Bede's On the Tabernacle and the Garments of the Priests

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

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BOOK ONE. CHAPTER ONE. Moses, ascending the mountain of God with Joshua, left Aaron and Hur to govern the people. As we are about to discuss, with the Lord's help, the representation of the tabernacle and its vessels and utensils, we must first examine and more closely consider the location's layout and the circumstances of things, how they were when these commands were given. For all things, as the Apostle says, happened to them in a figure: they were written for our instruction (1 Corinthians X). Indeed, all things, not only the deeds or words contained in the Holy Scriptures, but also the positions of places, hours, and times, and also the circumstances of the events spoken or done.

The Lord said to Moses, "Ascend to me on the mountain," etc. Therefore, the Lord giving the law to Moses first called him to the summit of the mountain so that, having stayed there on high, he could more freely hear what he should teach the people as commandments when he descended back to the lower regions. And from the height of that place, he could gather how lofty and how far removed from human doctrines is the law he receives, and how it can only be perfectly understood or kept by those who, by living more loftily and perfectly, separate themselves from earthly contagions. Hence, he also commanded the people to wait in the lower regions until Moses returns, to imply typically that the mysteries of his law are heavenly indeed and can only be grasped by the more perfect, but that even the weak are not deprived of the occasion of salvation, if they humbly endeavor to listen to the wisdom of their elders. Similarly, in the Gospel, the Lord, calling the new heralds of grace to a mountain, instructed them with salutary precepts; so that from the very position of the place it might be evident that he gave them lofty commands for living and promises of reward: according to the Psalmist's phrase, "Your justice is like the mountains of God" (Psalm 36:6). But even after the resurrection, again appearing to them on a holy mountain, he sent them to preach, not only to the people of Israel but to the whole world: "Go," he said, "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-

20). So the Lord gave the commandments of both the law and the Gospel on a mountain to commend the sublimity of both Testaments.

But because the Scripture of the law was to be committed to the people of Israel alone at that time, while the grace of the Gospel was to be preached by the apostles to all the nations throughout the world, it was appropriate that Moses alone ascended to the mountain to receive the law, whereas the apostles together with the Lord on the mountain, listened to the doctrine of the Gospel with the people hearing. And at the coming of the Holy Spirit, by which the same grace and truth of the Gospel were more manifestly given to the Church, not only the apostles but also a large multitude of the faithful gathered together in the upper room on Mount Sion received it, and this in the division of diverse tongues, so that by such a miracle it might be signified that the Church would praise God in the languages of all nations throughout the world.

"And I will give you," he says, "two stone tablets, and the law and commandments," etc. This is similar to that which we have placed above from the Gospel: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Therefore, neither Moses, nor the apostles, nor any of the learned should teach the people of God any other precepts than those which the Lord himself taught, which he has prescribed for us to observe according to the eternal decree of his council, and in the observation of which he wished us to have eternal life. Just as nor can teachers omit anything from those things which he commanded to be done, but it is necessary for them to commit all that he commanded to their hearers. And he wrote these on stone tablets, because he firmly established them to be guarded with a fixed intention in the faithful hearts of the elect. When he proposes their examples for us to imitate, he shows the established statutes of his law as if written in stone. For Daniel also saw the Lord in the figure of a stone cut from the mountain without hands demolishing the pomp of the worldly kingdom, so that his kingdom alone might remain without end (Dan. II). And Peter exhorts the faithful, saying: "And you, as living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house" (I Pet. II).

Moses and Joshua, his minister, arose. Joshua, the minister of Moses, both by name and by action designates the Lord and Savior. He is rightly called the minister of Moses because, appearing in the flesh, he deigned to undertake the ceremonies of the Mosaic law: for he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. He follows in all the footsteps of Moses: because in all that Moses speaks or writes, he is either typically or manifestly designated as if an inseparable companion, he will be found if he is diligently sought. Hence he says to the Jews: "If you believed Moses, you would perhaps believe me also, for he wrote about me" (Matt. V).

And Moses, ascending the mountain of God, said to the elders: Wait here until we return to you, etc. Aaron is interpreted as the mountain of strength, Hur is interpreted as fire or light. Hence Aaron designates the Savior, the Lord, and Hur designates the Holy Spirit: because Isaiah also says of this, And in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be prepared at the top of the mountains (Isaiah 2:2). And He appeared upon the apostles in

the light of fire. Therefore, ascending to the Lord, Moses left Aaron and Hur, that is, the mountain of strength and the light of fire, in the plains, to govern the people. And if we cannot follow our teachers to the height of divine contemplation, let us diligently be careful that no temptation draws us back from the vicinity of the mountain of God; but let us insist on the works of virtues according to our own measure, adhering with a steadfast heart to the sacraments of our Redeemer, in which we have been initiated; and let us strive to preserve the grace of His Spirit, with which we have been sealed, unsullied in ourselves. And if any adversity questions us, let us immediately invoke the help of the same Redeemer, who through the gift of the Holy Spirit has been accustomed to protect and deliver His faithful from all evils. And there is no doubt that if we persevere in our endeavors, our weakness and humility will be strengthened and exalted through the mountain of strength, and will become stronger than all the temptations of the enemy; and through the light and fire of the Holy Spirit, our ignorance will be enlightened, and our soul will be kindled to the love of the same merciful Creator.

And when Moses had ascended, the cloud covered the mountain. Just as the mountain on which Moses received the law designates the height of perfection which was to be written in the same law, so the cloud covering the mountain signifies the grace of divine protection: by which every person enjoys the more, the higher they ascend to scrutinize the wonders of God's law with the eyes of their heart revealed. For the cloud covered not only the mountain on which Moses ascended; but also the people walking through the deserts, who could by no means ascend to the heights, the cloud nevertheless sent from heaven cast a shadow over them. From where it is written: He spread a cloud for their protection, because truly the Lord protects all who fear Him, the small with the great, with heavenly blessing. And the glory of the Lord dwelled on Sinai, etc. It must be known that not only the height, but also the name of the mountain, where the law was given, figuratively denotes the perfection of that law. Sinai means "My Measure" or "My Amphora." Therefore, it was divinely arranged that the mountain where the law would be given would be called "My Amphora": as if the Lord Himself, by this name, signified that His law would promulgate a perfect rule of living to all and would render to each according to their works, as He Himself said: "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged" (Matthew 7). And: "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Mark 4).

It is well said that, with Moses ascending, the cloud and the glory of the Lord covered the mountain for six days, but on the seventh day, He called him to the higher parts of the mountain. For we are commanded to work for six days in the law and rest on the seventh. And Moses, ascending the mountain, is covered by the cloud and the glory of the Lord for six days: so that it is mystically insinuated that anyone who follows the Lord's commandments with just works is indeed worthy of divine protection. For the same Lord, who commanded Moses to ascend the mountain, also surrounded him with His cloud and brightness as he ascended: because He who grants us the gift of working well also enlightens us as we work well, lest we falter, and protects us lest we be consumed by the temptations of the ancient enemy, as by the heat of the sun.

On the seventh day, however, the Lord calls Moses to the higher places because, after the perfection of works, the law promises us eternal rest: so that those who cared to stand before the Lord in the height of righteous action may now merit to ascend to His vision and conversation, as the Psalmist says, "Indeed, the one who gives the law will also give a blessing" (Psalm 84). "They will go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion." This is known to be granted to some of the elect in this life, that after the perfection of an active life, they ascend to the grace of divine contemplation, as much as and how much this can happen to those still clothed in flesh: which was also granted to many of the patriarchs and prophets, and preeminently to Moses himself, of whom it is specifically said that he spoke with God face to face, as a man speaks with his friend (Exodus 33). Hence it can be specifically understood that he was protected by the cloud and the glory of the Lord on the mountain for six days; on the seventh day, however, called to His conversation, he ascended to the higher parts of the mountain, because certainly, through the good works given to him by the Lord, he deserved to be more enlightened by Him and overshadowed by all the incursions of evil, and thus he reached the higher gifts of vision and conversation with Him.

The midst of the darkness, from which he is said to have been called, does not signify any darkness in God: but because He inhabits inaccessible light (1 Timothy 6), and as the same Apostle says, "Whom no one has seen or can see" (ibid.). For that darkness is the obscurity of heavenly mysteries, indeed inaccessible to earthly hearts, but penetrable to Moses and the other blessed pure in heart by the revealing grace of God: to whom it is said in the Psalm, "Come to Him and be enlightened" (Psalm 34). For His light is inaccessible to our powers, yet it is approached through His gifts. Where it is aptly added:

But the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like burning fire, etc. For the appearance of the glory of the Lord appeared like burning fire; because it illuminates the hearts of the elect with the gift of heavenly knowledge, and inflames them with the ardor of its charity. In the cloud, therefore, in darkness, and in fire the glory of the Lord appeared. Namely in the cloud, because it protects us from the heat of temptations. Truly in darkness, because the power of His majesty cannot be fully comprehended by any creature. For the peace of God surpasses all understanding (Phil. IV). Moreover, in the burning fire, because it illuminates the minds of the faithful with the knowledge of heavenly goods and inflames them with hope and love. And this glory of the Lord indeed the sons of Israel see from afar and from below, but Moses penetrates more deeply by ascending higher; for indeed the perfect ones see the hidden mysteries of the divine perfectly and sublimely. But we, mindful of our fragility and inertia, although we are unable to enter and comprehend this, let us at least strive to remain close by believing, hoping, and loving, and to gaze upon it. For just as the sons of Israel keep their eyes on the mountain of God and on the appearance of His glory from afar, so those weak ones in the church, desiring to see God with all their heart, keep the eyes of their mind intensely fixed on the memory of eternal brightness. Just as they dwell in the vicinity of the mountain of God, which they knew Moses ascended, when they restrain themselves by that rule of living, so that they never allow their steps of action to stray too

far from the imitation of the highest lives, even if they are not yet able to fully follow their footsteps to perfection.

CHAPTER II. Moses, called to the higher parts of the mountain on the seventh day, stayed there with the Lord for forty days and nights. And Moses, having entered the midst of the cloud, went up the mountain and remained there for forty days and forty nights. Moses, having entered the midst of the cloud, went up the mountain, with the preachers of the divine law, among whom Moses himself was eminent for observing sublimely the uncertain and hidden things of divine wisdom, as the Lord invited and led them. Moses was with the Lord for forty days and nights so that by this span of time he might learn that only those who would receive the decalogue of the law, which he had received with his people, could fulfill it, aided by the grace of evangelical truth, which was to be described in four books. For four times ten make forty. Or certainly that a time would come when the same decalogue precepts, which he then received with one people of the children of Israel, by the largess of divine grace, would be spread to the knowledge of all nations, which are contained in the four parts of the world, and that all might attain eternal salvation through the observance of these precepts by their nations. But since we have briefly learned by what miraculous ascent Moses reached the reception of the law, let us now turn our ears and minds to hear what he heard and to explain to the best of our ability the very mandates of the law. It follows:

CHAPTER III. The sons of Israel are commanded to offer first fruits to the Lord and to make a sanctuary. (Exod. XXV.) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the sons of Israel, that they take, etc. And we take the first fruits of our goods to the Lord, when whatever good we do, we truly attribute all of it to divine grace, and from the depth of our heart profess that we cannot have even the beginning of a good action or thought except from the Lord: but we confess that our evils, always from ourselves with the devil instigating, are both begun and completed, and can only be forgiven by the Lord granting it. The Pelagians do not want to take the first fruits of their goods to the Lord, but to retain them for themselves, because they presumptuously think they have some good of their own without the grace of God. It is well commanded to Moses to accept the first fruits from a person who offers willingly. For God loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. IX). And the Apostle commands us to do good not out of sadness or necessity, but from the purpose of the heart (Ibid.). Knowing that he does this, the prophet glories in the Lord, saying: I will freely sacrifice to you (Psal. LIII).

These are the things you ought to take: gold, silver, and brass, etc. All these material things which the Lord commanded to be offered by the former people to make a sanctuary; we too, who desire to be spiritual children of Israel, that is, imitators of the people who see God, ought to offer with spiritual understanding, so that through such voluntary offerings we may also deserve to make a sanctuary for Him within us, and He may deem to dwell in our midst, that is, to consecrate a dwelling for Himself in our heart. We offer gold when we shine with the clarity of true wisdom, which is in right faith. We offer silver when confession is made from our mouth unto salvation. We offer brass when we rejoice to spread that same faith

by public preaching. We offer hyacinth when we lift our hearts upwards. We offer purple when we subject our body to suffering. We offer twice-dyed scarlet when we burn with dual love, that is, of God and neighbor. We offer fine linen when we preserve the chastity of the flesh. We offer goats' hair when we put on the habit of penitence and sorrow. We offer red ram skins when we see the leaders of the Lord's flock baptized in their own blood. We offer blue skins when we hope to have spiritual bodies in the heavens after death. We offer acacia wood when, having purged the thorns of sins, we serve the Lord alone with clean flesh and soul.

We offer oil for the lamps when we shine with the fruits of charity and mercy. We offer spices, ointment, and sweet-smelling incense when we spread the good reputation of our good actions far and wide as an example of living well. We offer onyx stones and gems to adorn the ephod and the breastplate when we praise with due admiration the miracles of the saints, which have adorned thoughts devoted to God and works of virtue. And we take these into aid of our faith whenever necessary. For since we usually carry burdens on our shoulders, rightly through the ephod, that is, the upper garment, the works of the just and pious labors for the Lord are signified. And since the seat of thoughts is in the breast, rightly in the breastplate, which is the garment of the priestly breast, the pure thoughts of the elect are expressed. And onyx stones and gems adorn the ephod and the breastplate, when to the remarkable actions and thoughts of the greatest Fathers the signs of miracles are also joined. Nor does anything prevent us from understanding the merits of martyrdom added to good works in the onyx stones, which are said to be of a blood-red color. Of all these things, each in its place, we must speak more fully with the help of God's grace.

And they shall make a sanctuary for me (he says), and I will dwell in the midst of them, etc. The Lord showed Moses the tabernacle on the mountain, and the vessels consecrated for its worship: because He manifestly demonstrated to him, who remained with Him for such a long time, how much piety, humility, and purity, angelic virtues joyfully obey their Creator. These virtues are the perfect tabernacle of Him, who has never ceased to dwell and inhabit them since they were created. In the resurrection, the likeness of their life and common conversation before the Lord is promised to us too: whoever now, having left behind the contagions of this world, strive to imitate their life on earth, that is, in praising and loving the Lord, and also in loving and helping one's neighbor in God, provoking even enemies to the love of God through works of piety, such were they to whom the Apostle says: But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom. VIII). Therefore, the tabernacle that was shown to Moses on the mountain is that heavenly city and celestial homeland, which at that time was believed to consist only of holy angels: but after the passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the Mediator between God and men, it received the glorious and abundant multitude of holy souls too. The vessels of that tabernacle are each of the persons of blessed spirits: from all of whom that Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, consists in true peace and unity.

It should be noted more diligently that the children of Israel are commanded to make a sanctuary for the Lord, not partially similar, but according to every likeness of the tabernacle which He showed to Moses, and of all its vessels for its worship. For if we aim for the companionship of angels in heaven, we ought to always imitate their life on earth, ... as far as harmless bodies do not slow us down, and earthly limbs, mortal members dull us. But if perhaps you ask, how can a mortal man imitate this heavenly tabernacle, living in flesh? They love God and their neighbors: imitate this. They help the miserable, though not angels who are all blessed, at least men: imitate this. They are humble, gentle towards each other, appeased, they obey divine commands: imitate this as much as you can. They say, do, and think nothing evil, nothing idle, nothing unjust, persevering in divine praises, with word and mind attending: imitate this as much as you can, and you will have built a sanctuary for the Lord according to the example shown to Moses on the mountain, and our Lord and Savior coming with the Father will make His dwelling with you: and after this life, into that tabernacle which you imitated, He will introduce you to perpetual blessedness. This follows.

CHAPTER IV. Description of the Ark. And thus you shall make it: construct the ark of acacia wood. The ark, which is commanded to be made first of all in the tabernacle, not incongruously signifies the very incarnation of our Lord and Savior, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2). Indeed, the ark is rightly ordered to be constructed of acacia wood. For acacia wood is said to be of a light and incorruptible nature, not much different from the quality of the white thorn. Therefore, the ark was made of acacia wood: because the body of the Lord was composed of members free from all stain of vices. And these same woods are very similar to thorns, because although He did not come in the flesh of sin, yet He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, as the Apostle says (Romans 8). It follows:

Of which the length should have two and a half cubits, etc. Some are accustomed to ask of what quantity the cubit should be estimated, which Moses placed either in the ark of Noah or in the making of the tabernacle: which, if we see the words of Josephus, the question will be easily solved. For it should not be thought that a man of Jewish priestly lineage, of excellent genius, and very learned in both divine and secular scriptures, could have been unaware of this. He therefore says: Also, the ark was made of five handbreadths in length, three handbreadths in width (Antiq. Book III, Chap. 8). Whence it is clearly evident that it designates that cubit which two handbreadths complete. Mystically, however, the length of the ark signifies the longsuffering of our Lord and Redeemer, by which he lived among men. The width signifies the very breadth of charity, by which he wished to come to us and dwell among us. The height signifies the hope of future exaltation, for he foresaw that either he himself would be glorified or that he would glorify others after his passion. Whence it is aptly said that the length of the ark was of two cubits, obviously because of the doctrine and works by which he shone forth in the world. Hence also the evangelist Luke claims to have made a speech about the things which Jesus began to do and teach (Acts I). And

his fellow citizens, marveling, said: Whence does this man have such wisdom and mighty works? (Matt.

XIII) referring wisdom to the wondrous things he said: mighty works, to the things he did. But that the ark had, in length, after two cubits even a half, can be referred to the slowness of human frailty: which could not yet, as was worthy, grasp the sublime sayings or works of the Savior. Whence it was also plainly said of some of his mystical actions: These things his disciples did not understand at first, but when Jesus was glorified (John XII). Similarly, concerning his more sublime sayings: "And this word was hidden from them, and they did not understand what was being said" (Luke 18). The ark had two cubits in length because the Lord, clear in flesh by word and deeds, appeared. It also had half a cubit because he patiently bore the slowness of the disciples, who could not yet fully grasp his words or deeds. The width of the ark was one cubit, due to the administration of the Lord's charity, by which he sought to unite his chosen ones in God. Therefore, praying to the Father for them, he said: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17). And shortly after:

"I have made your name known to them and will make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Ibid.). It had after one cubit also a half, namely, for the signification of our frailty, by which, positioned in this life, we are not yet able to perfectly love God or comprehend the love that God has towards us: more, as the Apostle witnesses (1 Cor. 13), we know in part and prophesy in part, thus indeed we also love in part. Therefore the ark has one cubit and also a half, because the Lord with singular piety loves us to be associated with himself and the Father, and he equally embraces our capacity for love, whatever it can be in this life, with his pious kindness until we deserve to enter his vision, where we may love him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. The height of the ark was also most fittingly one and a half cubits, namely, for the indication of the singular hope, by which either the Lord himself, while in the flesh with us, awaited the outcome of his future resurrection and subsequent glory, or he always admonishes us to rejoice in the rewards of future goods amid the adversities of the world.

Therefore the ark has a full cubit in height, because our Lord and Savior most fully knew, even while still conversing in corruptible flesh, how much glory was preserved in the future either for himself or for his members, which are us. It also has a half cubit of height, because he willingly took on, in his body, our humble devotion, who indeed piously love the future homeland: but not yet perfectly, can we grasp what its happiness is; yet as much as we grasp, we have this only from him.

And you shall overlay it with pure gold, etc. The Ark is overlaid with pure gold inside and out, because the human nature assumed by the Son of God was full of the virtue of the Holy Spirit within and openly demonstrated the works of the Holy Spirit to people outwardly. Indeed, this Ark is rightly commanded to be surrounded by a golden crown above, because appearing in the flesh and coming to redeem the human race, the Son of God awaited the

definite time and hour when He would overcome the death He had taken on for us along with the author of death, and would ascend victoriously to the Father in heaven. About this crown the Apostle says: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2). Of this in the Apocalypse, John says, "And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" (Revelation 6). Certainly, the white horse is the Church, and the rider who sat on it is the Lord, who had a bow, because He was coming to battle against the powers of the air. And a crown of victory was given to Him, who by dying overthrew the kingdom of death.

And four golden rings, etc. The four golden rings are the four books of the Gospels, which rightly are golden because of the brightness of the wisdom by which they shine; rightly compared to rings, because the wisdom of God itself which they proclaim is eternal. Neither beginning in time, nor ceasing to be, the eternal divinity which Christ the man has received. Wherefore, at the nearing hour of His passion, He prays to the Father, saying: And now, glorify Me, You Father, with Yourself with the glory which I had before the world was made with You (John XVII). The ark has four corners, because the sacrament of the Lord's incarnation is celebrated throughout all the regions of the world, in which the holy Church is expanded, without ceasing. And at the same four corners, the four rings are placed; because the Gospel of Christ is preached in all the ends of the world to the hearts of the faithful who are to be saved. Now there are two rings on one side, and two on the other: either because two evangelists adhered to the discipleship of the Savior preaching in the flesh and performing miracles; and the other two came to faith after His resurrection and ascension to heaven: or because in the figure of the four animals, two who are designated by man and ox carried the signs of His sufferings and death;

but the other two who are figuratively represented by the lion and the eagle, demonstrated the signs of the victory by which He destroyed death. Indeed, the Lord as a man, having become mortal by incarnation, appeared. The ox indeed was offered for us on the altar of the cross. The same became a lion by strongly subduing death and an eagle by ascending to heaven. And so there are two rings on one side, and two on the other, because certainly two evangelists, by their figure, mark the assumption of human frailty in the Lord; and the other two signify the victory by which He triumphed over the same assumed frailty and death. For the left side of the ark had, as it were, two rings, since two evangelists figured the incarnation and passion of the Lord. Similarly, there were two rings on the right side, which also figuratively express the resurrection and ascension of Him, which belong to the glory of future life.

