice [done in the time of] Joshua. Those who received their being from him are not wronged when they are destroyed together with the one who stood at the beginning. For they have their non-being from the same source from which they had their being. But if they were worthy of some good because of their own conduct, they receive it later.}

Note 19

The question is asked how David, who had pardoned Shimei, commands Solomon to kill him. David was a man who held no grudges and was gentle. He gives the same command about Joab, who had labored together with him. Why, then, was this arranged in this way? David was wise, and he knew that Solomon would not let Shimei live, for fear of an uprising. For Shimei, from a position of royal dignity, would fight Solomon over the kingdom. Nor would Solomon let Joab live, since Joab had set up David's son as king apart from David's own mind. Joab had also killed Abner, though he had labored together with the father in many wars and had succeeded. David foresaw all this. So he got ahead of events and ordered Solomon to do what Solomon would certainly have done on his own. Then, when the men named were put to death by Solomon, he would be forgiven, as one who had carried out his father's wish and had not moved against them on his own account.

Note 20

"And he turned back," it says, "and slept. And the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him." Perhaps these were symbols of powers serving the prophet with food fitting for him. He was withdrawing from human affairs and was worthy of being taught by such beings. After this he would be able to hear, "Arise and eat," and would find at his head unspeakable mysteries, of which the barley cake baked in the ashes was a type. And does he not eat a second time, at the angel's command, when the angel said, "Arise, eat, for the journey is long for you"? [...] Now the [food of] the morning they brought to Elijah [...] in keeping with what the Lord had said to Moses, among which was this: "In the morning you will be filled with bread, and you will know that I am the Lord your God." And [the other food] likewise: "Toward evening you shall eat meat."

Note 21

This is the power of Christ Jesus, which makes men into sons. And if anyone is a man of power, he is clearly a son of Christ. But at times the powers under Christ cannot make sons. And if they do, they make not grown men but infants.

Note 22

“Spadontes” means eunuchs. He says this about the three young men and Daniel, that they were descended from this Hezekiah.

Selecta on Job

Note 1

Chapter 1. “The horsemen made three heads for us and surrounded the camels.” So he made the camels fall under the horsemen. The donkeys and the yoked oxen he put under those who took captives. The sheep he hated, and for that reason he brought fire down on them. He was also plotting against the sons, and he was looking for a moment to destroy them. If he had found them reading, he would not have touched the house, and he would have had no ground to kill them. If he had found them praying, he could have done nothing against them. But when he found an opportunity, he prevailed. What was that opportunity? It was drunkenness; it was a banquet. As for the Spirit’s mention of the corners being struck, take note that hypocrites stand and pray in the broad places of the corners. Everyone who has not set foot on the straight way makes use of corners. A broad corner is wickedness that is great and unrestrained.

Note 19

Chapter 19. “How long will you wear out my soul?” Heavy loads laid on the bodies of animals make the animals that carry them grow weary. In the same way there are some heavy words. When someone hears them, he grows weary, as if pressed down by the weight of what the words can do. These are words spoken with reproach and harshness, or in abuse. So it is now with the words spoken by Baldad. Job felt them like a heavy burden, and being worn out in his soul he says, “How long will you wear out my soul?” and, “Will you weigh down your words against me like a heavy load?” You see that the words of the tyrant of the Shuhites were tyrannical words, and Job, hearing them, says what is set before us. For nothing else strikes a person’s soul as a harsh word does. Often someone has endured tortures inflicted on his body and yet has not endured words. The perfect athlete, though he grows weary, still endures harsh words. To endure insult is the mark of a great man. That is why the Apostle, among his own deeds of courage, says, “When reviled, we bless; when slandered, we appeal.” Here too it is Job, the noblest of athletes, who speaks. His book contains nothing so remarkable as his courage and his endurance.

Even so, he feels the weariness he has suffered from the harsh word of those who came to visit him. The heaviness of a word is like a burden laid on the soul and makes it weary. That is why he says: “Why, my friends, do you add the toil of the soul to the pains of the body, pricking me more with your words than the sufferings prick the body?” “You speak against me.” Often someone speaks against another when that other is doing wrong. But when he has lost all shame, he says it to his face, not to expose him or to tell the truth, but to reproach and insult him. “I will cry out, and nowhere is there judgment.” If I cry out now, my judgment does not come anywhere. I am still contending. It is as if he were saying: “I have cried out like an athlete in the stadium, and my judgment does not arise anywhere, for I am still wrestling. If I do not finish the match, the judgment that brings the crown does not come.” We say this so that we do not accuse God because Job suffers so much and “nowhere is there judgment.” That is, there is nowhere any decision granting him freedom and release from his troubles.