You shall also make poles of acacia wood, etc. The poles by which the Ark is carried are the holy teachers who, by preaching the Lord, bring Him into the hearts of their listeners. These poles are commanded to always remain in the rings because it is necessary that whoever preaches the heavenly mysteries never detaches their mind from the memory of sacred

Scripture, and never withholds their hands from the observance of divine commandments. It is fittingly followed by:

You shall put the testimony into the Ark, etc. Because we must only speak and believe about the incarnation of the Son of God what the Lord Himself has deigned to reveal to us through the authors of sacred Scripture. But if you wish to know what is that testimony which the Lord commanded Moses to put in the Ark, listen to the Apostle: Beyond the veil was the second tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies, having a golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant, overlaid all around with gold; in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that had budded, and the tablets of the covenant (Heb. IX). Thus, the golden urn with the manna in the Ark signifies a holy soul in Christ, containing within itself all the fullness of divinity. Aaron's rod that had budded signifies the invincible power of His priesthood; of which the prophet says: The scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness (Ps. XLV). Which, after seeming to be cut off for a time through death, was found to have flourished more vividly with the dawn of resurrection, and is known to remain perpetually unsullied and immortal. For Christ, rising from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has dominion over Him (Rom. VI). The tablets of the covenant in the Ark designate all in Christ both the knowledge of the divine secrets of the Father and the power of His judgments.

For on the tablets of the covenant, there was inscribed the faith of the eternal divinity, which created and governed the world; the commandments by which God must be served; and the discernment of judgment, by which He rightly condemns those who hate Him and rewards with mercy those who love Him. Therefore, this is the testimony which the Lord gave Moses to be placed in the Ark, and it signifies to us the truth of Christ's body, soul, and word: showing that this very flesh, after the suffering of death, is glorified by resurrection and exalted with the dignity of the eternal king and priest, teaching that He alone is aware of the Father's secrets, and as truly being one majesty with the Father, is the judge of all ages.

CHAPTER V. Description of the Mercy Seat and Cherubim. You shall make a mercy seat, etc. It is often asked what the mercy seat is, with which the ark is to be covered. But since he commands it to be made of gold and of the same length and width as he ordered the ark to be made; it is undoubtedly clear that he wanted a golden plate to be made, large enough to cover the ark. This mercy seat, namely, is none other than the Lord Savior himself, but more specifically signifies the depths of his mercy: concerning which the Apostle says: "Whom God has set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. III). For it is also placed above, because mercy exalts above judgment. Hence the Psalmist also says, "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all his works" (Psalm 145).

Also the two golden Cherubim, etc. That Cherubim is the name of angelic powers, the prophet Ezekiel clearly declares, who also, according to the example by which they are ordered to be made here, indicates that they appeared with wings, saying: And the sound of the wings of the Cherubim was heard even to the outer court, like the voice of the Almighty

when He speaks (Ezek. X). And indeed in the singular it is called Cherub, but in the plural Cherubim, and it is a name of the masculine gender, but the Greek usage has placed Cherubin in the neutral gender, changing the letter m to n. However, our interpreter, following the Hebrew idiom, has placed it in the masculine gender. You shall make two cherubim of gold and hammered work, not two golden cherubim and hammered work, which I believe to be corrupted in its translation by the negligence of the scribes, so that instead of Cherubim it would be written Cherubin after the manner of the ancients. Cherubim, or Cherubin, is interpreted as a multitude of knowledge, or understanding of knowledge: which name indeed more rightly suits the angelic powers, insofar as they, perfectly alienated from any impulse of impure thought, adhere to the vision of their Creator.

Therefore, Moses is commanded to make wings either in the figure of the Cherubim or in the very form in which the prophet testifies to have seen them, which the license of painters is also accustomed to imitate, so that angels are signified to have their seat on high and to be able to move everywhere with light flight, nor to have any delay, but indeed to be present immediately wherever they wish. This same thing is also unquestionably promised to be granted to us, clothed with a spiritual body after the resurrection. Therefore, the Cherubim spread their wings and cover the mercy seat: because the angels offer all the power of their nature, by which they deserved to dwell in the heights and to penetrate all the places of that heavenly homeland with a light and joyful journey, in the service of their Creator, and as if looking upon the mercy seat, they overshadow, that is, they honor by covering: because they attribute all the state of perpetual happiness which they have to the grace of Him from whom they received that they can wish for nothing evil. But there are two to signify the society of angelic peace; because there can be no charity with less than two. Thus, they are also commanded to look at each other and have their faces towards the mercy seat, because undoubtedly in the glorification of the divine vision they harmonize with each other.

Likewise, by the two cherubim, the two Testaments can be figured, of which one proclaims the future incarnation of the Lord, the other proclaims it as having occurred. And they look at each other, because in the testimony of the truth which they preach, they do not differ from one another in any way. They turn their faces towards the mercy seat; for they highly commend the mercy of the Lord, in which is the only hope for the world. And for this reason, they are on either side of the oracle, because both the times preceding the Lord's incarnation and those following it are filled with the preaching of spiritual knowledge. Also, the name "knowledge of the multitude," or "multiplied knowledge" fits them, because sacred Scripture is full of spiritual and divine knowledge, and this very knowledge, since the Scripture began to be written, continuously increases and multiplies. Hence the angel said to Daniel: "Many shall pass through, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. XII). For the Lord himself testifies that Moses received greater knowledge than the patriarchs, saying to him: "I am the Lord who appeared to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name Adonai I did not make myself known to them" (Exod. III). Therefore, the knowledge of divine cognition has been multiplied since time began when the Lord revealed something about Himself to Moses which He had not disclosed to the patriarchs.

Let us see whether David, who meditated on the law of the Lord day and night, understood anything more about the Lord than Moses, who wrote the law, did. He says, "How I love Your law, O Lord; it is my meditation all day long" (Psal. 118). And immediately he adds: "I have more understanding than all my teachers. Hence, elsewhere he boasts in the Lord, saying: "The hidden things of Your wisdom You have made known to me" (Psal. 51). Similarly, the Lord Himself declares that the apostles know greater things than the prophets, saying to them: "Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matt. 13:17). But after His resurrection and ascension, He promised them even greater grace of knowledge, saying: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13). To whom He also promises that He will reveal even greater things in the future than can be known in this life, saying: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and reveal myself to him" (John 14:21). Therefore, the Cherubim are rightly called multiplied knowledge, because in both Testaments, the knowledge of the truth has been increasingly made known to the faithful over time. The Cherubim are rightly said to overshadow the mercy seat with glory;

because as the testament grows over time, and knowledge multiplies, they preach to us the propitiation of our Lord the Savior; and, always with their voices as with outstretched wings for flight, they do not cease to honor it. For indeed, the words of those in conversation, like flying through the air from the mouth of the speakers, reach the hearts of the hearers, so the Cherubim with outstretched wings and as if prepared for flight can rightly be designated.

From there I will command and speak to you, namely above the mercy seat, etc. Above the mercy seat the Lord speaks to Moses all things that He commands to the children of Israel through him; because through the grace of God's propitiation it has happened that He deigned to appear to humans after the fault of transgression and to show them the way of truth after error. He speaks from between the Cherubim; because through the angelic vision, and not in His own substance, God appeared and spoke to Moses, as the apostle attests: "For the law was put in place because of transgressions until the seed to whom the promise was made should come, ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator" (Galatians III). Again, the Lord speaks from between the Cherubim, because through the words of each testament, in harmony, He educates us to the faith of truth. Or certainly He speaks from between the Cherubim, because through His Only Begotten, who appeared in the flesh between the two Testaments, God the Father deigned to reveal His will to the human race. In this sense it can also be understood what Habakkuk says: "In the midst of two animals you shall make yourself known" (Habakkuk III). However, the ark can also figuratively be understood as the holy Church, which is built from incorruptible wood, that is, holy souls, and stretched out in the faith of the holy Gospel through the four corners of the world, expecting the crown of eternal life from God.

It holds in itself the tablets of the Testament in continuous meditation on God's law, and also a golden urn with manna in faith of the Lord's incarnation, and also the rod of Aaron; which

had budded, in participation of the kingdom and priesthood of the Lord, as the apostle Peter says: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood" (I Peter II). It has a mercy seat above, so that all the good things it possesses, it remembers to have received by the gift of divine grace. It also has the Cherubim of glory on the mercy seat, either as angelic supports, with which it is always helped by God in His mercy, or the Testaments, by which it is taught how to live and how to rightly seek the help of living rightly from divine propitiation. Thus the Cherubim are placed above the mercy seat, as the city of Christ, that is, the holy Church, is said to be established upon the mountain, that is, upon Christ Himself: not that the city can be higher than Him, but that it progresses supported by His aid. The ark has Cherubim above the mercy seat: because either angelic ministries or divine words help the Church more truly, the more it is established on the foundation of supreme truth.

CHAPTER VI. Description of the Table. Make a table of setim wood, etc. The table made of setim wood represents the sacred Scripture, composed of the strong words and deeds of the holy Fathers, which, while showing us what the joys of eternal blessedness are and how to attain them, indeed offers us the food of salvation and life. It has length, when it indicates the perseverance of our initiated religion; breadth, when it indicates the breadth of charity; height, when it insinuates the hope of eternal reward. And well the length is of two cubits because our actual conversation consists mainly in two virtues, namely mercy and innocence: as the Apostle James says: Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world (James 1). For in commanding us to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, it shows that we ought mercifully to act towards all who are in need: in admonishing us to keep ourselves unstained from this world, it signifies in what respects we ought to live chastely ourselves. The Lord Himself declared that these two cubits of good action belong to the table of His words, when He said: Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning (Luke 12). By having our loins girded, we remain immune from the contagion of this world. By having our lamps burning, we shine brightly before the Lord by our works of mercy. The following:

And you like men who wait for their lord when he returns from the wedding, pertains to the height of the table, that is, to the hope of future reward. That the table has one cubit in breadth figuratively denotes the unity of that same love, which the whole series of the Old and New Testaments recommends to us: for there is one charity, that is, the simple and pure devotion of the mind, by which we are commanded to love God, our neighbors, and even our enemies, although we must rightly love God first and our enemies last by a great distance and distinction of that same love. The love we owe to our neighbors also varies according to their merits, as we know from Scripture that while patriarch Jacob loved all his sons, he loved Joseph more than the rest due to his singular merit of innocence. Hence beautifully in the Song of Songs the Church says to Christ: He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love (Songs 2). Further, the height of a cubit and a half equally insinuates the unity of our heavenly hope, by which we await our Lord, when He returns from heaven, to reward the servants whom He finds watching with girded loins, and lamps

burning with good works. For although there are many mansions in the Father's house due to the diversity of merits (John 14), the kingdom of heaven is one, in which all the elect are received.

The remaining half-cubit indicates the beginning of the contemplative life, which some saints, even while still in the flesh, have deserved to enjoy: for they have not only been permitted to hope for heavenly rewards, but also to taste them by vision in part, such as Isaiah and Micah, and the other prophets, who saw the Lord sitting on the throne of His glory, surrounded by the host of angels (Isaiah 6): such as Peter, James, and John, who saw the Lord glorified between Moses and Elijah on the holy mountain (Matthew 17): such as the teacher of the Gentiles, who, before he dissolved the debt of the flesh, was caught up into paradise and the third heaven, and heard secret words which man may not utter (2 Corinthians 12). So also for us, in these and suchlike servants of Christ, the table of the tabernacle, that is, the divine Scripture, by which the Holy Church is ceaselessly refreshed, joins the common hope of one cubit to a half-cubit in height, because it shows them the joys of heavenly happiness in anticipation before it gives them in full: this anticipation, because it appears swiftly and transiently to the minds of the saints, is rightly figured by a half-cubit and not by a complete cubit.

And you shall overlay it with purest gold. The table of the tabernacle is overlaid with gold because the holy Scripture shines with the clarity of heavenly wisdom, and the prophets who composed it were illustrious in life and speech.

And you shall make for it a rim of gold round about. A golden rim is made around the table because the teaching of the sacred word is delivered to us by the most pure mouths of faithful preachers. Nor did the speech of those who handed down the divine mysteries to us ever consent to be tainted by the language of human chatter; rather, they took care to severely rebuke and scorn not only harmful but also idle words of men. Or indeed, a golden rim is made around the table because the holy Scripture, in all parts of its speech, when rightly understood, sounds forth to us the clarity of heavenly wisdom. To this rim, a crown is added; because the tongue of the preachers promises eternal life to its listeners. And fittingly, the crown is commanded to be four fingers high; because the height of the eternal crown is shown to us through the four books of the holy Gospel, or because by the keeping of evangelical faith and action, we are to attain the crown of life. Fittingly, the books are represented by fingers, because the tablets of the law are said to have been written by the finger of God: and in the Gospel, the Lord, moderating the severity of the law, wrote with his finger on the ground, saying of the adulteress whom the Pharisees and scribes accused, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John VIII).

The finger of God, however, is understood as the Spirit of God. Hence that which Luke reports the Lord as saying, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils" (Luke XI). Matthew explained more clearly, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God" (Matthew). Therefore, the golden crown four fingers high is placed over the golden rim of the table; because the purest words of the holy preachers expect the hope of heavenly happiness, which is con-

tained, described by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the four books of the holy Gospel. And not only do the preachers themselves receive the reward of their labor in the heavens, but they also promise the same crown of life, with the assured authority of evangelical truth, to all who obey them. Rightly, however, this same crown is commanded to be made intricately; because the reward of the eternal kingdom is not given indiscriminately to all, but a distinction is divinely distributed to each according to their merit by the judgment. For the golden crown of the Lord's table would be pure and not intricate if the brightness of the future reward for the righteous were revealed equally to all: like this worldly sun, whose splendor God makes to rise indiscriminately on the good and the bad. But as one star differs from another in brightness, so also will be the resurrection of the dead. The crown of the Lord's table is decorated with various distinct carvings, appropriately arranged.

For eternal life in the future is promised to all the righteous, but in it, the glory of each one is manifold according to the diversity of merits. The fact that one crown is first described and then added:

And upon that other gold crown, a small golden crown. The reward of those can rightly be understood, who by a voluntary choice of life transcend the general commandments of Holy Scripture, and therefore expect a special reward of voluntary offering above other faithful ones. For a gold crown four fingers high is placed on the edge of the gold table, when through the Gospel, to those who keep the commandments of the divine law, eternal life is promised: the Lord saying to the rich man: If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 19). But another small golden crown is placed upon the same crown, when it is immediately added: If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me (Ibid.). To this crown pertains that new song, which virgins alone are said to have sung before the Lamb, who were redeemed from among men, firstfruits to God and the Lamb. To this, as well, pertains that they follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev. 14). Or certainly a gold crown is placed on the edge of the table of the Lord, when in the words of Holy Scripture we say, the souls leaving the flesh are to be received for eternal rewards in heaven. And another small golden crown is added upon that, when it is repeated in the same Scripture, that for them a more sublime glory at the end of the world is preserved in the reception also of immortal bodies.

You will also prepare four golden rings, etc. These, as we have explained above about the ark, should also be understood here. For the four golden rings are the books of the four Gospels; through whose faith it came to pass that all holy Scripture would be read and understood throughout the entire world. However, the table has four feet; because the whole series of divine discourses is distinguished by a fourfold reasoning. In all holy books, indeed, it is necessary to observe what is intimated there as eternal, what deeds are narrated, what future things are foretold, what actions are either instructed or advised to be done. Likewise, the table of the tabernacle has four feet; because the word of the heavenly oracle

is customarily accepted in a historical, allegorical, tropological, that is, moral, or certainly anagogical method. For history is when some matter, how it was done or said according to the letter, is related in plain speech: how the people of Israel, saved from Egypt, are narrated to have made a tabernacle for the Lord in the desert. Allegory is when the sacraments of Christ and the Church are signified by words or mystical things: by words, notably, as Isaiah says: "A rod will come out from the root of Jesse, and a flower will ascend from his root" (Isa. 11). Which is plainly to say: The Virgin Mary will be born from the lineage of David, and Christ will arise from her lineage.

However, by things, as the people saved from Egyptian servitude by the blood of the Lamb signifies the Church, which is freed from demonic domination by the passion of Christ. Tropology, that is, moral discourse, looks towards the correction and establishment of morals, either conveyed in plain or figurative terms. Plainly, as John admonishes, saying: "My little children, let us not love in word or tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3). Figuratively, as Solomon says: "At all times let your garments be white, and let oil not fail on your head" (Eccl. 9). Which is plainly to say: At all times let your works be pure, and let charity not fail from your heart. Anagogy, which leads to higher things, is a discourse that discusses future rewards and that future life in heaven, either in mystical or plain terms. Plainly, as: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5). Mystically, as: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates" (Rev. 22). Which is openly to say: Blessed are those who cleanse their thoughts and actions, so that they may have the right to see the Lord Christ, who says: "I am the way and the truth and the life"; and through the teaching and examples of the preceding fathers, may enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Under the crown shall be golden rings, etc. Fittingly, there shall be rings under the crown, because we use the books of the Holy Gospel in this life, while we hope for the crown of life to come in heaven. Through these rings, indeed, rods are inserted to carry the table, because the holy teachers, in order to refresh the hearts of their listeners with the words of the sacred Scriptures, must themselves always keep their minds fixed on the evangelical readings, so that they direct all their understanding and interpretation to the intention of their teaching, and they carefully ensure that they teach nothing else to be done, hoped for, or loved in all the Scriptures than what is found in the four books of the Gospel. While they refer all the utterances of the Scriptures to the faith and love written in the Gospel, they are, as it were, carrying the entire Lord's table with its loaves and vessels on four rings.

CHAPTER VII. Description of the vessels of the table and the loaves of proposition. You shall prepare bowls and chalices, etc. Various vessels made for offering libations represent different distinctions of divine eloquence, corresponding to the diverse capacities of the listeners. For the same doctrine cannot be suitable for everyone: the wise must be taught one way, the foolish another; the rich in one manner, the poor in another; the healthy differently from the sick; the old from the young; men from women; singles from married persons; superiors from subordinates. Nevertheless, all these vessels pertain to the table of the tabernacle

and to offering libations, because whatever a prudent teacher speaks, differing according to the diversity of the listeners, all is found within the rule of Holy Scripture and stirs the hearts of the listeners to offer vows of good works to the Lord. This fitting diversity of holy preaching was signified by the mouth of the Lord Himself when He said: "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom the Lord has set over His household, to give them their portion of grain in due season?" (Matthew 24). For the faithful and wise steward gives the measure of grain to his fellow servants in due season, when a discerning minister of the word not only observes the proper time for speaking but also diligently considers the nature and intelligence of the listeners, and adjusts the manner of his speech according to their differences.

And you shall place upon the table the bread of the Presence, etc. The bread of the Presence placed upon the table always represents spiritual teachers, who, meditating on the law of the Lord day and night, offer the nourishment of the heavenly word to all who enter the Church. These are rightly called the bread of the Presence because the word of salvation must always be openly available to all the faithful, and the comforting word should never be absent in the Church for devout listeners. The Lord, through the heralds of truth, presents this to the world such that it should always appear before Him and continually abound to the end of the world for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Concerning this bread in Leviticus, it is more fully related how many and what kind of loaves are to be made, or how they should be placed, as the Lord says to Moses: "You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it, each loaf being two-tenths of an ephah. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the Lord. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion, an offering made by fire to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord continually; it is an everlasting covenant on the behalf of the children of Israel.

And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place" (Leviticus 24). Where clearly, in the very number of the loaves twelve, the figure of the twelve apostles is prefigured, whom the Lord, appearing in the flesh, first chose, by whose ministry He would give the bread of life to all nations. Hence, to the hungry crowds in the desert, He says to the same disciples, namely to our apostles: "You give them something to eat. And after feeding five thousand men with five loaves, they themselves collected twelve baskets of fragments (Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6), because indeed it is the role of the apostles and apostolic men to grasp the mysteries of the Scriptures which the crowds cannot. Therefore, the twelve loaves on the tabernacle's table are the twelve apostles and all their followers in the Church. Since until the end of the world they do not cease to nourish God's people with the food of the word, the twelve loaves of the Presence never depart from the Lord's table. And fittingly, these loaves are ordered not to be made from any type of flour, but from fine flour: because it is necessary that those who minister the word of life to others must themselves first excel in the fruits of virtues, so that what they admonish by preaching they also commend by practicing, shaped by the example of Him who said of Himself:

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone" (John 12). Moreover, it is fitting that these loaves are commanded to be set in two rows, indicating the harmony of charity and fellowship, for the Lord is also reported to have sent the disciples out two by two to preach: figuratively suggesting that holy teachers never differ from one another either in the assertion of truth or in the effect of love. But that which is placed over the bread, the purest incense, signifies the power of prayer, because the same teachers commend their ministry of preaching and the devotion of their work to the Lord. For the Psalmist testifies that prayer is signified by incense, who says: "Let my prayer be directed as incense before you" (Psalm 140). And the purest incense is placed over the bread as a commemoration of the Lord's offering, when pure prayer is added to the holy actions and teachings of the saints. By these two things being rightly joined, the memory of the holy offering always appears in the sight of the highest judge. However, it is well commanded that the bread before the Lord be changed every Sabbath;

for the bread that was placed on the Lord's table for six days of work is changed for us on the Sabbath, when the teachers of the holy Church, having completed the time of their holy labor, are rewarded with eternal rest in the heavens, and they leave others after them to labor in the same work of preaching the word, under the same hope of reward. And so it happens that the Lord's table never remains without bread, but as soon as one bread is taken away, another is substituted in its place, while ministers of the word succeed each other in order, so that the Church is never lacking in those who, apostolically, show the faith of piety or purity of action, both in words and deeds. That most beautiful sentence remains always in the praise of the same holy Church: "In place of your fathers, your sons are born; you will make them princes over all the earth" (Psalm 45), as if it were said to the tabernacle of the Lord in other words: "In place of your old loaves, new ones are prepared for you, you will make them a refreshment for the spiritual hearts of the faithful throughout the whole world. Therefore, the loaves were changed for loaves, but the table always stood the same in the tabernacle because teachers of the word come and go, and, yielding to others, others succeed in their order.

However, the sacred Scripture remains unabolished by any ages, until in the end of the world, with the Lord appearing, we will neither need the Scriptures nor their interpreters anymore, fulfilling that most longed-for prophecy of the Lord, which says: "And no one will teach his neighbor, and no one his brother, saying: Know the Lord, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31). According to Josephus (Antiquities, Book III, Chapter 13), the loaves were baked before the Sabbath, divided into pairs before the Sabbath, and on the Sabbath morning they were placed on the sacred table, facing one another, with two golden bowls full of incense placed over them, which remained until the next Sabbath. Then others were brought instead of those, and they were given to the priests. With the incense burned on the sacred fire, on which all holocausts were made, other incense was added over the other loaves, and it is written in the book of Kings that when David entered the tabernacle, he received the holy loaves from the priests, which happened on the Sabbath morning. He came to the tabernacle at that

hour when the loaves of the previous week were taken from the Lord's table, so that the new loaves, which were baked the day before, might be placed there; and thus he took the holy loaves so that not even for a moment would the Lord's table be without bread.