Note 20

Chapter 20. “If his gifts go up to heaven.” The heretic too: when he prays, when his sacrifice goes up with lofty speech, when he seems to be firmly established, then in the end he will perish. For his prayer is counted to him as sin. We who belong to the Church and know his errors will say: where are such people, who dream and fashion errors for themselves? In their stumbling they do not rest their mind on the truth. They become like a dream that has flown away, which will not be found. David sings something similar: “But the enemies of the Lord have failed. At the very moment of being glorified and exalted, they failed; like smoke they failed.” And again: “Like a dream of those who awake.” “Wealth gathered unjustly will be vomited up.” I know of another wealth that is gathered unjustly, the wealth found in the words of the heretics. They hold teachings in their bellies that are opposed to the doctrines of the truth. These are not sweet but are “the gall of asps,” that is, they are evil. It is said in Deuteronomy, in the song of Moses, about the wine of their teaching: “For their vine is from the vine of Sodom.” But the good God will not allow them to keep unjustly gathered wealth in themselves forever. He will make them vomit it up. For by God’s kindness an angel will drag them out onto the very house that was badly built:

That house is the church of the wicked. So Job goes on: “Out of his house,” and so on. See how much is laid up even for the one who holds other teaching, because of his ungodly doctrines. Let us therefore watch ourselves, so that we are not robbed by plausible arguments from heretical teaching and fall away from the mystery of the Church. “May he not see the milking of the herdsmen.” The one who teaches other doctrine does not see the milking of herdsmen either. The herdsmen are souls that are pastured under the good shepherd and find pasture. The doctrines against God have nothing sweet in them; they are harsh and dense. For “he shattered the houses of many who were powerless.” And if the teacher of other doctrine finds you anywhere weak in the faith, weak in sound teaching, he robs you. It is truly said of the teacher of those who hold other doctrines that he shattered the houses of many who were powerless. He snatches away the way of life of the easily deceived, and afterward he cannot make it stand, for falsehood cannot make anything stand. “May a day of wrath come upon him.” On that day the divine judgment is stirred up against him. Whether it is the man from the circumcision who has acted impiously against God, or the one who holds other doctrine, or anyone ungodly in whatever way, his portion is the one shown in what was said above.

Note 21

“Why do the ungodly live, and grow old even in wealth?” By saying “grow old in wealth,” he means that they are not newly rich. From youth to old age they have gone on being wealthy. “They take up the psaltery and the harp.” Fathers have another kind of happiness, and so do their children, a joy filled out by pipes, harps and drums. These charm the ears, stir up the pleasures of the soul, and bewitch those present with undisciplined music. The children of the ungodly make it shamelessly, laying their hands on the tightened strings and clapping to the sound of the instruments. “They finished their life in good things.” That is, they had no break in their prosperity. They went on to the end of a full life, luxuriating in bodily goods. The end of their life became the end of their happiness, since their good fortune lasted until death. “And they fell asleep in the rest of Hades.” That is, resting and cheerful until death, they go down to Hades untroubled. Or it means that death itself is not bitter to them; they die as though falling asleep. Or it means that other people suffer and are worn down while they live, and rest only when they die, whereas these men, of whom he is speaking, spent their whole life in good cheer and so came to the rest that is in death.

Note 22

Chapter 22. “Is it not the Lord who teaches?” This is a sound teaching: a human being cannot be the true teacher of virtue. The one who teaches a person knowledge is, as it is also written in the Psalms, none other than God. God teaches by shining into the soul of the one who learns from him, and by lighting up the mind with the true light, his own Word. So even if righteous men teach us, having received the grace of teaching, it is still the Lord who teaches us through them. Even the understanding itself, and the opening of our hearts to receive the divine lessons, comes about by divine grace. “Or will he reprove you, making an account of you?” To this we would say that God does not reprove the ungodly because he worries that he himself might be harmed. He reproves him because he takes account of the one he provides for and does good to. “You took pledges from your brothers for nothing.” Eliphaz supposes this about Job, because he knew he was rich and suspected that he had grown rich from sources of this kind. So he says, “You took pledges for nothing,” that is, when nothing was owed to you. Then, adding to this, he charges him with another sin: “You stripped the naked of their clothing.” Sometimes one may take garments from someone who is not naked but rich, who has many clothes laid up. But suppose someone has only one tunic, and I strip him of that tunic on the excuse of demanding what is mine, having no pity on that naked man. Then I have taken away the clothing of a naked man. Many such things happen among us when we lend, when we have people in debt to us. Often our debtor is desperately poor and cannot repay. And we shut up our compassion. We do not see that he is feeding a wife and children, and that they are barely fed from the few small coins he gets. Yet we demand payment harshly, sometimes even when we have more than enough ourselves. So Eliphaz brings this charge against Job: “You stripped the naked of their clothing.” Perhaps he also calls it taking away when someone does not give a cloak to the naked. For the person who does not clothe the naked, and the one who does not feed the person who needs bread, is a defrauder and a greedy man.

“And you admired the faces of certain people.” This too is another sin, for admiring a person’s face is a sin. Someone is rich, so I admire his face, but I trample on the poor man because he has no standing. “So the Almighty will be your helper.” Eliphaz states a sound teaching here. He thinks Job is suffering because of his sins, and that by enduring he is purified through the suffering itself. Purified like gold in a furnace, he is shown to be approved, having put away everything foreign and become unmixed with any evil. So Eliphaz says

that if you also endure what has happened to you, God will give you back purified, like refined silver. And once purified, you will have boldness, as one who has put away his sins. You will lift your face cheerfully to heaven and make your prayers with a conscience that does not condemn you. If you vow or promise anything to God, he will strengthen you to carry out your promises to him. For he is "the one who works in us both the willing and the working, for the sake of his good pleasure." Where the text reads "He will grant you to fulfil your vows," Theodotion rendered it, "And you will decree a word, and it will stand for you." That is, whatever you arrange and set down will not fall through. To put it simply, God will provide you with a whole way of life that suits a righteous man. All your ways will prosper, guided by the divine light, or else your deeds will be bright and glorious. "Because he humbled himself, and you will say, 'He was arrogant.'" Eliphaz seems to speak about someone else, but the word is aimed at Job. He means that these things will come to the one who repents, because he humbled himself and said that he justly underwent what he suffered, since he had been arrogant. "And he will save the one with downcast eyes." That is, the humble-minded man, who looks down because of a troubled conscience and lack of boldness, like the tax collector who was justified in the Gospels.

Note 27

Chapter 27. Job added this in his opening words: the devil received authority over Job and tested him night and day. First he did it through things outside him, then through his own body, and after that through his friends. When he had tried Job through his wife and saw that Job was not beaten, he brought three friends. They were not enemies, and they did not hold scheming doctrines. What they said was true, but it was not offered in the right way or at the right time. Through them he wanted to make the righteous man say something against Providence, to turn him to impiety because of his labors and to make him lose heart because of his pains. But look at what this unbreakable man of steel says after the words of the three. Eliphaz had finished three speeches, Bildad three, and Zophar two. Job says: "I am not conscious of having done anything out of place." Paul said the same thing later, and added: "But I am not justified by this." The righteous man spoke with great confidence, both about his former life and about his conduct at the time of his trial, so that he could say: I am conscious of nothing against myself.

Note 29

Chapter 29. “The mighty ceased speaking.” Or, according to the rest of the editions, “the rulers.” [These words are corrupt or obscure in the Greek; I give the sense.] “...what was conceived...” The same thing happens in the soul that loves learning. It conceives the word, and as the word is declared it shapes it and gives it form in order. When, after shaping and forming it, the soul hands it over complete, then it gives birth. Until it gives birth, it is weighed down in labor. “I will speak, that I may find rest, opening my lips.” The one who has an understanding hearer, and is full of words, finds rest in speaking. He has, as it were, emptied himself and thrown off the excess.

Note 35

Chapter 35. “Look up to heaven.” The one who looks up to heaven is not the one who lifts his bodily eyes and sees the sky. Dogs and donkeys have that kind of looking up. No lover of the world looks up to heaven. Only the one who loves neither the world nor the things in the world does. Again, the clouds are not simply high above us. But if I look at the life of Moses and how he pleased God, and then at my own smallness and lowliness, I see the cloud high above me. If I come to Jesus the son of Nave, and to the lives of the prophets, and examine their deeds, then I do what is written and learn how high the clouds are above me. “If you sinned, what will you do?” So he asks: do you know, if you have sinned, what you will do to undo the sin? If you sinned in words, heal it with better words. If you sinned in deeds, heal yourself with different deeds. But if our lawless acts are many and incurable, then it is for the incurable things, which we cannot heal ourselves, that Jesus Christ came from heaven, to heal what cannot be healed. So the words come true: “Blessed are those whose sins have been forgiven.”