Hence, it is worthwhile to consider more closely that the loaves were commanded to be changed every Sabbath: for they were changed so that each of them would be placed on the table on the Sabbath and again taken away on the Sabbath for the priests to eat; and indeed, they appeared on the table for six days of work, but they were set on the table on the Sabbath, the day of rest, and taken away again the next Sabbath. What else can we mystically understand from this order of placement, except that holy teachers, or rather, all the just, after their good works which shine in the Church, reach rest, and are incited to work good deeds by the hope of future rest and beatitude? Therefore, the loaves were placed on the Lord's table on the Sabbath with the intention of those who placed them that they might remain there through the six days of working; and after these days had passed, with the arrival of the next Sabbath, they were consumed for the refreshment of the high priest and his sons: because evidently, at the beginning of our devotion to God we are promised rest and eternal life, but on the condition that we ought to attain it through the labors and good works of temporal life. By what reasoning, then, this consumption of the loaves of proposition by the high priest and his sons pertains to the entrance into heavenly life will be more aptly explained in the exposition of the following verse.

The same loaves, moreover, were accepted by the sons of Israel, because those who are to undertake the rank of priesthood or doctrine should be chosen and appointed from the company of God's spiritual servants. As to the conclusion added, "They shall be for Aaron and his sons," this can be understood in two mystical ways. For Aaron ate with his sons the holy loaves taken from the table of the tabernacle when our high priest introduces the elect taken from this life into the increase of his body, which is in heaven, that is, into the great multitude of the elect. Or indeed, the holy loaves will be for Aaron and his sons, when each prelate, and those subject to them in the Lord, are nourished for eternal life by the examples of the preceding fathers.

CHAPTER VIII. The Lampstand. You shall also make a lampstand of pure beaten gold. The lampstand of the tabernacle, like the table, signifies the universal Church of the present time. For this reason, they are before the veil, within which the ark of the covenant is placed; because it has not yet been deemed worthy to enter into the vision of its Redeemer in heaven. But it is a table; because to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, it daily provides heavenly sustenance, lest they falter in temptations. It is a lampstand; because it shows the path of light to those who wander. It is both a table and a lampstand; because taught by the sacred scriptures it has learned both to satisfy the hungry soul with good things, and to provide the lamp of the word to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Indeed, while it humbly subjects itself to this lamp, entailing the deeds that the word of God commands, restraining itself from its own pleasures, lifting itself up from visible joys to hope for the rewards and to love the promises, it becomes as it were the lampstand of it;

because it places the sovereign heavenly command above all its own pleasures, humbling itself, and showing the clarity of the word of God to all by both preaching and doing.

His shaft, reeds, cups, etc. The shaft of the lampstand, He who is the Head of the Church, the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, should be understood. Of whose body, which we are, as reeds proceeding from the shaft, the Apostle says: From whom the whole body, supplied and constructed through joints and ligaments, grows with the growth of God (Col. II): for indeed the Almighty God, our Redeemer, who in Himself has nothing to increase, still has growth daily through His members. The reeds proceeding from the shaft are therefore preachers, who, instituted by the Lord, have produced a sweet sound in the world, that is, a new song. The reeds are all the children of the Church, who willingly obey Him (the prophet saying: Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the ends of the earth [Psalm 31]), resounding praise to the Lord and saying: And He directed my steps, and He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn to our God (Psalm 30). Because cups are usually filled with wine, not unreasonably they are interpreted as the minds of those who hear, which are filled with the wine of knowledge at the voice of the preachers. And because the hearts of the faithful, intoxicated with the wine of inner love, tend toward God with tireless desire, correctly in the lampstand after the cups spheres are made; for a sphere can turn in every direction, since indeed the minds of the elect can be neither detained by the adversities of the world nor corrupted by its prosperities, but in everything that happens, they progress to God through holy desires. And well after the reeds, cups, and spheres, lilies are designated in the lampstand; because after the grace of preaching, after the intoxication of spiritual drink, after the unreturnable course of holy operation, that verdant country follows, which flourishes with eternal flowers for holy souls.

Six reeds extend from the sides, etc. It is well known that the number six, in which the world was made, signifies the perfection of works. But since it is set forth in the description of the reeds in such a way that it is divided into two sets of three, it is better to speak of the number three. For three reeds extend from one side of the shaft, and three from the other; because there were teachers before the coming of the Lord in the flesh who would designate the faith of the holy Trinity with mystical voice, and preach as much as the unlearned could still grasp. Hence, the saying of the Psalmist: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33). Indeed by the name of the Lord, the Father; by the name of the Word, the Son; and by the Spirit itself by its own name, he calls it the breath of his mouth. He thereby designates that the power, will, and operation of this holy Trinity is one, since he asserts that both the heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all their host by the spirit of his mouth. There are now teachers who openly preach the same faith of the Holy Trinity, so that all who belong to Christ ought to be consecrated by the same faith: as the Lord says to the apostles:

"Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28). Hence Paul, praying for the faithful and desiring that they be strengthened by the accepted faith in the Trinity, says: "The grace of our Lord

Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13). Again, three reeds extend from one side of the candlestick, and three extend from the other: because both before and after the Lord's incarnation, there were three ranks of those who served the Lord faithfully in the Church, namely the married, the continent, and the rulers: whose distinction the prophet Ezekiel mystically describes, when at the coming of the punishment he predicted that only three men, namely Noah, Daniel, and Job, would be delivered (Ezekiel 14). For indeed, in Noah, who directed the ark upon the waves, there are the leaders of the Church: in Daniel, who aimed to live chastely in the royal court, there are the continent or virgins: in Job, who, placed in married life, provided everyone a remarkable example of patience, the life of good married people is shown. Similarly, the Lord in the New Testament under a figure indicates the difference between them who in the bed, in the field, in the mill are to be found on the day of judgment (Matthew 24; Luke 17). Of these, He says that some are to be taken and some to be left.

For indeed, in the bed is symbolized the rest of the continent, in agriculture the industry of the preachers, in the turning of the mill, the labor of the married is expressed. And because in all these ranks some should be chosen, some indeed to be rejected, it rightly says of each one: Because one out of two shall be taken, and the other shall be left. And since among the chosen ones the merit of preaching is more exalted than those who merely apply themselves to continence and not also to the work of teaching, likewise the life of the continent is more exalted than that of the married: thus the supreme reeds, which arose from the shaft on both sides, denote those who dedicated themselves to the studies of doctrine among other virtues in both Testaments. Rightly lower reeds, equally emerging from each side of the shaft, symbolize the life of the continent devoted to God; rightly the lowest reeds, also originating from the same stem of the single candlestick, typify the life of good married people, faithfully serving the one and the same Lord in the time of both Testaments. Therefore, reeds emerge from the shaft at different places, yet all, each in its own place and order, being bent upwards, reach a single summit, so that they may preserve an equally positioned light above them; because, indeed, the chosen, though distinct in the degrees of their merits, are imbued with one faith of truth, destined to reach one light of eternal truth in heaven:

and the more one strived to cleave to Christ in this life, the closer they shall enjoy the vision of Him in that life, so that of certain people it may be said for the great merit of their virtue: These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14). Of whom it was stated just before, as of the reeds near the candlestick: And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders (ibid.). Where it is shown that all the saints in the streets of that upper city sing a new song of joy to the Lord. But those are especially uplifted in the joy of song above others who, here, have transcended the general life of the faithful by the privilege of sacred virginity.

Three goblets, as in the shape of a nut, etc. It is customary for a nut to be placed in the figure of the present Church, confirmed by Solomon, who speaks on behalf of faithful teachers: "I

have descended," he says in the Song of Songs, "into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley" (Cant. VI). For just as a nut has a sweet fruit inside, but cannot show this outwardly unless the hardness of the shell is broken, so the present life of the just keeps the sweetness of spiritual grace in the innermost heart, so that how great it is from nearby cannot be fully seen until, after the removal of the body's domicile, their souls in celestial light may freely see each other, and how much each shines with the grace of the Holy Spirit, how each is loved by the other, may in no way remain hidden from anyone. And thus goblets are made in the candlestick in the manner of a nut, when any of the elect desiring to be filled with the wine of wisdom hasten to form themselves after the example of the preceding just, whom they know to be full of the great sweetness and love of invisible goods. But the fact that there were three goblets, spheroids, and lilies for each branch signifies the three differences of times in which the elect lived both before the Lord's incarnation and afterwards devoted to God.

For there were just ones before the law, there were under the law, there were in the times of the prophets. Similarly, after the Lord's ascension, the primitive Church was gathered from Israel, is now gathered from the gentiles, and is to be gathered at the end of the world from the remnants of Israel. Therefore the first branch on one side had three goblets, spheroids, and lilies because on the part of teachers before the Lord's incarnation there were three orders of those who, like goblets, thirsted for a draught of heavenly grace, ran most promptly into the way of the Lord, like spheroids, and joyfully expected the gift of a heavenly reward, like the whiteness and fragrance of lilies: that is, before the law, under the law, under the prophets. The second branch also had three goblets, spheroids, and lilies, because the continent of that time equally contained three orders of saints in the aforementioned distinction of times, desiring spiritual drink, running on the path of the Lord's commandments, and awaiting heavenly rewards. The third branch similarly had three goblets, spheroids, and lilies: because there were many married before the law, many under the law, many in the days of the prophets, who rejoiced to hear the word of the Lord, to run in his way, to expect the rewards of good works from him. Also on the other side of the shaft, the first branch, the second, and the third, had three goblets and spheroids, three lilies as well:

because in the New Testament, both in teachers, and in the continent, and in married people devoted to God, there were three orders of different times: that is, in the primitive Church from Israel, in our election from the gentiles, in the final gathering of the remnants of Israel, all of whom in their proper time desire to be intoxicated with the word of life, to hasten in the way of peace, to see the brightness of eternal light.

On the lampstand itself there will be four cups, etc. We have said that the lampstand itself, that is, the middle stem of the lampstand from which the branches proceeded, represents the Lord Savior; from whose grace the righteous have received whatever good they possess. Therefore, in the Gospel, when He said to the disciples: I am the vine, you are the branches; He immediately added: As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me (John 15). It is as if He were saying in other words:

I am the lampstand, and you are my branches: just as a branch cannot lift itself to support the lamp unless it remains fixed in the stem of the lampstand, neither can you bear the light of truth and faith within yourselves unless you abide in Me. Surely in this lampstand, there are four cups because in the four books of the holy Gospel, which are written about the Lord, we find the taste of new wine, that is, of heavenly doctrine, which not old wineskins, that is, minds still clinging to earthly desires, but only hearts renewed by the Spirit of grace can hold. In each cup, there are little spheres along with deformed lilies, because the same Lord, who has offered us the cup of spiritual wisdom, has also shown us the path of pious operation to be straightforward and unfaltering:

and that we may have it, He Himself will grant it, and so that we might not run in vain, He promised us the brightness of the heavenly homeland to which we should aim; and He has opened this access to us by His grace, or surely, because under two branches the cups, spheres, and lilies are commanded to be made in three places. We can mystically interpret these things in this way: because to the three stages of the faithful—namely, the married, the continent, and the virgins, about whom we have often spoken—He revealed the doctrine of truth, commanded the course of good work, and promised and granted the blessing of an everlasting and incorruptible inheritance. And it is fitting that the cups, globes, and lilies of the lampstand are ordered not to be above the stalks, but below them; because the hearts of the preachers, indeed of all the elect, are sustained by the gifts, commandments, and promises of the Lord, so that they might not fall into the depths, and are raised to love and seek the heavenly things. Hence, the holy Church, that is, the bride of Christ, glories in Him, saying: "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand will embrace me" (Cant. II). For the bridegroom's left hand is placed under the bride's head; because the Lord, separating the minds of the faithful from earthly pleasures and desires with temporal benefits, raises them to hope and desire for eternal goods.

And His right hand will embrace her, because the vision of His divine majesty revealed will glorify her without end.

The cups, globes, and lilies are fittingly under the two stalks, because in both Testaments, although varying in ceremonies, the same devotion of serving the Lord is commanded, the same glory of the heavenly kingdom is preserved for the faithful. However, the fourth cup, globe, and lily, which were above all the stalks near the top of the lampstand itself, pertain specifically to the Lord the Savior; who not only grants the knowledge of virtues, the operation, and the reward to His elect, but also in Himself, the same man Christ showed the figure of the cup when He declared Himself full of the Holy Spirit. He showed the form of the globe when appearing in the world, without any obstacle of the surrounding things, He rejoiced like a giant to run His course (Psal. XVIII). He showed the appearance of the lily when rising from the dead and ascending to the heavens, He was glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world existed (John XVII). And rightly here, the cup, the globe, and the lily stood out higher than the stalks; because indeed the gifts which God the Father conferred on the Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ,

transcend every measure of human capacity. For to each one of us, grace has been given according to the measure of Christ's gift. In Christ Himself, as the Apostle says, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Eph. IV). Furthermore, it follows:

And therefore both the spheres and the branches from it, etc. For all the work of the lampstand, that is both the central shaft, and the branches proceeding from it, with all their ornamentation, are made of gold; because the Lord Himself, particularly free from sin, and distinguished in all works of righteousness, appeared in the world; and His members, in this interim life, imitate the same innocence and righteousness as much as they are able; but in the future, they truly progress by adhering to Him. And aptly the same gold was ductile, for ductile gold is produced by striking; because our Redeemer, who was perfect God and man from conception and birth, endured the pains of suffering, and thus arrived at the glory of resurrection: and all who desire to live piously in Him suffer persecution (II Tim. III), because they also, like metal expanded by striking, advance through the insults of suffering into the grace of immortality. Hence also in the fourth psalm, which is inscribed, In the songs, which in the mystic branches of faith, the Church says to its Redeemer: You have enlarged me in tribulation. As if the ductile gold were to say to its maker: You have enlarged me by the smith's striking, and by striking have given me greater progress.

Chapter IX. The Lamps of the Candlestick and the Snuffers. "You shall make seven lamps," etc. The lamps are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; which always remained whole in our Lord and Redeemer, and were distributed among His members, that is, all the elect, according to His will. Thus, the seven lamps are placed on the candlestick because the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety, rested upon our firstborn Redeemer from the root of Jesse, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord filled him (Isaiah XI). And as the same one speaks through the same prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me" (Isaiah LXI). What is said, "That they may shine towards the front"; this is what the prophet subsequently added: "To proclaim good news to the humble, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.

For the lamps of the candlestick shone towards the front and lighted up the Lord's tabernacle, when the Lord, being full of grace and truth, granted us all from His fullness, and grace for grace, when He entrusted the word of the Gospel to the meek and poor in spirit, when He granted the marrow of forgiveness to the penitent, when He declared that now is the time to please the Lord, but the future will be the day of universal judgment. This number and position of the lamps is in harmony with what John says in Revelation: "And I saw, and behold, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Revelation V). For if the seven horns there, or the seven eyes of the Lamb, can signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: why should not the same also be believed to be signified by the seven lamps of the

candlestick by merit? Indeed, as it is rightly signified by the horns and eyes on account of the omnipotence of the power by which He governs all things, and the fullness of knowledge by which He sees all things;

so too the same septiform Spirit is aptly expressed through the figure of the lamps, on account of the light of grace by which He illuminates the darkness of our blindness in the night of this world. Hence it is aptly subjoined:

Dust-cloths also, and where those things which are wiped off are extinguished, etc. For there are certain precepts in the divine Scriptures that must always be observed both in this life and in the future, by perpetual law: such as this, Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exod. XX): and, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matth. XXII, Luc. X). There are others which are commanded to be observed throughout this entire life, but receive the eternal reward of their observance in the future life: such as the one from the Gospel, Make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations (Luc. XVI). For here alms should be given for a time, there the fruit of those alms is to be received eternally. There are also others which were diligently commanded by the Lord to be observed in the time of the Old Testament:

now with the Gospel shining throughout the world, they are commanded to be observed in the Church not according to the letter, but according to the mystical sense, such as the observance of the Sabbath, the rites of sacrifices, and the blood of the Paschal lamb, and other things of this kind, which in their appropriate time were solemnly kept by the people of God, like wicks burning in the lamps of the candelabrum, filled with the oil of pious devotion and kindled by the fire of the heavenly word: but when it was preached by the apostles and apostolic men that an end was imposed by the Lord to these and the like observances, all these are to be kept more spiritually in the Church rather than according to the letter. As if the wicks of the candelabrum were being wiped so that they could shine brighter when renewed, because they provided the light of the saving doctrine to the Church, more sublimely understood through the Spirit. About this renewal of the lamps of the tabernacle, that is, the more sublime understanding of the divine Scriptures, the Lord promises His people in Leviticus, saying: You will multiply and I will establish my covenant with you. You will eat the old store long kept, and you will cast out the old to accommodate the new incoming. For with the children of Israel multiplied, the covenant of God was confirmed with them:

when also the Gentiles were called to the faith, the grace of the New Testament was planted in the hearts of the elect with a firm root. And we eat the most ancient of the old, when we retain in the sweet memory of the heart the old commandment, which from the beginning was given to the human race: loving the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength; and loving our neighbor as ourselves. And we cast away the old things with the coming of the new, when we cease to observe the typical statutes of the Mosaic Law according to the letter; but the same, more graciously understood through the spirit,

we keep with a heart renewed in hope of the heavenly kingdom: according to that of the Apostle, "If therefore any be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. V). And in the Apocalypse, "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Apoc. XXI). Now the snuffers by which these things were done are the very words of sacred oratory, by which it is clearly designated that the letter of the law is to be dissolved in many respects, and to be kept only with a spiritual sense. Among these is that in the Acts of the Apostles, where the Gentile believers are prohibited from being circumcised and are commanded to obey evangelic grace without the ceremonies of legal sacrifices.

And what the Apostle, explaining a verse of the Psalm to the Hebrews, said, previously saying: "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure in them, which are offered according to the law; then he said, "Behold, I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. X). He takes away the first, that he may establish the second: in which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ Jesus. Therefore, the snuffers, and the vessels where those things that are snuffed out are extinguished, are made of the purest gold; because both the divine words, by which the cessation of legal ceremonies is preached, and the hearts of those, in whom the same figurative shadow of the law takes an end, are illuminated by the grace of God, that the succeeding truth of the Gospel might shine more clearly to the world. For it is well known that the first apostles loosened the Sabbath in the Gospel before the passion of the Lord, and after the ascension of the Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit, they utterly put an end to the legal sacrifices, and changed many decrees of the letter of the law to the evangelical grace of liberty. Therefore, in these, the snuffers by which those things that were snuffed out extinguished: in which the literal observation being completed, exhibited the beginning of grace more clearly shining to the world.

Likewise, because the mortal life being finished, and immortal life succeeding, the greatest part of the works or gifts of light, which we now use, will cease, that the rewards of eternal light might follow in the presence of the divine vision. Those testimonies of the Scriptures, which testify that these things will be, are certainly golden snuffers, which by the hope of future brightness are excellent. The vessels also in which those things that are snuffed out are extinguished, are doubtless the bodies and hearts of all the righteous immortal. And therefore most rightly compared to gold, in which this most desirable change will be made, that after the temporal benefits of God, they may come to the eternal. Finally, the Apostle provides us golden snuffers of the lamps of God, and places where those which are snuffed out are extinguished, when he speaks of the difference between present and future goods, saying: "Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. And a little later: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Cor. XIII).

All the weight of the candlestick... a talent of the purest gold. All the weight of the candlestick with all its vessels is the whole body of Christ, with the very head of our Mediator between God and men, and with all His chosen ones from the highest to the lowest, from those of whom no one is greater among those born of women down to those of whom He says: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones who believe in me" (Matthew 18). Indeed, all these, although in different ranks, ages, sexes, conditions, abilities, and times, cling with the fixed root of their mind to one and the same Author and Giver of perpetual light, each in their own time and place, as if to a golden candlestick, so that they may become participants in the same light. This candlestick, in fact, is properly said to have to be a talent of the purest gold, for a talent is a full and perfect weight: "Because the Lord is righteous in all his ways" (Psalm 145); and He who in this life grants His grace to the faithful to act well, in the next life renders the crown of justice to their good works. On the other hand, the prophet Zechariah describes iniquity sitting upon the talent of lead (Zechariah 5); because He will also render to the reprobates in the same just examination according to their deeds: "You will render to each one according to his works" (Psalm 62).

But it makes a difference whether someone brings gold or lead to the divine judgment. For those who, like gold, shine with good works advance to the Lord's candlestick, because they become participants in the glory of their Creator. But those who appear heavy with sins in the strict examination are submerged like lead in the very deep water; because by the merit of their crimes they fall into the abyss of grievous punishment. Yet, both lead and gold have the measure of a talent; because both in condemning the wicked and in saving and crowning the elect, the judgment of our Creator is just.

Look, and make according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain. The mystery of this commandment is very easily evident from those things which were explained above. For an example of the lampstand that Moses would make was shown to him on the mountain; because in the height of intimate contemplation he clearly learned the manifold sacraments of Christ and the Church; however, he did not want to openly declare these to the people whom he was teaching, but rather typified them through the figure and work of the lampstand and its vessels, until the Lord and our Redeemer Himself would come in the flesh, who would reveal the inner sense of that figure to His Church by giving the grace of the Holy Spirit: so that by dying on the cross He tore the veil of the temple, and revealed the secrets of the holy places that had been covered; and after the resurrection, appearing to his disciples, He opened their minds, so that with the eyes of their minds spiritually revealed, they might perceive these and other secrets of the Scriptures. But every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is also commanded diligently to follow and to teach others those things which he has learned in the holy writings about the catholic faith or holy action, what else is he enjoined to do but to look and make according to the pattern that was shown to him on the mountain?