“He who sets night watches.” See how Elihu goes through praises and hymns of God, saying of him, “He who sets night watches.” Do you want to see how God sets night watches? This whole age is night; it is darkness. The light is being kept for you. For now you see through a mirror, but one day you will see the light. So the whole age is night, and there is need of appointed watchmen, so that the watchmen of the night may guard those who are in the night from robbers, from wild beasts and from enemies. Who are the watchmen? The angels who encamp around us. “He who separates me from the four-footed creatures of the earth.” According to the others: “teaching us above the beasts of the earth, and making us wise above the birds that fly through the air.” For man alone is honored with reason. By the account of creation, then, we have been set apart from all living creatures. But if you are a sinner, a fornicator, inclined downward, you have not been separated from the four-footed creatures of the earth. You have been compared with the beasts and have become like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and like the stallion mad after mares.

Note 40

Chapter 40. “No, gird up your loins like a man.” The full prizes of the contest are kept for those who have competed well, and they come after this life. Even so, God’s grace already gives the contestants a down payment. So when Job fought the greatest fights, God gave him a foretaste and a pledge of the prizes. Job lost his possessions and glorified the one who had given them. He buried his children and thanked the one who had taken them. He fell sick, so that worms poured out of his body, and he was still not beaten by his sufferings. Then God spoke with him out of a cloud and a storm. Job had heard the earlier words. He ought to have answered God, but he stayed silent, as one who had no boldness to speak. He did not yet know the saying, “Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice.” Yet God gives him freedom to speak. His kindness is so great that he takes on the face of one who is not judging but being judged together with the man. Other passages of Scripture teach this too, such as “Come, let us reason together,” and “My people, what have I done to you?” God is already giving Job a prize, because he questions a human being, asks him for an answer, and gives him authority to reply. If Job had not been victorious, he would not have received it. If he had not endured, he would not have heard, “Gird up your loins like a man.” Do not keep silent. Be courageous in facing the questions. For whoever has loins that are not girded and tightened but loose cannot answer God reasonably. So let no one answer God until he has become a man, mature in spiritual stature, and has girded his loins.

“Do not set aside my judgment.” Do not suppose that what you endured was decided against you without reason, and do not set my judgment aside. Let us remember this saying as a useful one whenever God judges that we should suffer something: to lose a child, to lose a position of authority, to fall ill in the body, or to undergo anything of that kind. None of these things can happen to us unless God judges it so. Since none of them happens apart from God’s judgment, he says to the one who suffers, “Do not set aside my judgment.” That is, do not disown what I decided about you. He means the present dealing. “Do you think I have dealt with you for any other reason than that you might be shown to be righteous?” I make my defense to you: you were righteous, but you were not plainly seen to be. You had endurance, and I had to give an occasion for your endurance to shine. You had courage, but it was hidden in you, and the troubles that came on you showed your courage. Let us remember these things in times of hardship. Let us take it that we hear God present and saying to us, “Do you think I have dealt with you,” that is, allowed the trial, “for any other

reason than that your righteousness might be made clear to those who do not know it?" "Take up your height." The lines can also be understood like this: you have defeated the tempter. Take back your height. Take back your strength. Be crowned. Put on splendor. The insolent one marched out against you, but you humbled the proud one and turned him back far away in shame, together with his battle line.

Note 41

Chapter 41. “Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you bind him like a sparrow for a child?” This describes the end of a great, strong and perfect soul. The dragon has been handed over to such a soul like a sparrow to a child. He cannot even hurt the child, since the child leads him about bound wherever it wishes and carries him around. In the same way, by the grace of the Lord, Satan has been bound like a sparrow in the hand for the little ones and nursing babies, out of whose mouth God has prepared praise. “Nations will feed on him.” The Lord is food for the faithful, and in the same way the dragon is food for the ungodly: “You gave him as food to the Ethiopian peoples.” That is, to the sons of darkness, to those who live in ignorance. For with every word we accept, we are eating either from the dragon, if we accept a vain report, or from Christ, if we accept a word that builds up and benefits. “And all that sail together will not carry one hide of his tail.” To say it more plainly: men who use their bodies as ships cannot by themselves put to death the dragon’s final and last parts. But when divine power watches over us, we are able both to bring him in whole and to put him to death. Each of us puts the devil to death, as far as it depends on himself, according to the saying, “God will crush Satan under your feet quickly.” “Who could enter into the fold of his breastplate?” The breastplate is also called the chest, where the ruling part is. His breastplate is not simple. It is deceitful and folded over. But a holy person is able to expose him and show that it is folded over,