For he diligently looks at the shown pattern, and returning to the lower things, he makes it, when he carefully examines with a devoted heart those things which through the sublimity

of the divine word he understands to be believed or acted upon within: and he always shows to his hearers the pattern of these things both by the execution of righteous work and by the word of salutary doctrine; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Son together with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

BOOK SECOND. CHAPTER ONE. Description of the tabernacle and the temple. The tabernacle will indeed be made thus. The tabernacle made by Moses in the wilderness, just as the temple which Solomon made in Jerusalem, signifies the state of the holy universal Church, which partly already reigns with the Lord in the heavens, and partly, in this present life still, with its departing and succeeding members, is a pilgrim away from the Lord. Indeed, in the construction of each house, this is usually the principal distinction of the figures: that the tabernacle designates the present building of the Church, where daily it is exercised in labors, and the temple signifies the future rest, which is completed by the daily reception of souls departing hence after their labors. For Moses made the tabernacle with the people of God while they were still in the way, going to the promised land; Solomon, however, built the temple when he had gained possession of the promised land and the kingdom in it. Moses made the tabernacle in the wilderness, Solomon made the temple in Jerusalem, which means 'vision of peace'; for here indeed the Church is built in the labor and affliction of the passing life, in thirst and hunger for the perpetual kingdom; but there it is consummated in the vision and perception of true peace.

Hence it was well said in the construction of the temple that the hammer and axe and all iron tools were not heard in it when it was being built, with all the stones and woods prepared outside Jerusalem, and properly fitted into their positions: which there most easily and undoubtedly were each returned to its place, either with cement or nails; because in the peace of supreme blessedness there is no need for our faith to be tested by tribulations, or for our life to be proved, but what was chastened here in the present age and fitted regularly for the heavenly seats, there with the glue and bonds of mutual charity, so that it cannot be dissolved perpetually, must be joined together in the sight of its Creator and King. For when the heart and soul of the multitude of believers become one in this life, and all things are common to them, what are they but the living stones squared into the building of the future house of the Lord, which, being transferred from here and there, without any laborious delay, are inserted into their proper places, and joined to each other by the bond of divine and their own love? Moreover, the figure of each sanctuary can be generally distinguished thus. The work of the tabernacle signifies the time of the synagogue, that is, the ancient people of God: but the work of the temple signifies the Church, that is, that multitude of the elect, which came to life after the Lord's incarnation:

for Moses completed the tabernacle with only the Hebrew people, but Solomon perfected the temple with the gathered multitude of proselytes, also being assisted by the king of Tyre with his artisans, who were neither Jews by nature nor profession. For it is evident that in the former people of God, their teachers were presided over only from among their own race; but as for the Church, its first governors were indeed from the Hebrews: but soon, as it grew

and expanded throughout the world, its builders rose also from the Gentiles, so that even the evangelist Luke, and Timothy and Titus, apostolic men from the calling of the Gentiles, came to its leadership. But if we inspect each detail more diligently, the construction of each house mystically describes the state of the entire present Church, which from the beginning of worldly condition to the last one who is to be born at the end of the age, always continues to be built: and it also wonderfully depicts the glory of future life, which it now partly enjoys, but after the end of this age, will enjoy eternally in all its members, with the truth of the figures marvelously represented.

Therefore, as we are about to say something about the tabernacle, with the Lord's help, invoking Him first with humble prayer, we beseech that the eyes of our heart may be revealed, so that we might be able to consider the wonders of His law, and understand that the adornment of pernicious metals and garments is recommended to us as the decoration of morals, shining with faith and devotion. For surely otherwise that apostolic word cannot apply to us, where he says: "For you are the temple of the living God" (II Cor. VI), as God says: "For I will dwell in them, and walk among them" (Levit. XXVI). And what John heard, a great voice from the throne saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (Apoc. XXI), unless we imitate the ornamentation of the material tabernacle or temple with the religious adornment of the cleanliness of heart and body of the world. But before we discuss the spiritual sense, let us first briefly look at the material text of the letter itself. The tabernacle was a house consecrated to the Lord, having thirty cubits in length, ten cubits in width, and equally ten cubits in height, having a roof level through the whole, as is the custom in Egypt and Palestine to build houses. Its three walls, southern, northern, and western, were compacted of wooden boards, gilded on both sides.

Furthermore, for the eastern part, there was one bar, where the entrance was, which extended through the middle of the boards from corner to corner, that is from the top end of one wall to the top of the other wall. On it rested the curtains of the tabernacle and the roof, where also a tent was suspended by five columns. The house, moreover, was covered all around and above with curtains woven in wonderful variety, which was properly called the tabernacle. This was also covered all around with curtains of goat's hair, reaching down to the ground. There was also another covering on the roof made of ram skins dyed red. Again, above this, there was another covering of hyacinth-dyed skins. There was also a veil embroidered with variegated work, hanging on four columns, which divided the sanctuary and the holy of holies: within which was placed the Ark of the Covenant, and in front of the Ark outside the veil was the altar of incense. Likewise, in the middle of the sanctuary itself was a lampstand on the south side. The table stood on the north side; the altar of burnt offering outside before the entrance of the sanctuary; the bronze basin between this altar and the tabernacle. And around all of this was the court of the tabernacle, having a length of one hundred cubits and a width of fifty cubits.

Therefore, for the sake of elucidation, we briefly introduce these matters, so that through these words of history we might be able to reach a deeper and clearer understanding of the

allegorical sense. When the Lord had taken Moses to Himself on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, and was delivering the ceremonies of the law and the manner of living, He said among other things:

CHAPTER II. The Ten Curtains (Exodus XXVI). But you shall make the Tabernacle, etc. The Tabernacle of the Lord is made from curtains varied in different colors; because the holy universal Church is built from many chosen persons, from many Churches throughout the world, and from various flowers of virtues. All its perfection is contained in the number ten; because the Church throughout the world, spread among different nations, tribes, peoples, and languages, subsists wholly in the love of God and neighbor alone, which is encompassed by the Decalogue of the law. Nor can anyone otherwise truthfully reach the members of the Church unless he has learned to love with a whole heart both Him by whom the Church is built, and those in whom the Church is built; that is, God and His chosen ones. The various decorative colors with which these curtains are distinguished are the grace of various virtues, by which the holy Church, composed by marvelous and entirely heavenly craftsmanship, shines in the sight of its Creator: with this variety, and as it were with embroidered work, blessed Peter endeavored to build the Tabernacle of God when he said: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4). Paul saw this present in the curtains of the Tabernacle, that is, in the minds of the faithful, when he says:

"To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12), and the rest of that passage. And indeed the fine linen, which is mentioned first, because it designates the ornament of virtues, John testifies in the Apocalypse, saying: "For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready, and to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright" (Revelation 19): for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Solomon speaks of the same wife of the Lamb, that is, the Church of Christ: "She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple" (Proverbs 31). However, John, in expounding the figure of one color, suggests that the others also should be interpreted figuratively. Therefore, the fine linen, which indeed comes forth from the earth, but extracted from the earth, through long process of drying, beating, purifying, scalding, and spinning, is accustomed to lose its grassy hue and to take on a bright white color, represents bodies adorned with the beauty of chastity: who, born indeed of the allurements of the flesh, through great labor of continence, as it were, sweat out the native moisture, and attain to the decoration of purity worthy of God by diligent fasting and watchings, prayers and readings, patience and humility. About them, the apostolic words might rightly be said:

"Or do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6)? This fine linen is twisted into the curtains of the Tabernacle; because we not only gird the loins of our flesh, but also, as Peter admonishes, the loins of our mind in sobriety (1 Peter 1), so that we may restrain both the flesh from lascivious movements and our heart from seductive thoughts. Hyacinth, because it imitates the appearance of

the air and the sky, signifies the minds of the same chosen ones, seeking heavenly things with all hope and desire. The Apostle recommends to us the mystery of this color, saying: "If you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3). Purple, because it shows the color of blood: and true purple is also dyed with the blood of sea snails, designates the devoted hearts of those who can say with the Apostle: "For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21). And with the prophet David: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered" (Psalm 44). Scarlet, because it has the appearance of fire, is rightly compared to the most fervent love of the saints. Hence, some of them, who had conceived this with the Lord present and accompanying them, said:

"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us" (Luke 24)? To whom, in contrast, it is said of the reprobate: "And because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24). This is dyed as if twice, when it flames with love for God and neighbor, when we love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Thus, in these four colors of curtains, the four justifications of the chosen are expressed. In twisted fine linen, the flesh maintaining chastity; in hyacinth, the mind desiring heavenly things; in purple, the flesh subjected to passions; in twice-dyed scarlet, the mind shining forth among passions with love for God and neighbor.

The length of one curtain will be, etc. In the length of the curtains, is represented the longsuffering patience of the holy Church; in the width, the breadth of charity is expressed, which not only loves God and neighbor, but also usually receives the enemy who hates it with open arms of its sweetness, and commends its persecutors to the Lord on bended knees in prayer, saying: Lord, do not hold this sin against them (Acts VII). Four cubits aptly represent this breadth, because there are four books of the Gospels, in whose examples and words of our Lord Redeemer, we are taught how this charity is to be maintained. Four virtues, in the exercise of which the same charity is practiced, that is, temperance, fortitude, justice, prudence, so that charity, uncorrupted in God, and whole, may be preserved, which is of temperance; may not be broken by any hardships, which is of fortitude; may not serve any other, which is of justice; may be vigilant in discerning things, so that deceit or trickery may not gradually creep in, which is of prudence. But the length of the curtains was twenty-eight cubits, which is a number that is four times seven, and the number seven, because of the day of the sabbath, usually symbolizes the eternal rest of the saints. Therefore, the length of the curtains is extended in four sets of seven cubits;

because through faith and the keeping of the evangelical doctrine, and through the exercises of the spiritual virtues we have spoken of, the longsuffering patience of the holy Church tends to eternal rest. There is also another mystery in the number twenty-eight, equally pertaining to the number seven. For if you are willing to count all the numbers from one to seven in full order, you will complete twenty-eight; for one, and two, and three, and four, and

five, and six, and seven, make twenty-eight. Because, therefore, in the parts of the number seven, the number twenty-eight is found, rightly the length of the curtains is contained therein, because the faith and patience of the saints, distinguished by the variety of virtues, in all things which it does or suffers, expects not the glory of human favor, but the happiness of heavenly rest. Hence it is that a psalm of this number is titled in the completion of the tabernacle, which is understood to be sung entirely about the perfection of the holy Church, especially in what is said in it: Worship the Lord in His holy court. And again: And in His temple, all shall say glory (Psalm XXVIII). For appropriately, psalm twenty-eight is inscribed about the completion of the tabernacle; because indeed in this is the perfection of the Church, which is a pilgrim in this world, that through faith and good works, it tends to the rest of the world to come. And properly it follows:

All the tents shall be made of one measure. For although the curtains differed from each other by varying embroidery, they were all of the same measure in length and breadth. This is because the chosen ones, though they possess differing gifts according to the grace given to them, have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Five curtains are to be joined to each other, etc. Josephus (Antiq. III, 6) narrates that the tablets of the Covenant were inscribed with the Decalogue so that each tablet contained five words. Therefore, it is fitting that the ten curtains, which when joined together completed the beauty of the tabernacle, were divided in due time so that five remained together on each side. By observing this, the ministers of the holy places and the people of God would be reminded of the law that must always be observed, which, though contained in ten words on two tablets, was divided into five on each tablet.

Indeed, concerning this interpretation, we can also speak of the number of the curtains as twice five, noting that the followers of God signified in either testament. The first five, which protected or constituted the front and foremost part of the tabernacle, represented the type of the ancient people of God, who fulfilled the precepts of the law in the sacrament of circumcision, sacrifices, and diverse observances of the ceremonies according to the letter. The latter five curtains, which covered or even constituted the rear of the tabernacle, designated us, who after the coming of the Lord in the flesh, keep the books and sacraments of the law spiritually, as He revealed and granted. And indeed all the curtains were of one workmanship, depicted with the same colors, yet five were mutually joined; because all the worshipers of both testaments believed in one and the same God, served with the works of one and the same piety and chastity, but each people performed their distinct parts in the celebration of the sacraments. For the sacrament of the Lord's passion, by which we are both redeemed, was celebrated by them in the flesh and blood of the victims, and by us in the offering of bread and wine: they believed and confessed the future birth of the Lord in the flesh, His preaching, operation of miracles, temptation, passion, burial, resurrection, ascension, coming of the Holy Spirit, faith of the Gentiles, whereas we believe and confess all these things now accomplished and no longer to be done.

Nevertheless, at the time when the tabernacle was being erected, all the curtains were joined together; because the whole beauty of the Catholic Church extends from the beginning to the end of the age, surely the connection of the ten curtains, as one, adorns the tabernacle of the Lord. Loops of hyacinth on the sides and tops, etc. We have said that hyacinth, because it is of a sky-like color, is suitable to signify heavenly goods. Therefore, curtains are connected with each other by loops of hyacinth when the sole hope of heavenly beatitude unites all the hearts of the elect around the world in one and the same devotion. These loops are aptly called as such, because they were to be placed not only on the sides of the curtains, but also on the tops, that is, at the extreme ends of the corners. For the life and operation of the saints are directed towards perfection by the straight path of common intention, but also the very beginning of good conversation, which is carried out through the confession of faith and the reception of heavenly sacraments, is not diverse from one another, but all are equally and indissolubly connected by the grace of truth. Also, we all share the common certainty of the end of temporal life with the same hope, when we close our eyes in death in such a way that, having first received the viaticum of the heavenly mystery, we quickly trust that we will be found in true life and remain in it forever.

This passage fits what is commanded of the children of Israel in the Book of Numbers, that they should make fringes for themselves on the corners of their garments, placing on them ribbons of hyacinth. Indeed, the children of Israel have fringes and ribbons of hyacinth on the corners of their garments when the elect, and those who desire to see God, work to clothe themselves in acts of justice in such a way that they do not place the end of these actions in the praise of mortals, lest it should be said of them, "They have received their reward" (Matthew VI): but rather they seek in them the judgment and eternal rewards of the heavenly ruler. Hence, it is immediately added in the book by way of explanation: "When they see them, they shall remember all the commandments of the Lord, not following their own thoughts and eyes, which lead them to unchastity through various things." We should also use these words in the explanation of loops of hyacinth, so that we say that curtains are joined by such loops so that the children of Israel, having these things before their eyes, were reminded of heavenly commandments, and we, now reading these things, may remember that we, living this life as children of eternal promise, are separated from each other by times and places: but in heaven, there is a homeland that will unite its citizens, gathered from the four winds of heaven, in an indivisible society forever.

It will have fifty loops on each curtain, etc. We read in the law that the fiftieth year is called the jubilee (Leviticus 25), which means a time of release or initiation, in which all people were to rest from all the labor of the land, and all debts were to be forgiven. And in the New Testament, we know that the grace of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on Pentecost, that is, the fiftieth day after the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 2), and consecrated the beginning of the nascent Church by His coming. From this, it is evident that this number can rightly symbolize either the grace of the Holy Spirit or the joy of future blessedness, to which one is brought through the gift of the same Spirit, and in whose reception alone one truly rests and rejoices. And fittingly, the curtains had fifty loops by which they were

fastened to one another; for it is only by the gift of the Holy Spirit that the elect are joined together in the bond of peace, which is the bond of perfection: not from any other hope but the future hope and memory of the society and peace which makes the servants of Christ, separated by times or places in this life, to be harmonized together with piety. It is also well said that the curtains had loops on each side, so that each curtain would embrace the curtains next to it on each side as if with outstretched arms embracing from here and there.

For it is indeed necessary that all the faithful, both those who preceded us in Christ and those who followed, be embraced with the outstretched arms of sincere piety; and those who taught us in Christ, and those whom we ourselves taught by Christ's granting, we should all venerate with one affect in Christ. For in this way, we must hasten to see the face of our Creator by living rightly, so that we do not abandon our fellow traveler but strive to reach together before the sight of the divine glory: for the individual curtains were so directed by the support of the boards towards the heights, so shined within the heights with the varied flowers of their own embroidery, that they did not abandon the curtains that were raised with them to the heights or shone while placed on high: just as we ought to help our fellow faithful progressing with us in the service of God, with admonishments and examples, and in whatever virtue we have been able to advance, we should similarly treat our companions in the same virtue with worthy veneration. Therefore, loop meets with loop so that one might be fit to the other when the just are bound to each other with a mutual and equal quality of virtues.

You shall make fifty golden rings, etc. This passage is explained more fully in the subsequent sections where it states: And he cast fifty golden rings to fasten the curtains' loops, so that one tabernacle would be made. Therefore, the number fifty signifies the true governance in the Holy Spirit; and because a circle appears to have neither a beginning nor an end, and gold is more precious than other metals due to its brightness. What is expressed by the fifty golden circles, if not the perpetual brightness and shining eternity of the highest tranquility? And the rings grip the loops of the curtains so that one tabernacle is made from all, when the glory of the heavenly kingdom thus infuses pure minds of the faithful, that with such a glue of saving inspiration, one Church of Christ is made perfect from both peoples, rather from all the elect.

CHAPTER III. Eleven Cloths of Goat Hair and Eleven Cloths of Cilicia, etc. This passage is repeated in the following: "And he made eleven cloths of goat hair to cover the roof of the tabernacle. Thus, the cloths by which the tabernacle is covered represent the leaders of the holy Church, through whose diligence and labor the dignity of the same Church is protected and continually fortified with care, lest, evidently, the life and faith of the elect be corrupted by heretical seduction, defiled by the wickedness of false Catholics, tainted by the filth of tempting vices, or drawn to sorrow by the lack of temporal supports. The more they diligently gird themselves to sustain or repel the assaults of incoming temptations, the greater freedom they grant the subjects in serving the Lord, and they provide the appearance of shining within, like curtains, while they endure the storms of afflictions outside, like cloths.

It is right that these cloths are also mentioned as cilicia made from goat hairs, and that there are eleven of them; because indeed, holy preachers, the higher they are in merit, the humbler they ought to be in spirit, according to the wise man's saying: "The greater you are, humble yourself in all things" (Eccle. III). Eleven, indeed, surpasses ten but does not reach twelve, that is, the apostolic number, and signifies transgression of the Decalogue law. And in the eleventh psalm, the prophet laments that the holy ones have failed and the sons of men have exchanged truths for vanities and deceits, saying:

"Save me, O Lord, for the holy one has failed," etc., subtly indicating with this number that such men of double tongue and heart neither keep the legal precepts of the Decalogue nor can receive the apostolic grace of the Gospel. Cilicia, furthermore, is the garb of penitents, as testified by the psalmist, who says: "But when they were troublesome to me, I clothed myself with cilicium" (Psal. XXXIV), that is, I assumed the habit of penance and humility, with which either I would calmly endure the wrath of my persecutors more lightly or even mitigate it. For if goats, or their hairs or skins, always represented the stench of sinners and not at times the humility of penitents, the animal itself would not be counted among the clean, nor would it be said in praise of the spouse: "Your hair is like a flock of goats" (Cant. IV). Thus, the cloths, which hint at holy preachers, are both cilicia and eleven; because the more earnestly they purify hearts by faith, the more they discover in which to blame themselves. Hence, they humbly confess: "For in many things, we all offend" (James III): and "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John II). However, the following words mystically declare the perfection of their hearts, by saying:

The length of one covering shall be, etc. Behold, here you have the number ten, not eleven, in length, and this multiplied by three: which plainly suggests the virtue of those who complete the decalogue of the law in the faith of the Holy Trinity, which operates through love: with which indeed in this life no higher perfection can be attained. You also have the width of four cubits, which signifies the breadth of sincere charity, that is, the one that is both commended and given to us in the Gospel through Jesus Christ. Therefore, the coverings of the tabernacle cover the roof, and these are made of the hair of goats, but having thirty cubits in length and four in width; because those highest preachers who protect the life of the faithful by their exhortations, intercessions, daily care, vigils, fasts, and their own nakedness, humbly admit themselves to be sinners in contemplation of the supreme purity. Nonetheless, as far as the measure of human perfection reaches, they appear pure and exalted among men of the world.

The measurement of all coverings will be equal, etc. There will be one measurement of all coverings because, undoubtedly, there is one faith in which the entire Church is saved, and one and the same eternal life to which it hastens. Hence, those who entered to work at different times in the vineyard of the Lord are all rewarded with one denarius. Thus, the division of coverings into five and six can be understood as we have explained above regarding the divisions of curtains; namely, that they designate the teachers of both Testaments. For five coverings are aptly compared to the ancient teachers of the people of God; either because

they preached only the sacraments of the Mosaic law, although they also preached the mysteries of evangelical truth, or because they lived in the five ages of the world. The doctors of the New Testament can be taken from the six coverings without inconvenience; because they spiritually comprehend all that divine Scripture records as done or spoken in the six ages of the world to aid and exemplify their preaching; because they openly proclaim to their listeners that the Lord's passion, through which the world was redeemed on the sixth day, is to be believed and confessed, and they testify that they can be saved only through this sacrament. Therefore, it is rightly commanded that the sixth covering be doubled at the front of the roof, for the confession and imitation of the same Lord's passion.

For it is not enough for believers to be baptized and consecrated only in the confession of the Lord's death and resurrection if each baptized person does not also strive, as much as possible, to live continually in the likeness of the Lord's death, and by suffering for Him, to be assimilated to Him, so that they may also deserve to be partakers in His resurrection. According to the letter, he calls the front of the roof the entrance of the tabernacle: where, as we briefly said above, it is commanded to place not boards, but pillars and a beam stretched from the corner of the boards to the corner; and therefore, as far as the form of the work itself is concerned, a doubled covering was more necessary there, where the solid firmness of the wall was absent. But mystically, the sixth covering is doubled at the front of the roof when all who enter the holy Church are initiated in the faith and sacraments of the Lord's passion, understanding that they must always live by imitating it as well. For in the entrance of the sanctuary, the sixth covering is, as it were, doubled for us when we are consecrated by the sacraments of the Lord's passion and instructed by His examples. Thus Peter speaks of the reception of the sacraments: "He has regenerated us into a living hope, according to His great mercy, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1). He speaks of the imitation of the passions:

"Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same resolve" (1 Peter 4).