for to the holy person it is not folded. “And a spirit will not pass through him.” “Will not pass through” does not mean that it does not go through and pass on. It means that nothing escapes him, and everyone must come through him. So let us prepare ourselves not to be held fast by him. “And his eyes are the appearance of the morning star.” His eyes are not morning stars, but “the appearance of the morning star.” For he disguises himself as an angel of light. He pretends to be a heavenly star, and pretends to be a sign of day. “Like burning lamps.” I think that all the ungodly who bring in godless doctrines are the mouth of the dragon. But something further can also be understood figuratively here, namely where destructive words come from. Suppose you have ever heard a speech that accuses the Creator under the pretext of Christianity. Say it advocates the teachings of Marcion, Valentinus or Basilides. When they speak evil of the Maker of heaven and earth, or say anything like it, you will see that firebrands come out of the mouths of such men. So let us guard ourselves, lest those lamps burn us, lest the coals of their fire touch us. “Before

him runs destruction." Destruction is like his forerunner and bodyguard. Wherever he is coming, his destruction runs ahead, and only then does he himself enter. Unless someone first receives destruction, he does not receive the dragon. For when someone sins, then, with itching ears, he seeks teachers, since he is on his way to ruin. In seeking teachers, after he has been ruined he finds the dragon, and receives into his own soul one who is filled with so many evils.

Note 42

Chapter 42. “And the Lord gave double.” Whoever endures every trial receives rewards for his endurance, all of them double what he had before. But the Lord gives rewards that are not merely double but a hundredfold. Yet Job would not have received double what he had before, if he had not shown double the virtue.

Fragments on Ezekiel

Note 30

The arms of Pharaoh are evil in the practice of sin, and, in the doctrines of ungodliness, the mind of the flesh. God, being good, crushes these arms. Pharaoh is a symbol of the devil, the ruler of sin among men. The Lord crushes the arm of sinners so that they cannot take hold of a sword.

Note 32

This especially shows the allegorical meaning of the Scripture. Pharaoh, in bodily terms, could not water the land from his excrement. Rather, it is the filthy discharge of the adversary that waters earthly things.

The Hebrew has “in the length of the pit.” For the word *yarekh*, pronounced with the aspirate in the Hebrew language, means both “thigh” and “length.” [Its application to the assembly, or gathering, is uncertain in the Greek.] So he calls the depth of the burial a “pit,” and the extent of the burial its “length.”

Note 44

4. Ezekiel, the son of man, describes many gates, and about each one he gave some account. Here he speaks, to those who have ears, about the gate of the sanctuary that faces east. Of this gate it is written, “This gate shall be shut,” and so on. It is not only that the Lord, the God of Israel, passes through the gate and so it is shut. The prince also sits in that gate to eat before the Lord, by the way of Ailam, which is translated “the porch of the gate.” The gate is a shut gate: it is the mysteries of God, which cannot be locked up. Knowledge has a key, as the Lord says to the lawyers. So the gate is shut to ordinary people, for what lies inside the gate is what “eye has not seen and ear has not heard,” and so on. The words in Isaiah about the sealed book carry a meaning like that of this gate. You will find this same book more plainly in the Revelation of John, together with what is written about it, and how the one from the tribe of Judah, and he alone, opened these things. For until our Lord Jesus Christ came, the law and the prophetic word were shut. A covering lay over them: the stone of hardness, which Jacob removed from the well. For in many places Scripture has opened up the meaning concerning this gate.

Sources. Greek text: >Erich Klostermann’s edition (Origenes Werke, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’Sche Buchhandlung, 1901); Charles de La Rue’s edition (Origenis Opera Omnia, Paris: J. P. Migne, 1857); Charles de La Rue’s edition (Origenis Opera Omnia, Paris: J. P. Migne, 1862), 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.