Make fifty loops along the edge of one curtain, etc. These, as we explained above concerning the curtains, can also be understood here; namely, that the remembrance of the heavenly rest, which is usually expressed by the number fifty, unites the hearts of the saints with the bond of peace. Or, if it pleases you to hear something new, since the coarse woolen cloths designate the humility of eminent men; because they desire more to remember their own sins than to boast of their virtues, they are more affected by the virtues they have not yet attained than by those they have already achieved. The number fifty of the loops or clasps can signify the humility of their compunction. For the fiftieth psalm is the psalm of repentance. And rightly so; because the gift of repentance is granted only by the generous giving of the Holy Spirit, the gift of forgiveness to the repentant is bestowed only by the action of that same grace of the Holy Spirit. And fittingly, the fifty loops or clasps join the curtains together; because no virtue bonds faithfully into the unity of charity more than humility. For the more one perceives oneself to be weak, the more earnestly one seeks the

help of a neighbor to be strengthened. And rightly so, the clasps are made of bronze; because it is known that this metal is very vocal, for indeed the humble conscience of the just has a great voice before God. Hence, that Davidic poor man, when he was troubled, did not shout in the ears of men but poured out his prayer in the presence of the Lord: "Lord, hear my prayer," he says, "and let my cry come to you" (Psalm 101).

What remains in the coverings prepared for the roof, etc. In order that these things may be fully understood, it is necessary to discuss more broadly the entire arrangement of the tabernacle itself. We have said that the walls of the tabernacle, which consisted of boards and columns, had a length of thirty cubits, a width of ten, and a height similarly of ten. Therefore, if anyone wished to encircle the house in width with a cord, for example, from the base of one board on the southern side, to the base of the board opposite on the northern side, it is evident that the same cord would need to be thirty cubits in length, that is, having ten cubits of upward stretch on the southern wall, ten others straight across between the walls, and ten more of downward stretch on the northern wall. Similarly, if you wanted to extend the cord along the length of the house, from the bases of the columns upwards, and along the entire length of the house to the western wall, and then down to its bases, the cord will have fifty cubits in length, namely, ten cubits of upward stretch beside the columns, thirty cubits straight along the length of the house, and another ten cubits of downward stretch beside the boards of the western wall. Therefore, with these things considered, look at the measurements of the curtains with which the house was to be covered, and how they could match the aforementioned measurements.

There were ten curtains, each having a length of twenty-eight cubits and a width of four, which, when joined together and set as one, filled the tabernacle with forty cubits in its width. So, hang the curtains, each having a length of twenty-eight cubits, and place them in the house whose transverse measure is thirty cubits, and you will see that the curtains will have ten cubits in equivalence between the walls; however, in the ascent or descent beside the walls, they will have nine cubits. Thus, it happens that the tops of the curtains cannot touch the ground but will be one cubit higher than the ground. Likewise, you will see that the curtains have thirty cubits in equivalence along the length of the house; but in the ascent or descent beside the eastern and western sides of the house, they have five cubits. Therefore, the same lateral top of the curtains does not reach the ground, but is five cubits higher than the ground. Hence, it is necessary that those five cubits of the curtains, which remain with the ceased walls, be brought together on the eastern and western sides, and joined mutually, so that the curtains cover the house all around, except for one cubit near the ground. This about the curtains. Furthermore, the coverings had thirty cubits in length and four in width; and because they were eleven conjoined along their sides, they filled forty-four cubits. Therefore, place these also in the house:

and since the length of the coverings matches the cord by which you measure the house transversely, it happens that their tops reach the ground. For they will have ten cubits in equivalence between the walls, and also ten cubits in both ascent and descent on each side.

And this is what the Scripture says, that one cubit would hang on one side and the other on the other, which is more and protects both sides of the tabernacle in the length of the coverings. For the tabernacle properly calls the very making or conjunction of the curtains, which the coverings extended by one cubit from the southern side of the house, and the other from the northern. Hence, they reached the ground, because these had thirty cubits in length, while those had two less. Again, the measure of the coverings along the length of the house was extended to forty-four cubits, having thirty cubits in equivalence, from the front of the house to the top of the boards on the western side, and seven cubits hanging from the front of the house, and similarly seven hanging on the western side. And so it was that the length of the goats' hair curtains on the western side exceeded the measurement of the inner curtains by two cubits; for indeed the curtains coming from above, as we have mentioned before, covered five cubits of that western wall, and left three cubits untouched. And this is what is now said:

"And the surplus that remaineth in the curtains prepared for the roof, that is, one curtain, with which thou shalt cover the back part of the tabernacle. For half of the curtain, in width it is two cubits, with which namely the back part of the tabernacle was covered, that is, the curtains which were properly called the tabernacle, because, as we have said, the last curtain extending two cubits downward passed beyond them. Similarly, the curtains coming from above covered only seven cubits of the western wall: however, the remaining three cubits, which were left bare, did not suffer the injuries of the weather to the ground; but the seven-cubit curtains drawn together from each side, which remained beyond the walls, firmly covered the back of the house down to the ground. Nor could these only reach each other and, like the curtains, touch in the middle of the wall; but because they were of seven cubits, they exceeded the middle of the wall by two cubits on each side and were joined together by overlapping each other: which we think should be understood in exactly the same way on the eastern part of the house, and therefore it was previously commanded that the sixth curtain be folded at the front of the roof. We have endeavored to explain this very difficult matter briefly, as we seemed to have understood it, being ready to learn more correct things about it, if anyone wills to teach us. In all these things, however, the clear sense of allegory is evident.

For the goats' hair curtains protected the linen curtains, both from above and below and on every side: and so that those within might shine freely with their beauty, these kept them immune from all external injuries of storms, rains, and heat: for indeed the perfect ones of the holy Church's purpose are diligent in circumspectly watching over the life of the faithful committed to them, so that they may lack neither the supports of the flesh nor the aids of the spiritual life. And let the doctrines of heretics and the bad examples of the immoral Catholics be kept away. Let the saving doctrine be present, by which strengthened, they may be able both wisely to repel the words of those who teach evil and patiently to endure the deeds of those who inflict evil upon them. Let their heavenly life be present, by which confirmed, they may use their tongues silently as if always by living reading. For the goats' hair curtains ward off rains, resist storms, prevent the heat of the sun, and strongly drive

away all external adversities, so that the beauty of the curtains inside remains unblemished: when Augustine neutralizes all that could disturb the faith, the poison of heretics: when Gregory explains the temptations of the ancient enemy that attack good morals: when Cyprian strengthens the weak with pious exhortations lest they falter in martyrdom:

when other venerable bishops and teachers keep at bay the temptations that could disturb the Church, and with diligent investigation foresee whatever contributes to their salvation, so that everywhere the religious conduct of the faithful may be safe, freely studying virtues with a pure heart, and shining with outstanding deeds in the sight of their Creator, and may also be able to focus the eye of their mind on His contemplation. Truly, because among the holy preachers those are worthy of the greatest honor, who, besides serving in the office of preaching and governance of people, also shed their blood for Christ, it is rightly added:

CHAPTER IV. The third and fourth covering of skins. You shall make another covering for the tabernacle of rams' skins, etc. The holy doctors are sometimes accustomed to be referred to by the name of rams, because they are the leaders of the Lord's flocks. Hence beautifully the Psalmist says: Offer to the Lord, he says, sons of God, offer to the Lord the sons of rams (Psalm 127). Which is to say openly: Offer to the Lord, O angels of God, to whom the care of this office is delegated: offer to the Lord in heaven the spirits of the faithful, who by the imitation of life and faith have merited to become sons of the blessed apostles. Hence it is that the sixth station of the people of God, having set out from Egypt, is called Elim, which means rams, in which were twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees: so that both by name and appearance it bore the figure of the apostles and apostolic men. The rams' skins are dyed red for covering the roof of the tabernacle, when the apostles, or apostolic men, do not cease to persist in the word of teaching even to the passion of martyrdom: so that they may more safely protect those subjected to the dangers of impending temptations, while they themselves do not flee from suffering persecution for righteousness even unto death.

The tabernacle of the Lord is covered with rams' skins dyed red, and defended from the injury of tempests, when holy preachers strengthen the hearts of the weak by the example of their passion and patience, lest they fail in the pressures of tribulations. And as among the chief members of Christ and the Church, sacred virginity holds a prominent place, it is fitting that after the varied beauty of the curtains, after the protections of the saints' covers, after the red-dyed rams' skins, there is still added another covering of hyacinth skins. For hyacinth is of heavenly color: and the skin of a dead animal is a portion and sign. And what is signified by the hyacinth skins, unless the virtue of those who, having mortified all the enticements of carnal lust, live a heavenly life on earth, and, placed among men, imitate angelic purity: and that which in the future time of immortality is promised to all the elect, because they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God (Matt. 22), they strive to anticipate even while retaining mortal flesh? Hence, rightly, such great virtue receives a great reward, for it is declared by the prophet: Thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, and choose what I delight in, and hold fast my covenant; I

will give them in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than sons and daughters:

I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off (Isa. 50). Of which place and name, the evangelist John, who was one of themselves, reports hearing them singing a new song before the throne of God (Rev. 14), which no one else could sing. And immediately he adds: These are those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins: these are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Therefore, the hyacinth skins, rightly, hold the highest place in the house of God, and the heavenly color has chosen a seat closest to heaven, so that choirs of virgins, following the Lamb with special closeness of soul and body, and singing hymns of praise to Him, may be designated. Well, indeed, it is said of the curtains and coverings that even though placed high up, they would hang down to the ground, even though the curtains could not reach all the way to the ground. The columns and boards of the tabernacle, even though erected high, had bases placed on the ground on which they stood. But of the red-dyed and hyacinth skins, it is said that they cover the roof above, but it is not added that they would be turned down to the ground; because other types of virtue seem to have something in common with those who are still held on the earth:

but the contest of martyrdom, and the honor of virginity dedicated to God, as if suspended from the lowest and earthly things, are specially demonstrated to be connected with the citizens of heaven. For the martyr, placed in torments, intends nothing else with his whole mind than to quickly leave behind all things that are in this world, and the world itself, and, freed from all pains, to come to see the Creator of the world, and to possess the joys that are beyond the world. And celibates, while they transcend the common law of human kind, which said: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, with a view to a greater reward, rightly choose for themselves a seat higher than other faithful, indeed higher than the world itself, and thus live in the Church so that they surpass the social conversation of the Church by the honor of their more sublime merit. Hence rightly John writes of such: That these were purchased from among men, firstfruits to God and to the Lamb (Rev. 14). Rightly such are called in the Latin language either virgins, as distinguished by virtue; or celibates, as blessed with heavenly life, that is, imitating the life of the citizens of Heaven on earth.

CHAPTER V. The boards of the tabernacle. You shall make standing boards for the tabernacle, etc. Shittim wood, from which the tabernacle was made, is of a nature exceptionally resistant to decay, of notable whiteness and lightness, and differing only in size from white thorn wood. Hence Jerome sometimes in the Book of Hebrew Names, but also in other works, interpreted shittim simply as thorns. For example, Abel shittim, mourning of thorns. However, this kind of wood is not easily found except in the deserts of Arabia, where the tabernacle was built. Therefore, Greek or Latin translators could not assign it any other name than the Hebrew one, since they had no knowledge of it; though some, trying to express its nature, translated it as incorruptible wood. The boards of the tabernacle thus designate the apostles and their successors, through whose preaching the Church was spread throughout the world. For the width of the boards represents the expansion of faith

and sacraments, which before lay hidden in one Israelite people; but by their ministry, it reached the fullness of the entire world. Although, correctly, the width of the boards can also be understood to mean the widening of the hearts of the saints, by which they are elevated to despise the world and long for heavenly things, through which they joyfully love not only friends in God but also enemies for God's sake. Finally, let us see one of the boards of the tabernacle, namely the Apostle Paul, how he indicates that he is expanded in both ways.

He speaks of internal, that is, heart's widening: Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged; you are not restrained in us, but you are restrained in your own bowels. As a response to this, widen yourselves also (2 Cor. 6). He also speaks of the expansion by which he used to serve the progress of the tabernacle, that is, the holy Church: So that from Jerusalem round about as far as Illyricum I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15). Such boards were made from shittim wood, that is, of thorns. Indeed, thorns according to the Lord's word are the cares of this world, deceitful riches, and pleasures (Matt. 13, Mark 4). But the pricks of sins are also fittingly compared to thorns. Therefore, it is written: Thorns grow in the hands of the drunkard (Prov. 26), that is, sins are in the works of the foolish. Because holy preachers strove to purge themselves from the pricks of vices and to strip away all worldly cares and pleasures, so that they might be free-minded to expand in the love of God and neighbor, and to run to preach the word far and wide; it is rightly said that the boards of the tabernacle are made from wood of thorns: they are made from thorns, but from those which had entirely shed all prickly thorns and shone with pure whiteness.

For even the saints, shining with virtues, though they themselves are conceived and born in the sin of the first transgression, are also subject to that general condemnation said to Adam when he sinned: The earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles for you (Gen. 3); but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, they are stripped of all pricks of sins and are apt for the construction of His house by a worthy exercise of virtues.

The individual boards were ten cubits in length, etc. The length of the boards is height, which was ten cubits; because the holy teachers tend towards perfection through the observance of the Decalogue of the law; because they labor in Christ's vineyard for the perception of the daily denarii, that is, they insist on the intention of the word of doctrine, so that they may restore the image of their Creator and King in themselves, which Adam lost by sinning, with His blessing, so that they may rightly receive His name again by living rightly, which they lost by sinning. For it was customary for the name and image of the king to be contained in the denarius. Also, the fact that the denarius got its name from being completed in ten coins appropriately fits the state of our future blessedness, which is perfected in the true love of God and neighbor. For God is often represented by the number three because of the Trinity, which He is, and man by the number seven; because the body is made up of the four well-known elements. The soul, that is, the substance of the inner man, is usually comprehended in Scripture by a threefold distinction. Hence, we are commanded to love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. Therefore, it is fitting that

the boards, by which the entire tabernacle is held upright and standing, have ten cubits in height;

because the teachers and rulers of the holy Church serve God with the intention that they may be worthy to see Him immortal and blessed in eternity with both soul and body; constantly urging all their listeners to this end of life, both by word and work, and striving as it were to lift them up. The fact that these boards had a width of a cubit and a half, the full cubit represents the perfection of good works; the half cubit that remains signifies the beginning of divine knowledge: because the righteous indeed in this life can perfectly attend to almsgiving, devote themselves to prayers, discipline themselves with fasting, and endeavor in other religious acts of this kind. Meanwhile, we know God through faith, but we hope for full knowledge of Him in the future, as God Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ says: "If you remain in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth" (John VIII). Again, to the Father He says: "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John XVII). Hence, the Apostle also says: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. Shall we labor in part for Christ, insist on the word of preaching in part, serve in good works in part" (I Cor. XIII)? Therefore, the elect have a full cubit of good works in this life;

but they have a cubit of blessed reward in part, insofar as they can anticipate with heavenly desires the joys of an eternal kingdom and the presence of their Creator. They will then be blessed by the completion of this cubit, when the word is fulfilled, which He promised to all His chosen people in the end, saying: "I will deliver him and glorify him, I will satisfy him with long life, and show him my salvation" (Psalm XC).

On the sides of the boards two tenons shall be made, etc. The tenons on the sides of the boards signify the strength of humility in the minds of the just, through which they are joined together in brotherly charity. For as each of them with a contrite and humbled heart prepares a place in themselves for the love of their neighbors, and by the worthiness of piety and devotion they present themselves to their brothers to be loved, just as all the boards of the tabernacle are coupled together by the joint of the tenons. And indeed, when the tabernacle is erected and the regular arrangement of the boards is orderly placed, the figure of the tenon is not seen. However, the firmness of the stable wall shows how greatly the boards are united to each other; because certainly, the humility of the hearts of the saints, by which they are joined to each other, cannot be seen by men externally, but what it works inside is plainly evident to everyone from the very peaceful state of the holy Church. Through which a marvelous dispensation of divine grace is achieved, that we, upon whom the ends of the ages have come, also love with sincere affection those who were faithful at the beginning of the age, and we embrace them in the bosom of our love no less than those who live with us in the present, and we also believe that we should be received by them through the embrace of charity.

But that it is commanded that two tenons be made in each of the boards, that is, on both sides of them, this can be understood figuratively in two ways, so that we preserve the inviolate

rights of charity towards our brothers both in prosperity and adversity, proceeding with the armor of righteousness, following the example of the Apostle, from the right and the left, and holding within our arms both the greater and the lesser, that is, those who have preceded us in Christ and those who have followed, all of one and the same love, we strive towards the heights of perfection. It follows:

CHAPTER VI. On the position of the boards of the tabernacle. There will be twenty boards on the south side, etc. The length of the tabernacle is not specifically stated; but it is implied by the fact that its walls were made of twenty boards, and these are said to have had a width of one cubit and a half each. For twenty cubits and twenty half-cubits will make up a total of thirty cubits, which Josephus also writes was the length of the tabernacle. And this number fittingly encompasses the length of the tabernacle because there are three virtues in which the perfection of the holy Church principally consists, namely faith, hope, and charity: which are multiplied by ten to complete the number thirty, when good works are joined to the virtues of the mind, which are contained in the Decalogue of the law, so that no one might think that faith, hope, and love of God could suffice without the execution of works. The fact that the number of boards is twenty also contains a great mystery of the saints' perfection; for four fives make twenty. And since the Mosaic Law is comprised in five books, and grace and truth of the New Testament in the four volumes of the holy Gospel, it is fitting that the holy doctors are expressed by the number twenty; for by a wonderful consensus of truth, they reveal and complete the secrets of the law manifested in the Gospel, and declare that the sacraments of the Gospel were prefigured in the law.

And while they teach that the Old Testament is elucidated in the New and made more manifest in broader sense, and that the New is foreshadowed in the Old and pre-signified by various revelations of types, they demonstrate that in the breadth of their discourse, both the number of four multiplied by five and five multiplied by four are indicated. The bases that supported the boards, however, are the words and books of the law and the prophets, by which the apostles and evangelists proved that the things they wrote and preached were true and divine. Hence it is often repeated in the Gospel: Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet (Matthew 1), and: But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled (Mark 14). And Peter, giving testimony about the Lord, added: And we have the more sure word of prophecy, to which you do well to take heed (2 Peter 1). Indeed, well are two bases placed under each board, to show the consensus of prophetic testimony in all that the apostles said. Or certainly, two bases are placed under each board at the two corners, so that, with the corners well supported, the entire board can rightly and steadfastly stand; because the beginning and end of all apostolic and evangelic discourse is prefigured in the prophetic writings.

The entire life of the apostles and their successors, from the beginning of faith to the end of the present life, is found to be included in the mystical pages of the Old Testament. Well too are these bases made of silver, on account of the brightness of the heavenly word: For the

words of the Lord are pure words, silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, etc. (Psalm 12).

On the second side also... there will be twenty boards, etc. The southern side of the tabernacle, which faced the south, symbolizes that ancient people of God, who, having long since received the light of legal knowledge, used to burn with love for their Creator. But the second side, which faced the north, represents the multitude of nations, which did not cease to lie in the darkness and cold of unbelief until the time of the Lord's incarnation. Of their calling, the Lord beautifully speaks through the prophet: "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold." Which is plainly to say: "I will say to the people of the nations who have long been cold without faith, Give of your children, who will come to the faith of my confession and love. I will also say to the Israelite people, who already enjoyed the light of my knowledge, Do not withhold the nations from being received into the lot of election. I will say to Cornelius and his household, Receive the faith and baptism of Christ. I will say to the Jews, Do not compel the believers from the nations to be circumcised, for those dedicated by the font of baptism, faith and confession of truth suffice for salvation. Both sides had boards of the same number, measurements, and workmanship; because it is indeed the same faith, hope, and charity preached to both peoples by the apostles, both are called to the same promised kingdom of heaven, both receive the general precept of the Savior: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16), that is, to both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Where it is also added without any distinction: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

To the western side... six planks, etc. Josephus (Antiq. III, 7) writes about the tabernacle that it had ten cubits of width; he also writes that the planks were lifted four fingers from the ground. From this it seems to be understood that the bases of these planks were made of such a height. He again says about the chapter we proposed, and about the bars of the planks, thus: "Nine cubits of the posterior wall were made by six planks, to which two other planks are joined, made of half a cubit, which they placed as corners like the larger planks. Each plank had golden rings; prominent on the outer faces, fixed like certain roots in order, facing each other around, and through them, gilded bars were inserted, each having a size of five cubits, and they were for the joining of the planks, and the head of each bar entered into the head of another bar, like in the manner of a shell: and behind the walls positioned in length there was one row, going through all the planks, by which both sides of the wall were held together, in joints made and inserted together. This was so diligently done so that neither by winds it was moved, nor by another cause the tabernacle was disturbed, but it was kept immovable in secure quiet. This from the text of Josephus. But according to the sense of the allegory, the western side, which receiving both walls, completes the building of the tabernacle;

rightly designates the completion of the whole holy universal Church, which is perfected with the end of this world, up to which faith and correct operation of both peoples will persevere, as if the length of the twin walls reaches. For it is not credible either that before the

time of the Lord's incarnation there were ever lacking those who believed from the nations, or now, although heavily condemned for their unbelief, the people of the Jews, there are some from them, though very few, who exiled among the Christians, come daily to salvation by believing. If anyone dares to deny this, we should say what cannot at all be denied, namely that spiritual teachers and interpreters of both Testaments, who, according to the word of the Lord, bring forth from their treasure new and old, will remain in the holy Church until the end of the age. And appropriately, the tabernacle is completed on the western side, where the sun closes the day and all the stars usually set; because of, namely, either the demise of each of the chosen, or the general end of the whole age. For it is as if the sun sets for him, who from this temporal light through the darkness of transitory death, migrates to the joys of light and eternal life.

Just as the sun of the entire Church sets in the west, so in truth it rises in the east with passing darkness, when the life of this present world is ended at the coming of the Lord, then the true morning of the world to come, the true day of eternity will appear to the righteous. And because then, while the righteous reign with the Lord, the reprobate perish forever; it is rightly said of this side of the tabernacle in the following, that it looked toward the sea. The Red Sea is in this way represented, in which Pharaoh with his army was submerged, and from which Israel was saved by the Lord, ascending to Mount Sinai, where he built the tabernacle. Therefore, the western side of the tabernacle looks to the sea, when the holy Church, crowned after the perfection of works, in Christ freely gazes upon the vices or punishments of the impious, which He helped them avoid, as Isaiah testifies, who says: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I am making, stand before me says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name stand. And shortly after: "And they shall go out, and see the corpses of men who have rebelled against me. Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched" (Isa. 66).

Indeed, the waves of the deep, bitter and turbulent sea, can also symbolize the sins by which the reprobate in this life are badly delighted and perish, and also the abyss of future perdition, when in the last judgment they will be thrown into eternal fire with the devil. Nor should it be overlooked that when the tabernacle was built on Mount Sinai, it had the Red Sea to the west; but when it was brought into the promised land by Joshua and placed in Shiloh, it had the Great Sea in the same direction. From this we can mystically understand that the saints, serving the Lord in this life and making a tabernacle for Him in their hearts, disdain with a fixed mind the haughty boast of the impious, just as something soon to set; and in the future country placed with the Lord, they gaze upon their perpetual punishment without any interruption of their own happiness; so that they give greater thanks to Him, not only because they enjoy the good things He granted, but also because they observe the evils from which He delivered them. However, well the western side of the tabernacle, or that which is said to look toward the sea, consisted of six boards; either because the number six often expresses the perfection of good work, since the Lord completed the adornment of the world in that number, created man in its beginning, and in its number restored humankind by His passion;

or because the six ages of this world are, in which we must perfect ourselves with good works, so that we can come to eternal rest in the future and the glory of the resurrection. For the fact that again another two boards, except for the first six, are commanded to be erected at the back corners of the tabernacle, to receive those coming from the eastern side and join the wall of the western side; this pertains to the reward of future life, which is secure after the labors and times of this world. Which is divided in two ways: into the Sabbath, that is the rest of the holy souls after the dissolution of bodies, and into the glory of the resurrection, the reception of incorruptible bodies. Both allocations of reward, common to both peoples, never end. For the rest of the souls, with the time of the resurrection coming, receives no diminution, but rather an increase, and this union of immortality, of our flesh and spirit in heaven, remains always inviolate. However, it is well said of the same boards:

And they shall be joined together from bottom to top, etc. Because, indeed, the whole life of the elect, with one and the same faith and charity, tends towards the heavenly; it arrives at one and the same end of divine vision, in one and the same voice of true doctrine all the speech of the holy preachers agrees. For indeed the joint of the boards would gape apart if what one prophet or apostle had said, another would deny. But because the harmonious speech of divine utterances erects the structure of the Church, indeed one joint fits together all the boards of the tabernacle and does not allow them to be separated from one another. To the two boards... a similar joint shall be preserved, etc. The corner boards are joined to the wall boards in every way, because the glory of the future rest and immortality is most firmly connected to our present conversation through faith, hope, and charity: in fact, the present state of our conversation endures stable and unshaken because it believes, hopes, and loves the rewards of the future compensation; because frequently by the assistance of the heavenly citizens, it is restrained lest it might fall by the turbulent blasts of impure spirits. And these boards, which either designate the perfection of our good action or the future rewards for good deeds, are supported each by two bases; because all these things also the holy prophets predicted with a harmonious voice would be for the confirmation of the evangelical and apostolic preaching.

CHAPTER VII. The bars and rings of the boards of the tabernacle. You shall make bars also of acacia wood, etc. The five bars, which hold the boards of the tabernacle together, are the five books of the Mosaic law, by whose protection the holy Church is marvelously safeguarded against every impulse of the evil spirits of those who tempt and lead into sin. And this is on either side, because not only did the letter of the law instruct the former people of God in faith and good works, but it also instructs us, serving God in the time of the new testament, spiritually understood by the same letter, with greater sweetness of grace, and in the present, it establishes us in faith and the exercise of virtues, and in the future, it kindles in us hope for perpetual reward. Bars of the same number are also on the western side, because the same completion of good work, when we depart from the flesh toward future rewards, is proclaimed to us by the law well understood. Hence, to the rich man asking and saying: Good Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life? the same Good

Teacher replied: If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19). And He did not adjoin to him anything other than the commandments of the law:

And you shall gild the boards themselves, etc. The gilded boards of the tabernacle gleam brightly when every life and every word of the holy preachers exhibit the light of heavenly wisdom, and nothing in them is seen but the honor of virtues. But the golden rings, through which the bars held the boards in place, signify the very beatitude of heavenly life; which, because of its glory of brightness, is rightly compared to gold, and because of its eternity, is rightly compared to a circle. Hence the Apostle speaks of it: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (II Tim. IV). However, each board had five rings; not because the distinction of the heavenly homeland is fivefold, but because the same perpetual brightness and clear eternality of that kingdom are contained in Genesis, in Exodus, in Leviticus, in the book of Numbers, and in Deuteronomy. And five golden rings were fixed into each board of the tabernacle, because the hearts of the just, greatly expanded through love, read in all the books of Mosaic law not only the correction of works, but also the perpetual light of heavenly retribution.

And you shall cast for them golden rings, etc. The bars hold the boards in place through the golden rings, when the words of sacred utterance, through the promise of the heavenly kingdom, confirm the state of the holy Church; so that the more it learns the certainty of perpetual remuneration, the less it fears the disturbances of the world. Furthermore, it is aptly added concerning these bars:

Which you will cover with golden plates. The poles are covered with golden plates when the words of the divine law, which seem to be strong according to the literal sense and most suitable for confirming the life of the faithful, are shown to possess a higher understanding, that is, one shining with evangelical clarity. For example, to give a single testimony: when we read the history of Saint Noah, how he was miraculously preserved with his own in the ark from the flood that destroyed the wicked; it is clear to all in that God, loving justice and hating iniquity, knows how to rescue the pious from temptation, and to punish the wicked with just severity. Therefore, such reading is like the poles of the incorruptible tabernacle of the Lord, because the minds of the faithful, fixed on the words of true wisdom, are fortified against the incursions of temptations. But as if the wooden poles were covered with golden plates, when the same reading is shown to be full of more sacred mysteries through spiritual understanding, the ark is understood to signify the Catholic Church, the water of the flood to signify baptism: clean and unclean animals, to signify the spiritual and carnal members in the Church: the smoothed and pitch-covered wood of the ark, to signify teachers strengthened by the grace of faith: the raven going out of the ark and not returning, to signify those who fall into apostasy after baptism:

the olive branch brought into the ark by the dove, to signify those who, though baptized among heretics, because they have the fatness of chastity, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, deserve to be introduced into Catholic unity: the dove going out of the ark and not returning, to signify those who, freed from the flesh, fly to the free light of the heavenly

fatherland, and will no longer return to the labors of earthly pilgrimage. Thus, the poles of setim wood are surrounded by gold, when the most firm testimonies of sacred Scripture prove to be clear through mystical interpretation, with these and similar heavenly and spiritual senses.

And you shall erect the tabernacle according to the pattern, etc. The pattern of the tabernacle was shown to Moses on the mountain, because, dwelling in secret with the Lord, he saw the sublime life of angelic purity and immortality; in imitation of this he was commanded to establish human life on earth, to the extent that it is possible for mortals to imitate, so that with their example we might attend, on earth, to mutual love for God, divine praise, unanimous peace, sincere chastity, and other such virtues, and thereby deserve to be their companions in heaven, according to the promise of the Lord, saying: But those who are considered worthy of that age and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot die anymore; they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:35-36). Moses indeed showed us an example of angelic life, which he saw in the mountain of contemplation, through legal precepts, by the observance of which, we, too, raised from the earth, might be able to reach the company of angels in heaven. The same example of a more perfect life and blessed reward was also presented to us through the figure of the tabernacle and the priestly and Levitical service which he describes. The tabernacle is erected according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain when the elect, to imitate the angelic purity, which he merited to contemplate in secret, compose their work and mind. Thus far it has been expounded concerning the south, north, and west walls of the temple, as the Lord has given; but in what follows, the pattern for the east side will also be shown. But first, the Scripture has judged it right to intimate the middle wall which separated the holy of holies from the former tabernacle.

CHAPTER VIII. On the veil and columns of the tabernacle and the mercy seat above the ark. You will make a veil of blue, etc. This veil, by which the tabernacle was divided in the middle, is placed according to Josephus so that twenty cubits of its length extended to the first house, and ten pertained to the second. This is entirely in accordance with the measurements of the temple, which was later made by Solomon. Since it was sixty cubits in length and twenty in width, a third part of its length, that is, twenty cubits, was allocated to the inner house, that is, the Holy of Holies, so that the length and width of the inner house were one. Thus, the inner part of the tabernacle had a similar length and width, that is, ten cubits. But what the same veil symbolically represents, the Apostle to the Hebrews clearly declares, where he also expounds this in an allegorical sense: why the priests indeed always entered the first tabernacle, performing the services of sacrifices, but in the second, only the high priest once a year, not without blood, which he offered for his own and the people's ignorance. This veil is interpreted as the sky. But the fact that the priests entered the first tabernacle daily throughout the year with sacrifices speaks of the state of this life:

where the saints serve the Lord without interruption, daily atoning for the errors of their fragility, without which they can by no means exist in this life, with daily sacrifices of good

works, with daily libations of their tears, as true priests of God and Christ. The high priest, who entered the Holy of Holies once a year with the blood of the victims, is understood to be the great high priest to whom it was said: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110). Who, having been offered once for our sins, himself as both the priest and the offering, through his own blood entered into heaven itself, to appear now before the face of God for us. But that the same veil was woven of blue and purple and double-dyed scarlet and fine twisted linen, with beautiful variety, who cannot see, even according to the letter, how it corresponds to the beauty of the heavenly vision? For if you consider the beauty and flames of the stars, the various forms of the clouds, the very iris drawing a thousand various colors in the opposing sun, do you not seem to note paintings of colors in the sky far more numerous and beautiful than those woven into the veil of the tabernacle? Moreover, the four columns before which this veil was hung are the celestial powers of the hosts, illustrious with four distinguished virtues, which we have also mentioned above, that is, fortitude, temperance, prudence, and justice.

These virtues are indeed preserved differently by us in the labors and toils of this life, and differently in heaven by angels and holy souls. For there, the present rule appears to be subject to justice. And this is truly immortal justice; to prefer or equal no good to God, prudence: to adhere most firmly to God, fortitude: to take no delight in harmful defect, temperance. Here indeed, what is called justice in helping the wretched, what is called prudence in guarding against snares, what is called fortitude in enduring troubles, what is called temperance in restraining wicked delights, will not be there where there will be no evil at all. But these columns are well made of shittim wood, either because angelic spirits are by nature incorruptible and immortal, or because being created without sin, they always preserve the unblemished purity of their condition. Regarding which it is aptly continued:

Those same (columns) indeed will be gilded, etc. For the columns are gilded, before which the veil will be hung; because placed within the veil of the heavens are the virtues of the angels, clothed with the grace of the highest brightness. They have golden capitals, because the mind by which they are ruled is illuminated by the presence of divine knowledge and vision. And they have silver bases; because their entire nature specially subsists on this, as if on a foundation, to chant hymns of praise to their Creator, to declare the will of the same Creator to us still wandering on earth, as if placed outside the veil, to their fellow citizens. Whence also, rejoicing with their praises from the earth, we are accustomed to say diligently, as if in a voice of exhortation: Bless the Lord, all his angels, powerful in strength, who do his will (Psalm 103). For in the Scriptures, the splendor of wisdom is often shown by gold, and the brightness of words by silver.

The veil shall be hung on the rings, etc. Rings, which appear to have neither beginning nor end, are sometimes used in sacred Scripture to symbolize eternity. Fittingly, the veil, which represents the heavens, is said to be hung by rings; either because it was in the eternal counsel of Divinity when the world was created, in which the heavenly nature holds the first and foremost place; or because the firmament of the heavens was made in such a way

that its creation would never be undone. For when the Lord said, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24), it is to be understood of the ethereal heaven. About this Jeremiah says, "The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times" (Jeremiah 8). For that heaven will perish by fire in judgement, which was destroyed by the flood, as attested by Peter, who said, "The heavens were of old and the earth, standing out of water and in the water, by the word of God, by which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth that are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement" (2 Peter 3). Within this veil of the temple was placed the ark of the covenant; because the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who alone is privy to the secrets of the Father, after his passion and resurrection from the dead, ascending above the heavens of the heavens, sits at the right hand of the Father. By this veil, the sanctuary and the holy of holies are divided; because the Church, consisting of holy angels and men, partly still sojourns in the lower places, partly reigns in the eternal homeland on high, with the veil of heaven still dividing and separating its citizens from each other.

And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony, etc. Fittingly, the mercy seat is said to be placed above the ark; because the mediator between God and men is particularly given by God the Father to be the atonement for our sins. Hence Paul also says, "Jesus Christ, who died, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

The table outside the veil, and opposite the table, the lampstand, etc. The table and the lampstand of the tabernacle symbolize the temporary benefits of God, by which we are presently refreshed and illuminated, so that, being comforted and assisted by these in the meantime, with the increasing grace of merits, we may be able to enter to eat the bread of angels in the heavens and to see the true light of the world. These are both outside the veil; because in this life only, we have need of either the holy Scriptures and doctors or the other sacraments of our redemption: but in the future age, where the Lord will openly declare the Father to us, that is, will openly show the Father to us, and where, as John says, we will see Him as He is (1 John 3); there will no longer be a need for an external aid of salvation, with God Almighty dwelling inwardly in His elect, illuminating like the light of life, and satisfying like the bread of life, whom He exalts with eternal happiness, introducing them into the joy of His kingdom. We have said above that the southern side of the tabernacle signified the ancient people of God, who first received the light of divine knowledge and the fervor of divine love: but the northern part of the same tabernacle indicated the Church gathered from the Gentiles, who had remained longer in the darkness and the shadow of death.

Hence, by a proper distinction, the lampstand, which is placed in the southern part, can insinuate the grace given to the former people; while the table which stood in the northern part signifies the benefits of God granted to us. It is rightly said that the lampstand is placed opposite the table, because in truth the Scriptures of the law and the prophets in all

respects look towards the grace of the gospel; namely bearing witness to it, and signifying that they are to be revealed by it in spiritual sense.

CHAPTER IX. Description of the curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle and its columns. You shall make a curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle, etc. Having completed the narration about the veil that divided the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies, he returns to explain about the eastern side of the sanctuary, which seemed to have been omitted for a time when he described the other sides, namely the southern, northern, and western sides. Therefore, the curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle, woven with beautiful variety of colors, is the adornment of the primitive Church, glorious with different flowers of virtues: about which Luke writes: Because the multitude of believers were of one heart and soul, and there was no separation among them; nor did anyone say that anything he possessed was his own, etc. (Acts IV). For it had blue, because it used to think of heavenly things and lead a heavenly life on earth. It had purple, because it was ready to die for Christ. It had scarlet twice-dyed; because it burned with love for God and neighbor. It also had twisted linen; because it rejoiced in bodily continence and chastity.

And you shall gild five columns of acacia wood, etc. The columns by which the tent was suspended are the holy teachers, of whom Luke subsequently adds: And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord (Acts 4:33). The stronger their minds are raised to the heavens, the more firmly they suffice, by teaching, to lift others to the love of heavenly things. Just as the apostles and apostolic men can rightly be depicted by the boards, due to the breadth or doctrine with which they go into the whole world to preach the Gospel to all creation; or the love which they extend not only to friends but also to loving even their enemies, and to pursuing with prayers and benefits those who hate them: so too, because of the invincible strength of their hearts, and their ever-raised intention to the heavenly, they are not inconveniently figured by the name and craftsmanship of the columns, as the apostle attests, who says: James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars (Galatians 2:9). These columns, truly, are well made fivefold because of the same number of the books of the law, with which it is necessary that the holy teachers unite their word of preaching, and especially those who established the primitive Church, which, gathered from the people of the Hebrews, knew only to be established by the authority of the Mosaic law, when as yet the evangelical and apostolic Scriptures did not shine throughout the world.

But these same columns are rightly ordered to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, to signify that the holy preachers must be inwardly entire in the weakness of heart, and failing in no way, and must be visibly conspicuous in the brightness of deeds. Or certainly, the columns of acacia wood are gilded when the same teachers always teach that the strength of their actions must be protected by divine aid, when in all that they do they seek the glory of the Father who is in heaven; when in all that they speak, they rejoice to sound Christ, saying: For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5). Of whom it is aptly added:

Of which the capitals will be golden, and the bases bronze. The golden capitals indeed signify Him, of whom the Apostle says: And all things hold together in Him, and He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead (Col. I). Nor should it seem inappropriate for the one head of the Church, Christ, to be represented by the five capitals of columns; for there were as many capitals as there were columns: because indeed the same Lord Christ is the head of all the saints, remaining whole in Himself, always equal and indivisible, but distributing the grace of His Spirit to each of the elect according to their capacity to receive. Whence not only to the whole Church generally, but also to each of its members individually, it can be appropriately declared with confidence: Now therefore my head is exalted above my enemies around me (Psalm XXVI). It is fittingly in conformity with the significance of this head that the same column capitals are commanded to be made of gold, and not gilded like the columns and boards, because all the saints have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and heavenly grace, but He Himself was full of grace and truth: and as His forerunner said of Him: For God does not give the Spirit by measure. For the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand (John III). The bronze bases, however, are the prophets, whose testimony confirms the word of the apostles.

And it is fitting that they are bronze, either because of the unsurpassable confidence of the prophetic mind or because their word, even as the world grows old or passes away, can never be consumed by any age. For the Lord did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them. For the columns of the tabernacle have bronze bases; they have golden capitals, because the apostles and apostolic men were confirmed in faith by the words of the prophets, and were elevated by the desire to see the face of their Creator among the heavenly ones. Again, golden capitals but bronze bases; because whatever they received from the Lord by His heavenly authority, they learned that all these holy mysteries had been foretold by prophetic utterance. Indeed, since we are speaking of the eastern side, it seems opportune to recall some exposition about that unique bar, which we have said was stretched from the angle of the boards to the angle of the other wall and held all the stability of the walls, lest it be shaken by force and impulse of storms and be bent here and there. It is written in the following sacred history where it is told that Moses completed all that the Lord had commanded.

CHAPTER X. The bar that reached from one corner to the other. (Exod. XXXVI.) ... Another bar that went through the middle of the boards, etc. This bar, therefore, is to be believed to have stretched from the top of the first board to the top of the board on the other side, over the ten cubits of the width of the tabernacle, firmly set upon the boards at either end so that even the part of the tabernacle that consisted not of boards but of columns would be no less fixed than the others, even if driven by the wind. If you also desire to know the sacrament of this bar, it clearly signifies our Redeemer, who reached from corner to corner; because, having first chosen the Jewish people, He extended himself to save the multitude of the nations. Hence, just as in the prophets He is rightly called the cornerstone, so also in the law He can rightly be called the corner bar (Isa. XXVIII). He is indeed the cornerstone, for

the temple that is built for God with living stones; He is the corner bar, for the tabernacle that is built for Him from incorruptible woods, that is, from the souls of the chosen free from the stain of corruption.

CHAPTER XI. The description of the altar of burnt offering and its vessels. (Exod. XXVII.) You shall make the altar of acacia wood, etc. This altar, which was specifically called the altar of burnt offering, signifies the hearts of the chosen, which are consecrated by His gift to offer to God sacrifices of good works. It is fittingly commanded to be made of acacia wood; because it is proper for the hearts and bodies in which the Spirit of God dwells to be clean and incorrupt. It has five cubits in length and as many in width, for when anyone faithfully exercises all the senses of their body in the length of patience and in the width of charity; that in all their seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching, they should always remember to be devoted to the divine service, according to the Apostle's words, Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. It also has three cubits in height, for these same hearts of the chosen tend towards the heavenly by faith, hope, and charity.

The horns, however, on the four corners, etc. The altar of burnt offerings has four corners, because the holy Church is extended across the four regions of the world, which, because of the one heart and one soul of the entire multitude of believers, is rightly designated by the figure of a single altar: from which altar, indeed, four horns are made, when the hearts of the just are fortified with the four virtues often mentioned before. About which, in the praise of wisdom, it is said: "For it teaches sobriety and prudence, and justice and virtue; than which nothing is more useful in the life of man" (Wisdom VIII). These horns are produced from the altar itself, when the defenses of virtues are not superficially displayed and shown to the faces of men by the faithful, but are generated from the innermost root of their hearts for God as witness. There are four horns at the four corners of the altar, when, in all the ends of the world, the Church, with spiritual virtue potency, stands inviolable against all the snares of the enemies, indeed becoming stronger against all those attacking it. The altar is covered with bronze, when the virtue begun by the faithful is held firmly with perseverance to the end; for, because the metal of bronze usually endures incorruptible for a long time, virtue of perseverance is rightly designated by this.

If anyone is troubled, literally, how the wood of the altar could remain unburnt so close to the fire, let him accept the response of the blessed Jerome to this question. He said, the wood of the altar, which is from the woods of paradise, is not burned by nearby fire, but is made purer. And it is not surprising to believe this about the sanctuary and the inner parts of the temple and the incense altar, since even asbestos, which is a kind of wood or has the appearance of wood, becomes cleaner the more it burns.

And you shall make pots for his use, to receive the ashes, etc. The various vessels of the altar, or the different persons of the faithful, or certainly we should understand the diverse actions or thoughts of the same people disposed for the service of their Creator. And indeed, first, it is prescribed to make the pots to receive the ashes. The ash of the sacrifices, which must be taken in great mystery, is attested to by the ash of the red heifer sprinkled; which also,

according to the witness of the Apostle, sanctified those who were defiled for the purification of the flesh (Hebrews IX); in which he himself understands the prefigured sacrament of the Lord's passion. Moreover, the time and acceptance of Christ's passion are designated by the burnt ashes, which, purifying us perpetually, save us. Therefore, the burning of the red heifer intimates the mystery of the already completed passion, by which we are cleansed daily from our sins, having been preserved for the purification of the impure. Because therefore all the sacrifices and victims which were burned on the altar figuratively announce either the Lord's passion or the devotion of his saints burning with the flame of charity; the ashes of the holocausts rightly express either the completion of the Lord's passion or certainly the perfection of the virtue of the just;

since they, offered whole in the service of God through the fire of the Holy Spirit, have deserved to finish good works and to be taken into eternal life to receive the rewards of those works. To make this clearer, let us see what Moses says about the ashes of the holocaust: This is, he says, the law of the holocaust: it shall be burned on the altar all night until morning. The fire shall burn from the same altar. The priest shall be clothed with a linen robe and linen breeches. And taking up the ashes, which the consuming fire has burned up, and placing them next to the altar, he shall change his garments, putting on others, and carry them outside the camp; and in a very clean place, he shall let them be consumed down to the embers. Moreover, the fire on the altar shall always burn (Leviticus VI). Therefore, the holocaust shall be burned on the altar, when in the heart of any elect person, who has vowed himself whole, namely in flesh and heart, to God, a good work is performed by the fervent fire of charity. This continues through the whole night until morning, when someone, throughout the span of this life, up until he is taken from the body and deserves to see the morning of the future age, does not cease to insist on good works. The fire shall burn from the same altar;

because we should only burn with that charity which the Lord bestows upon his Church through the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Aaron's sons, because they wanted to offer strange fire to the Lord, not that which had once been given from heaven, were immediately killed by celestial fire; because anyone who performs heavenly works not with the intention of heavenly reward, but out of a desire for temporal favor or gain, is struck by the sentence of heavenly wrath. The priest shall be clothed with a linen robe and linen breeches: the priest who offers the holocaust is the Lord; because in us he customarily kindles the fire of his charity and through this makes the sacrifices of our good actions acceptable to him. And doing these things, he is clothed in linen garments; because to excite us to works of virtue, he proposes to us the examples of his incarnation, passion, and death, which have often been said to be signified by linen. And the same priest takes up the ashes, which the consuming fire has burned up, and places them next to the altar, when the Lord puts an end to labored works, neither allowing the righteous taken from this life to strive further for eternal life, but commands them to receive the crown of righteousness in eternal life. For placing the ashes next to the altar, he shall change his garments, when recalling to the righteous the good they have done, he no longer shows them the need to imitate his passion;

but he puts on other garments, those of which he himself speaks in the Gospel: Truly I tell you, he will gird himself and have them recline (Luke XII); that is, he will prepare himself for eternal reward, and make them rest in eternal peace. Clothed in other garments, he will carry the ashes outside the camp, when ready to reward the labor of his elect, the Lord makes whatever good they had done in this life already visible in that life. Nor is it out of place to understand the entry into eternal life by means of the location outside the camp, since the Lord also says: Whoever enters through me will be saved; and will come in and go out and will find pasture (John X). And the Psalmist: The Lord will guard your coming in and your going out (Psalm CX): namely the entry, into the life of the Church; and the going out, into that where the pastures of eternal satisfaction are found. Therefore, it is not inappropriate to understand the position outside the camp in the sense of that life, especially since it is said to be a very clean place, which in this life it is clearly impossible to be. Therefore, the very clean place outside the camp is the state of the righteous souls taken from this life and rejoicing in another life.

In which place certainly the ash of the holocaust is consumed down to the embers, when where the merit of good works is repaid, all labor is wholly and perfectly consummated; according to that of the Apocalypse of Saint John, who, after speaking of the reward of the saints, said: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with mankind, and he will live with them, and they will be his people, and the Lord himself will be with them as their God (Apocalypse XXI); immediately he mentioned the removal of all labor and added: And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away (Ibid.). And because the labor of good works ceasing, the very charity through which they were performed will never cease, but indeed will burn more fervently, when he himself, whom we love, will be seen forever: it is rightly added, The fire on the altar shall burn perpetually. And shortly after, It is a perpetual fire, which shall never fail from the altar. Therefore, with the holocaust consumed down to the embers, the fire shall never fail from the altar; because, with every kind of labor perfectly consumed, only charity will perpetually and never extinguishably burn. We have said these things more extensively on the law of the holocaust because of the pots of the altar, which were ordered to be made to receive the ashes of the sacrifices.

Pots then receive the holy ashes, when faithful believers either contemplate the examples and sacraments of the Lord's Passion with a devoted mind for their own virtue, or certainly observe diligently the departure of the preceding just ones, who, after great struggles for the Lord, having completed their course, now rejoice endlessly in the reward they have received, so that, considering the virtues of their predecessors, they themselves may become great, according to the Apostle's command, saying: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13). After the pots, tongs, forks, and fire receptacles were commanded to be made. It is to be believed that tongs were made to tend the fire on the altar. Hence, they rightly designate the holy preachers, who usually ignite in us the fire of charity, as if on God's altar, through their exhortations. For these, like the dual teeth of tongs, arrange the logs on the altar

to ignite this fire: when they teach us with the consonant pages of both Testaments, and place the words of truth in our hearts, which are more inflamed with the desire of eternal things. Or certainly, with tongs having a double iron, priests tend the altar fire, when in everything that holy preachers teach, they imbue us with the virtue of twin charity, and with this grace, they instruct us to burn and shine at the same time.

Forks, which are called creagrae in Greek, were used in the ministry of the altar to bring forth the cooked meats of the sacrifices from the cauldrons and bring them to those who were to be refreshed by them. The use of these also suitably represents holy preachers, whose ministry is to refresh the souls of the faithful with the word of faith, and according to the rule of apostolic discretion, to offer to still immature disciples the rational, sincere milk of simple doctrine, but to the more mature, solid food of loftier doctrine (1 Peter 2). For whoever knows how to summarize and adopt the sacraments of Christ, these are as if they are satiated, being refreshed by the meats of the saving sacrifice (Hebrews 5). And since it is the duty of spiritual teachers to discern very diligently which mysteries ought to be entrusted to each person to hear, Moses was rightly commanded to make forks for the priests, with which they might arrange the meats of the sacrifices as befitting, some indeed offered to men to eat, but others left to be consumed by the altar fires: because there are some in God's words which He deigns to reveal to our humility, granting them for our refreshment at the feast; likewise, there are others of such profound depth, which only the knowledge of the Holy Spirit can comprehend, but entirely surpass the measure of our capacity.

Moreover, fire receptacles were assigned to carry the holy fire from the altar of burnt offerings to the altar of incense every evening and morning, for the placing of incense; these also clearly hold the figure of teachers, who, as if carrying the fire from the altar of burnt offerings to the altar of incense, teach their hearers to always progress from virtue to virtue, and with increasing merits gradually penetrate the higher and inner secrets of divine vision. But also all who, seeing the fervent hearts of their neighbors, are quick to imitate, become as if fire receptacles; because they strive to ignite in their own minds the flame of the heavenly sacrifice, which they observe in their brethren. All these things are made of brass, when the devotion of the faithful perseveringly attends to obeying divine precepts; or certainly, when the devout faithful, with a clear voice, exhort others to do what they themselves rightly perform, and as frequently said, both for the enduring nature of their incorruptibility, signify the perseverance of the faithful's minds, and because of the clarity of sound, the voice usually represents the teachers.

CHAPTER XII. Description of the grating of the altar of burnt offerings, rings, and garments. The grating also, in the manner of a brazen network, etc. The altar was commanded to be made hollow, as is more clearly taught later. But having a grating in the middle of it, throughout, distinguished in the manner of a network, on which the flesh of the victims to be burned would be placed; and underneath it, a hearth where wood arranged would burn, always ready to consume the holocausts placed above it. For there was a door in the eastern

wall of the altar against the hearth, through which wood could be thrown to feed the fire, or coals and ashes could be removed, as we have seen expressed in the painting of Senator Cassiodorus, which he himself mentioned in his exposition of the Psalms: in which he also made four feet for each altar, both of the holocaust and of incense. We believe he learned this, as well as the arrangement of the tabernacle and the temple, from Jewish teachers. Thus, the altar of God has a grating in the middle, prepared to receive holocausts; for the elect prepare a place for the Lord in the innermost affection of their hearts, where they may place their devout thoughts. It has a hearth underneath the grating, in which it receives the wood and fire of the holocausts;

because the same hearts of the elect prepare a receptacle within themselves for the hearing of heavenly words, by which, heated or even inflamed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, they may offer grateful vows of devout thoughts to God. For the priest places the wood of the hearth on the altar, when any teacher instills into the yearning and eagerly seeking minds of the faithful the testimonies of the holy Scriptures, by which they may be more confirmed in faith and love. He also adds fire to the wood, when he teaches that the understanding of the word and the efficacy of pious operation should be sought from God. And the wood burns on the altar, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. And this fire consumes the holocaust placed upon it, when all the things we have disposed to do well, through the grace of the Holy Spirit granting it, are rendered acceptable to God by the power of love. Hence it is well commanded that the grating, which carries the holocausts, be made in the manner of a network: so that through its frequent openings, the fire placed underneath may freely penetrate to consume all parts of the offerings. Thus indeed it is altogether necessary, that we should by no means harden our hearts, nor close them like the Pelagians against the grace of God; but diligently open them, and as though with many doors opened at once, earnestly pray;

that in all the good things which we begin or desire to do, as though through each piece of its offerings, He may deign to illuminate us with His mercy and to kindle us in His love. For the Pelagians, who presume they can accomplish some good without the grace of God, do not place a brazen grating like a network over the sacred fire on the altar of their heart; but rather interpose a solid wall between themselves and the fire of the Holy Spirit, lest they should ever be warmed in love. Now the four brazen rings, which are commanded to be made through the corners of the altar, are the four books of the Gospels, which are aptly compared to rings, because they promise an eternal crown of life to their hearers. They are aptly brazen; because their sound has gone out into all the earth. They are aptly placed at the four corners of the altar, to confirm the Church of the faithful spread throughout all parts of the world by the word of faith and truth. They are aptly fixed under the hearth of the altar, to lift the minds of the humble by the safeguard of their consolation.

You shall also make poles for the altar, of acacia wood, two, etc. The poles by which the altar was carried are the teachers, who are accustomed to carry the holy Church, while they strengthen the faith and sacraments of truth, either preaching to those who did not know, or

confirming in those who already knew and had accepted. Since they do not preach their own words, but those of Jesus Christ, not following cunningly devised fables, but making known to the world the power of our Lord as revealed in heavenly oracles. The poles, to carry the altar, are fittingly sent through rings; for carrying the altar of the Lord with poles through rings is to encourage faithful hearts with the words of the gospel, which neither heaven nor earth passing away can alter. There are two poles, so that the word may be preached to both peoples, namely Jewish and Gentile. This is also supported by the following words, where it is added:

"They shall be on either side of the altar, etc." For there will be teachers who summon both Judaea and the Gentiles to the same grace of faith with united voice and action. Or certainly, the poles will be on either side of the altar for carrying, when holy preachers teach the minds of the faithful, in both prosperity and adversity, to maintain unwavering virtue, so they are neither lifted up by prosperity nor troubled by adversity. Not solid, but hollow and empty, etc. Therefore, the altar was commanded to be made not solid, but hollow and empty, so that it might have ample room to receive either the sacred fire and the wood for the fire, or the holocausts to be consumed by the fire. Following this example, if you wish to be an altar of God, empty yourself and rid yourself of all contagions of worldly things, so that the wood of heavenly words and the sacrifices of virtues will have sufficient space in you. And you may receive the flame of the Holy Spirit, by which the same sacrifices are consecrated to the Lord, and brought to a firm conclusion of perfection. Appropriately, it is added in the conclusion:

As it was shown to you on the mountain. For all those things that Moses marked out for us to be made mystically in the construction of the altar and the entire tabernacle, he first saw in that heavenly conversation, in which he remained with the Lord for forty days, being done by the tireless and perpetual observation of the heavenly citizens. For it is not to be doubted that he could have seen before the throne of God that most holy altar which Isaiah deserved to see, full of the living coals of inner charity, and the holy tongs (Isaiah VI); which the same prophet saw, and with one of which an angel took a coal from the altar to purge his lips and by the grace of the same Spirit, with which the angels are inflamed to love God always in heaven and humans on earth, sins are forgiven, and the gifts of virtues are granted. Therefore, the altar is commanded to be made hollow and empty, as it was shown to Moses on the mountain; because just as the angels and the spirits of the just are empty of sins in heaven and full of piety and justice, so we ought to avoid evil and do good on earth according to our capacity. The same thing, as we are taught to do by the open exhortations of heavenly words, so also by the mystical figures of the tabernacle, its vessels, and its ceremonies.

CHAPTER XIII. The Court and Vessels of the Tabernacle. You will make the court of the tabernacle, etc. Just as the Holy of Holies signifies that part of the Holy Church which is in the heavens, and the first tabernacle typically announces the perfect life of the faithful dwelling in this world; so also the court of the tabernacle, which was outside, indicates the

first rudiments of beginners. Hence, the tent curtains of the same court were well made of twisted linen; because the first care for beginners is to curb the allurements of the flesh and spirit, as the Apostle, speaking of the sons of adoption, adds: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (II Cor. VII). For linen, as often mentioned, comes green from the earth, but once pulled from the earth, it is dried, beaten, cooked, twisted, and through great and long exertion, it is transformed from green to white in color. Similarly, our flesh, to attain the virtue and beauty of chastity, must be subdued by strict fasting, prayers, vigils, and all the labors of continence, by which we can dry up its natural and almost innate delights and arouse it to the dignity of virtue we desire. Linen is twisted so that it cannot easily come apart, when not only the luxury of the flesh is restrained, but also the entire memory of it is uprooted from the depths of the heart.

One side will be a hundred cubits in length, etc. It is established that the number one hundred, which in the counting of fingers is transferred from the left to the right, sometimes in the Scriptures has the figure of heavenly life, which is just as the right hand is preferred over the left and thus is deservedly preferred over the present life. The mystery of this number is frequently found in divine writings. Noah completed the building of the ark in the hundredth year; because the holy Church, which the Lord builds in this interim life, He perfects in the future. Isaac, the son of promise, is born to Abraham at one hundred years old; because the blessing of the inheritance which is promised to all the families of the earth in his seed will be returned in the future and heavenly fatherland. He himself sojourns for one hundred years in the land of promise; because we who are made sons of Abraham through faith must lead a life in the present Church as sojourners in the hope of the heavenly inheritance. Therefore Isaac sowed in Gerar, which is interpreted as sojourning, and found in the same year a hundredfold; because whatever good things the sons of promise do while sojourning in this life, as soon as they depart from the body, they receive in the heavenly life.

In this figure, the seed of the Gospel word, which fell on good ground, produced a hundredfold fruit, and he who leaves temporal goods for Christ and for the Gospel receives a hundredfold in the present, and in the future age, eternal life—that is, the joy of brotherly society now in the hope of heavenly life, and then in itself the life of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, one side of the tabernacle is a hundred cubits in length; because all who belong to the members of the Church must necessarily take upon themselves the labor of patience and temporary continence for eternal life in the heavens. However, the columns by which these tents are raised high are holy teachers, who lift the hearts of their listeners, extracted from earthly contagions, to desire heavenly things. And these faithfully extend, as it were, the garment of the Lord, so that nothing in them may be duplicitous; but with a simple and pure intention before the Lord, they may shine like byssus tents. The columns were of brass but overlaid with silver, as is manifestly said later. Of brass indeed, for the perseverance of virtue, or for the sound of preaching itself. But overlaid with silver, because they sound nothing else than the word of God. Whose clarity is often figured by silver, showing

by no other means in their actions than the observance of divine words. They were not only overlaid with silver but also had their entire capitals of silver;

which is proper to teachers, to subject themselves wholly to the words of Sacred Scripture, meditating on them, preaching and acting upon them. For just as our members cannot subsist and live without the head, so those who esteem divine words as their life never cease to bear them in obedience and exalt themselves in humility. And what else in the brass bases of the columns should we understand than the beginning of wisdom, the fear of God? About which the son of Sirach says: "The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord. Where he also beautifully adds, "Its branches are long-lived"; because surely the various offshoots of virtues, which proceed from the fear of God as the work and engravings of the columns from the bases, will never lack the fruit of their reward. Why there were twenty columns on one side of the court has already been explained above, where it was commanded that boards of this same number be made on one side of the tabernacle.

Similarly, on the northern side along the length there were tents of a hundred cubits, etc. The same things are repeated about the northern side, which had already been set forth about the southern side; because the proclaimers of both Testaments lift us up to the heavenly realms with a harmonious voice; even if they had ceremonies of the sacraments differing according to the reason of the times, indeed in this time of the New Testament, whoever from either people attains to salvation, not only have the same faith, confession, and operation, but also the same sacraments for the cleansing of sins and the reception of heavenly life, in the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the width of the courtyard which faces westward, etc. The width of the courtyard, which faces the setting sun, where after the daily labor is completed, sleep of the night and grace follow, rightly signifies that time when, after the cessation of actual life after death, the rest of the elect and eternal reward follow. Finally, those who labored in the vineyard of the supreme father of the family, when evening came, received the rewards of their labor; because indeed each of the righteous, when they reach the end of this life, then obtain the entry into true life. Hence in Revelation, John: I heard a voice from heaven saying: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (Rev. XIV). From now on, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. For this rest, the western side of the courtyard rightly had the tents along fifty cubits, and ten columns; for the number fifty usually signifies the fiftieth year in the law, which was wholly consecrated to freedom and remission, for which reason it was also commanded to be called the jubilee (Lev. XXV). For "jobel" means releasing or changing. The number ten is also understood to designate the same heavenly rewards, where human nature in both its substances is immortally elevated, rejoicing in the presence of the divine vision. For God is Trinity. Our body consists of four elements. Our inner man is comprehended by the number three, since we are commanded to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

And when our four are eternally joined to the holy vision of the Trinity, according to that of the Psalmist: But for me, to adhere to God is good (Psalm LXXII), this is, indeed, the number

ten, which the cultivators of the Lord's vineyard receive as a reward for the completed labors of the day: because, therefore, the holy preachers, having finished this life, promise us the presence of our Creator, and eternal rest; by these promises, they also raise our desires from the appetite for lower things to seek the heavenly, as on the western side of the courtyard the tents of fifty cubits in length, raised by ten columns, are lifted up.

In that width of the atrium which faces to the east, etc. That width of the atrium, which faces to the east, signifies the beginning of our good conversation, which starts from faith. Which, because of the first reception of heavenly grace, is rightly said to face the east, according to the saying of the blessed Zacharias: "The dawn from on high has visited us: to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1). In which region there will indeed be fifty cubits; because at the very entrance of conversion, all who are catechized are taught to hope for the remission of sins and eternal rest. For the number fifty also pertains to the remission of sins. Hence, in the psalm of the same number, repentance, confession, and the forgiveness of sins are described; so that he who had sinned against the Lord, and done evil in His sight, by acknowledging his iniquity, is washed clean by Him against whom he had sinned, and made whiter than snow, and again receives the joy of the salvation of God, that is, of the Lord Jesus, whom he had offended, and is strengthened by His chief Spirit, so that he might not fall again. Therefore, the width of the eastern atrium has fifty cubits, when the first confession of faith rejoices in the remission of sins, and in the hope of future rest and peace in Christ.

Finally, in the creed of the apostles, we confess to believe in the holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh. Which the universal synod of later Fathers wished to express more fully, saying: "I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Therefore, by the fifty cubits of the eastern region, the beginnings of believers are generally designated, who are celebrated in the remission of sins and the hope of future blessedness. However, immediately another particular distinction is introduced, which, when well considered, refers to the same end. It follows:

In which the fifteen cubit curtains shall be assigned to one side, etc. For the fifteen, which consist of the number seven and eighty, rightly designate the joys of eternal life, which, beginning with the sabbath rest of souls, is perfected in the resurrection of bodies. For the Lord, resting in the tomb on the seventh day of the week, rose from the dead on the eighth, that is, after the seventh day of the week. Moreover, the columns with their bases on the side of fifteen cubits represent holy preachers, excelling in faith, hope, and charity, firmly positioning their minds in the stability of the fear of God. Also, as you enter the courtyard of the tabernacle, you have on each side curtains of fifteen cubits suspended by three columns; because whoever proposes to learn the sacraments of faith by entering the holy Church, whether they direct their mind's gaze to the Synagogue or to the Church of the nations, in either portion of the faithful they will find teachers strong in faith, uplifted in hope, fervent in charity, and founded in the fear of the Lord, promising to their listeners

the rest of blessed souls and the resurrection of immortal bodies. They, like the curtains of twisted byssus, suspend in themselves, teaching their listeners by their own example to seek what is above, not what is on earth, and to keep their whole spirit, soul, and body blameless for the day of the Lord.

At the entrance of the court, there shall be a screen of twenty cubits, etc. There are four columns at the entrance of the court; for no one can enter the unity of the holy Church except through faith and the sacraments of the Gospel, which are contained in four books. Hence a beautiful custom has grown up in the Church, that for those who are to be catechized and initiated into the Christian sacraments, the beginnings of the four Gospels are recited, and they are diligently instructed about their figures and order at the opening of their ears; so that they may know and remember from then on who and how many are the books by whose words they ought to be educated in the faith of the truth. In this entrance, a screen of twenty cubits is also commanded to be made, which is the same number as four times five. And there are five most notable senses of our body: namely sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Therefore it is fitting that at the entrance of the court, the screen of twenty cubits is suspended on four columns; because all who enter the holy Church ought to conform both their faith and actions to the rule of the Gospels; so that, avoiding carnal enticements, they subject all the senses of their body to divine commands.

For not only is this screen supported by four columns, but in its length, it also has the number five multiplied by four, when any humble and pious listeners finding faith, are not only imbued with the words of the Gospel but also desire to lead an evangelical life themselves, spending all the senses of their body in obedience to charity. And rightly is this screen at the entrance of the court, not like in the rest of the court, made of twisted fine linen, but of four most noble colors, namely blue and purple, and double-dyed scarlet, along with twisted fine linen, made with embroidery work; because the outward appearance of the Church indeed shines beautifully for those who are catechized, but its dignity and virtue will appear much more splendid to those who merit to enter it through the sacrament of baptism. For no one suddenly becomes supreme, but we must necessarily progress gradually from lesser things to more perfect things. We have often said that blue signifies the hope of heavenly goods, purple the endurance of temporal evils, double-dyed scarlet the fervor of perfect love, and twisted fine linen the restraint of carnal pleasure. These colors, which are interwoven with embroidery work, when each virtue of the faithful is more clearly seen by the association and, as it were, by a certain kinship with neighboring virtues. Although also the individual aforementioned colors may correspond to individual persons of the chosen; for instance, if someone deserves to contemplate heavenly things more deeply, he is blue;

another, because he suffers more for justice, he is purple; this one, who burns with more fervent love for God and neighbor, he is double-dyed scarlet; that one who shines especially in the integrity of virginal flesh, he is twisted fine linen. And while the righteous in one and the same faith and evangelical piety rejoice in each other's virtues, they decorate, as it

were, the screen at the entrance of the court of the Lord, woven with the beautiful diversity of alternating colors.

All the pillars of the court round about shall be dressed with plates of silver, etc. He more diligently emphasizes what he had said; so that he may zealously remind the reader that no one among the teachers of truth, namely the pillars of the heavenly court, can be considered; who has not learned to have invincible patience amidst adversities like bronze, who has not taken care to adorn and fortify himself everywhere with the observance and proclamation of heavenly words, as if with plates of silver, who has not striven to subject himself to divine precepts with all subjection, as if under a silver head; who has not stood firm in the fear of God, as it were on a bronze base.

In length, it shall occupy one hundred cubits, etc. The Church has one hundred cubits in length; for it raises its arms to good works for eternal life. Fifty cubits in width; because it hopes for eternal rest in the grace of the Holy Spirit; which was designated by the number fifty, when He deigned to consecrate Pentecost, that is, the fiftieth day of the Easter feast, by His coming. The height shall be five cubits according to the number of our bodily senses; because then each one will receive according to what he has done in his own body, whether good or bad. But in the court of the house of the Lord, the figure of only those who have done good in the body is expressed, for which they deserve to be brought into the rest of perpetual life; who now shine in the works of righteousness which they perform with a pure body and heart, like twisted linen, and then in the same body elevated in the glory of immortality, they rejoice forever in the rewards of righteousness. But in the evangelical parable, mention is made of both parts together, where five virgins, who came to the bridegroom with works of light, immediately enter with him to the wedding; five others, who practiced works of chastity without a pure mind, are repelled with their darkness, cast far from the doors of the kingdom (Matt. XXV). For there were five and five, because each was judged according to what they had done in the flesh.

Therefore, the entire length and width of the court are stretched out by hundreds and fifties of cubits. It has five cubits of height; because it is necessary that we who have the promise of rest and the heavenly homeland, cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit; and not only cleanse from defilement but also perfect sanctification in the fear of God; so that at the appearing hour of the promised reward, we may deserve to rejoice not only in spirit but also in flesh in the love of God. For which reason, for the cleansing of both our substances, that is, of both soul and flesh, in the fear of God, what was said above is repeated to be more diligently committed to memory: It shall be made of twisted linen, and it shall have bronze bases. And then it is added:

All the vessels of the tabernacle for all its uses, etc. The vessels of the tabernacle for all its uses and ceremonies are prepared, and these vessels are men of the Church serving the Lord in different merits and ranks; all which vessels are commanded to be made of bronze, as often said, a representation of that mystery; so that if anyone is struck by adversity, he may persevere to the end, nor lose the promised salvation due to idleness; or, so that he

may not fear to openly confess the faith he has learned, even when enemies oppose him, but also remember to diligently declare the gifts he has received to his friends. For bronze is sonorous and naturally enduring for a long time. The pegs, he says, of the tabernacle or the court were made so that fixed at the top of the columns, they would project outward, and with ropes of the veils or tents placed on them, lifting them thus, they would suspend them from the ground. By the construction and position of these, the tongue of the learned, which touches the hearts of listeners by preaching and uplifting them by touching, can not unreasonably be designated. Ropes indeed are sometimes used to designate sacred Scripture. Hence it is written: "A threefold cord is not easily broken. For Scripture, interpreted in historical, allegorical, and moral senses, cannot be corrupted by the perversity of heretics or pagans.

But these tents or veils, so that they could hold the ropes, necessarily had rings or hooks at their tops into which these ropes were inserted. And you, if you wish to be a tent of God, prepare in your heart a receptacle for His words, so that you can be elevated to heavenly things. Let the ropes of the tents be placed on the pegs of the columns, so that, being thus spread out and raised, they complete the beauty of the tabernacle. Let the holy preachers commit divine words to the hearts of the faithful and remind them to be raised from lowly things by their example. Let the tents or veils, spread by ropes and raised up, show the marvelous glory of their work, which they could not show when folded. Let the faithful demonstrate the breadth of good works, the beauty of mind and inner grace which they received from the Lord's gift; so that those who see their good works may glorify the Father who is in heaven: and say, "How lovely are your tabernacles, Lord of hosts! My soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord" (Psalm 83).

BOOK THREE. CHAPTER ONE. Description of the oil offering for the lamp. (Exodus XXVIII.)

Command the children of Israel to bring you oil, etc. Once all the ornamentation of the tabernacle was arranged, the light of the lamp was also provided, so that its admirable beauty might be illuminated, just as during the day by the sunlight, so also at night by the flames of the lamps; so that no place of darkness could ever creep into the house of God, nor could any shadowy hour appear. According to the mystical senses, what the light of the lamp signifies, the Lord declares in the Gospel; who, after saying through a parable: Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, so that it may shine for all who are in the house; immediately added openly: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (Matthew V). Therefore, the lamp shining in the house of God are the works of the righteous, which illuminate the minds of those who observe them by their examples. But it should be looked at more diligently that for the lamp to be able always to burn in the tabernacle of God; indeed, the children of Israel are commanded to offer oil, while Aaron and his sons are ordered to place the lamp itself. What, then, is this distinction, that the people offer oil for nourishing the light in the house of the Lord, and the priests arrange the lamp?

Unless perhaps this is figuratively commanded, that the faithful and religious listeners bring hearts prepared for obedience to faith; while the teachers administer the fire of the heavenly word through preaching, so that they may be illuminated to recognize and inflamed to love God. By the richness of the oil, by which weary and weak limbs are refreshed, and the grace of light is provided, the internal love of the mind, and the work of mercy are often designated. Hence the Psalmist: But I, like a fruitful olive tree in the house of God, have trusted in the mercy of God forever and ever (Psalm. LI). As if he were plainly saying: Because I have shown the fruit of mercy to the needy, I also have hoped for the grace of mercy from God to be repaid to me forever. Therefore, let the children of Israel offer oil, and let Aaron and his sons arrange the lamp with the brought fire, so that it may burn in the tabernacle of God. Let humble listeners offer the devotion of a pious mind, and let the teachers through the ministry of speech instruct them in the secrets of heavenly knowledge; being regularly established, they may burn with the fire of charity in the sight of their Creator, and show the light of good action to men outside. It should be noted, however, that the children of Israel are not commanded to offer oil indiscriminately, but with distinction, oil from the olive trees is prescribed;

and it is further added, pure and beaten with a pestle. Oil may indeed be made from nard, from radish, from nuts, or from wood, and other different kinds of species, but no oil is allowed to be offered to the tabernacle of God except that which is made from the wood of olives: just as no other fire than that which comes down from heaven ought to burn in the holy lamps, or to be kindled on the altar of God: for the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit. Therefore, let the children of Israel offer oil for the lamp of God, not any kind but from olive trees, and this pure and beaten with a pestle. Let good listeners offer to spiritual teachers a pure conscience, and one fruitful in the grace of charity, cleansed by the diligent examination of any stain of wickedness; which alone, with the intention of pleasing and serving the Lord, delights in hearing His word. Let Aaron, with his sons, offer not strange fire, but fire sent from above to light the lamp; just as to accomplish the holocausts, and to offer fragrant incense, let teachers proclaim not their own word, but the Lord's, declaring with confidence: "For we are not, as many, corrupting the word of God, but from sincerity, but from God, we speak in Christ, as before God" (II Cor. II). They use this fire to illuminate the hearts of the listeners with the knowledge of faith;

this to perfect and dedicate to God the holocausts of their good works; this to kindle the incense of holy prayers. It is well said: "That the lamp may burn always in the tabernacle of the testimony; because in the holy Church, the light of preaching must never be wanting, nor should the pure humility of listeners, who willingly receive it, indeed, and diligently seek it. It is well added: "Outside the veil which is spread over the testimony. For we do not need the lamp of Scriptures within the veil of heaven, where is the ark of the Lord, and the Cherubim of glory overshadow the propitiatory, that is, the hosts of the heavenly army proclaim with a harmonious voice the glory of the incarnate Son of God, whom God has set forth as a propitiation for our sins. It follows well: "And Aaron and his sons shall place it; because it is not for everyone to preach the sacraments of faith to the people, but only for

those who are proven to belong to the sons of the high priest, namely our Lord and Savior, both by the purity of faith and the execution of good works. But whoever either deviates from the purity of faith by wrong doctrine, or defiles the integrity of known and kept faith by the wickedness of evil deeds: such a one, even if he seems to have preeminence in the name or person of a priest, will nevertheless hear from the Lord:

"Why do you declare my statutes, and take my covenant in your mouth? You indeed hate discipline," and the rest (Psalm XLIX). Such ones James also withdraws from the position of the lamp of God, that is, from the word of preaching with kind exhortation, saying: "Do not become many teachers, my brothers, knowing that you shall receive greater judgment" (James III). That particular judgment which we have long forewarned with the voice of the Psalmist. It is well further added: "And it shall shine before God until the morning. For when the night of this world has passed, and the morning of the future world has shined, of which the prophet says: "In the morning I will stand before you, and I will see" (Psalm V), we will no longer need the lamp of books, as the true light of the world, which the prophet speaks of: "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of righteousness shall rise" (Malachi IV), will appear and illuminate us.

The worship will be perpetual, etc. And this clause, like the preceding ones that have been said about the tabernacle and its vessels and utensils, should be understood and explained more in a spiritual sense than a carnal one. For how could the worship of the priestly office be perpetual according to the letter, where both the priesthood itself and the tabernacle in which it was conducted, and the people for whom it was conducted, have long since ceased to exist? Hence, it is clear that this word is to be fulfilled in the holy Church, where, with teachers succeeding each other in order, and listeners of the truth together, there will never be lacking spiritual sons of Israel who offer gifts of piety in the house of the Lord, and sons of Aaron, that is, of our true priest, who will minister to them the light of the word, until the end of this world's state is completed, and the very tabernacle of God, that is, the entire multitude of the elect, being transferred to the heavenly kingdom, there will no longer be men to be instructed by men, since God will be all in all.

CHAPTER II. On the Priesthood of Aaron and his sons. (Exod. XXVIII. "Bring near to you Aaron your brother, etc. After the construction of the tabernacle is described, consequently, the priests, who will minister in it, are ordained. Their ordination and attire rightly match the priests of the Church: so that everything that shone brightly externally in the priestly garments there, this shines spiritually high within the minds of our priests, this shines gloriously in their actions, surpassing the merits of other faithful. Hence it is aptly commanded to Moses, to bring near to him Aaron his brother with his sons from the midst of the children of Israel, to minister in the priesthood before the Lord. For it is necessary that whoever is to be promoted to a higher degree in the holy Church should apply themselves more diligently to the law of God, that is, attach themselves to the observation of divine commandments with a more keen mind than others. This is what it means for those who are to perform the priesthood to be brought near to Moses from the midst of the children of

Israel, that is, the leaders and teachers of the holy Church, transcending common life with the unique height of their mind, and attentively considering what the law speaks generally to all the chosen, and what it speaks specially to the few more perfect, that with a higher excellence of merits, they may reach higher rewards.

For when it is commanded that his brother Aaron be ordained into the priesthood with his sons, what else is mystically commended to us but that all who are chosen for the office of a teacher should cling to the meditation of the divine law with such zeal and love that they seem to be connected to it by a kindred bond? Nor does the fact that the first sons of Aaron, after their ordination, perished by heavenly fire when they offered strange fire before the Lord deviate from the meaning of our miserable times; where some priests and teachers, sadly a grave and grievous enough thing to say, assume the place while preferring the fire of desire to the fire of divine love, and are taken up by the fire of divine vengeance. Their perpetual damnation is temporally figured by the death of Aaron's sons. Although the more excellent figure of mystery, how the tabernacle with its ornaments and vessels designates the holy Church, distinguished by the most beautiful variety of virtues or faithful persons: so also the high priest of the same tabernacle holds the figure of the true pontiff Jesus Christ, who offered himself as a sacrifice and offering to God for us in a scent of sweetness. Who can also rightly be called the brother of Moses: for who is more connected to another by the bond of brotherhood than Christ to Moses, law to grace, the New Testament to the Old?

since even Moses himself gives such testimony about him, saying to the people he taught: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your people and from among your brothers; you shall listen to him. And a little later on behalf of the Lord: "I will raise up a prophet for them from the midst of their brothers, like you, and I will put my words in his mouth" (Deut. XVIII). Whose admirable works, which no one else did, are rightly compared to the attire of Aaron adorned with wonderful variety, or certainly Aaron's manifold garments signify the entire assembly of the chosen adhering to Christ in various distinctions of persons and merits, as the Apostle testifies, who says: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. III). When thus in the person of Aaron we accept figuratively the Lord and Savior, what else do the sons of Aaron, who are also anointed into the priesthood, signify but the apostles of Christ, their successors, and all the teachers of the faithful? These things indeed can be primarily taken concerning the Lord; but it is more fitting for us to look at those things which pertain to the signification of our pious conversation in the Lord, and which regard the correction of our morals. It follows:

CHAPTER III On the priesthood of Aaron and his sons. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, etc. The holy garments of Aaron which Moses made for him are the works of justice and holiness, which the Scripture commends to teachers of the sacred law, and of which it also shows examples to be imitated by those who have preceded in Christ. The wise of heart, whom God filled with the spirit of wisdom to make these same garments, are the prophets and apostles, and other teachers of the truth, who very clearly show us

how priests should live and how ministers of the altar ought to teach, either by the example of their actions or by the word of exhortation. Concerning whom is that statement of the Apostle to Titus: For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for gain; but hospitable, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as taught (Titus 1).

But these are the garments which they shall make, etc. How each of these is made will be explained more fully in the following. However, the breastpiece of judgment is the ephod; the tunic and the tight linen garment, that is, the undergarment, cover the whole body, the turban adorns the head, and the belt closely fits the tunic and the ephod to the body. To these six garments, a seventh and eighth are added below, namely, the linen breeches to cover the flesh of nakedness, and the golden plate on the turban, which with the inscription of the Lord's name stood out higher than all the others. He calls the tight linen garment such because it clings to the body and was so tight with confined sleeves that it had no fold at all. It also descended down to the shins, hence it was called poderes in Greek, that is, reaching to the ankles. The high priest was accustomed to wear these eight types of garments during the time of sacrifice. Among them, four were also granted to priests of lower order, namely, the linen breeches, the tight linen garment, the belt, and the turban. For it was fitting that the higher one was distinguished in rank, the more they should shine with admirable acts of virtues. Everything is made of gold and precious colors; because nothing lowly or sordid should appear in the speech or actions of the priest; but everything he does, all he speaks, all he thinks should be glorious before men and splendid in the sight of the inner judge.

CHAPTER IV. Concerning the Ephod. "They shall make the ephod of gold," etc. Since we are accustomed to carry burdens on our shoulders, what is signified by the ephod of the high priest, if not the labors of good works, which he should constantly bear before the Lord? It is fittingly commanded that the making of the ephod be first discussed, because anyone who is to be promoted to the priesthood and the leadership of God's people, his works must first be known so that when this, which is evident to all outwardly, is seen to be irreproachable, the integrity of his heart and the sincerity of his faith may also be examined in due time. The ephod, therefore, which the high priest wore on his shoulders, should be taken as that evangelical burden of which the Lord said: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. XI). Explaining this more clearly elsewhere, he said: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Mark VIII). Meanwhile, the same ephod is made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet twice-dyed, and fine twisted linen. Clearly, in the vestment of the priest, the understanding of wisdom should principally shine forth before all else. To this understanding, blue is added, which shimmers with a sky-like color; so that through everything he penetrates by understanding, he does not seek lowly favor but rises to the love of heavenly things; lest, when he feeds incautiously on his own praises, he should be deprived even of the understanding of truth itself.

Gold and blue are also combined with purple, so that the priestly heart, along with the highest things it preaches, hopes also to keep in itself the suggestions of vices, thwarting them as if by royal power; so that it may always aspire to the nobility of inner rebirth and sustain the habit of heavenly kingship in its morals. Although, as often said above, in the purple color, the shedding of blood for Christ or the endurance of various pressures can be understood. For this indeed is the cross, which following the Lord we are commanded to bear daily. Hence rightly such a feature shines upon the shoulder of the priest among others, to teach him always to be prepared to suffer adversities. To gold, blue, and purple is added twice-dyed scarlet, so that all the virtues may be adorned with charity before the eyes of the inner judge; that all which glitters before men, may be ignited by the flame of inner love in the sight of the hidden judge. This charity, by which he loves both God and neighbor, shines as if colored with a double dye. But when the mind is directed to the precepts of charity, it undoubtedly remains to be mortified by abstinence. Hence twisted fine linen is also added to twice-dyed scarlet. For fine linen, of a shining appearance, arises from the earth. And what is signified by fine linen, if not the gleaming decorum of bodily chastity? For this beauty of the ephod is connected to the earth, because chastity is brought to the perfect brilliance of purity when the body is wearied by abstinence.

Concerning the scarlet that flashes like fire, this can also be said not inappropriately; because it is perhaps commanded to be twice-dyed, because fire usually has a twofold power: to burn and to shine. It is fitting for the prelate to imitate its nature in the word of saving doctrine, to both illuminate with the knowledge of science to those desiring it and to burn away the rust of sins in the contemptuous by reproving them. When he exposes the sweet mysteries of Scripture, or the miracles, or the parables of the Lord in the Gospels to his listeners, he seems to showcase the brilliance of light in his vestment. But when he strikes the proud with the memory of eternal punishment, he shows, as it were, the terror of consuming flame to those watching. For no one speaking to the people should focus solely on reproving the crimes of the wicked, or solely on revealing the secrets of Scripture, lest he be listened to with less willingness by discussing only the correction of sins, or benefit them less by revealing only the hidden mysteries whom he should correct. But when he tempers his speech with both, by uncovering the sweetness of heavenly secrets to his listeners and urging the correction of morals through which they can become partakers of these, the high priest, as it were, shows in his vestment the brilliance of twice-dyed scarlet.

He will have two joined edges on each side of the summits, etc. About this, it is said in the following: He made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple. And a little later: And two edges joined to each other on each side of the summits. From this, it seems likely that with the garment folded, the edges of each part were joined on each side from top to bottom; so that half of the garment would appear outward to the eyes of those looking, while the other half would be hidden inside; but the edges of both joined, would descend to the extreme corners below. In which what else should we understand typically, if not that when we show good works outwardly to our neighbors, we should keep the same intact inwardly before the Lord? Lest ever the perfection of pious action should follow lesser purity of thought, or that which

appears to be the perfection of an imperfect work, the intent of the mind should leave part solitary. But just as the two edges of the ephod are joined to each other, while we show all good outwardly, we act inwardly with a pure and simple intention of pleasing God. And this is on both sides of the ephod so that we may always serve our Creator with consistent action and thought in both adversity and prosperity. For the shorter edge leaves the longer one, and with discordant measurement, they cannot come together as one, if we are seen doing good externally for eternal reward, but are inwardly entangled with the intention of pleasing men, seeking human favor more than the rewards of invisible life.

And the very texture and all the variety of the work will be of gold, etc. Not in one part of the ephod was there gold, in another part blue, in another various other colors, but all colors were certainly interwoven with the gold itself throughout; because indeed in the priestly action some great virtues should never at any time be lacking, but always luminous with the gold of wisdom, always lifted up to the heights with the blue of hope, always courageous against the battles of vices with the purple of the heavenly kingdom, always inflamed with the double-dyed scarlet of dual love, always shining with the twisted fine linen of chastised flesh the priest or teacher of the faithful should be.

You will take two onyx stones and engrave them, etc. For three reasons Aaron always carried the names of the patriarchs on his shoulders during sacrifices, just as he also bore them on his breast; namely, that he might remember to imitate the faith and life of the patriarchs, that he might be mindful of the twelve tribes which were born from them in his prayers and sacrifices; that the same people, seeing the names of their fathers written on the garment of their priest, might be careful not to turn away from their merits and incline towards the contagion of errors. For this is what is meant by the command: And you shall put on both sides of the ephod a memorial for the children of Israel. Now also the high priest bears the names of the patriarchs on the ephod when any teacher or bishop of the church considers the deeds of preceding fathers in all that he does, striving to direct his life in imitation of them and to bear the burden of evangelical perfection. These names of the fathers were fittingly ordered to be engraved on precious stones; for precious stones are indeed the works of spiritual virtues. And the priest bears precious stones on his shoulders, and the names of the fathers inscribed on them, when he himself becomes admirable to all for the brilliance of his good works, and teaches that this brilliance was not newly invented by him, but passed down by the ancient authority of the fathers.

And he bears these on his shoulders for a dual reason: that he may humbly walk, submissive to the commandments of the Lord, and that he may always set before his hearers the celestial, whether by his own examples or those of the fathers, to follow. It is fitting that these stones were commanded to be set in gold and surrounded; for gold represents understanding, as previously mentioned, or certainly charity, since charity surpasses all other virtues as gold does other metals. The stones are set in gold and surrounded when the operation of virtues is inspected all around by pure understanding so that nothing vicious can lie hidden or remain foul within them; when these virtues are so bound by the bond of

charity that they can never fall from their position through any change in circumstances, nor can they ever be removed from the habit of the priest through the torpor of a slackened mind. It is well said next:

And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord, etc. For the priest, on behalf of remembrance, bears the names of the fathers on both shoulders, when, diligently considering at all times the life of the preceding saints, he is always adorned with the virtue both in adversities and prosperities, so that according to the voice of Paul: Walking by the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left, striving only for what is ahead, he is not diverted in any way to the lower side of love (II Cor. VI). And you shall make hooks of gold, etc. The hooks he mentions were skillfully affixed in the upper corners of the shoulder-plate. However, the little chains he adds were not on the very shoulder-plate but rather seemed to have been attached to the breastpiece, that is, in its upper corners through golden rings, so that when the high priest would wear it, the little chains that hung from the breastpiece could be attached to the hooks of the shoulder-plate, so that both would be securely connected to each other in their position. It is more clearly written about this later: They also made in the breastpiece chains closely linked together of pure gold, and two hooks and as many gold rings. Furthermore, they put the rings on both sides of the breastpiece, from which hung the two golden chains, which they inserted into the hooks that stood out in the corners of the shoulder-plate. The figure of them will be better discussed in the explanation of the breastpiece.

CHAPTER V. On the Rational. "You shall make a breastpiece for making decisions, the work of a skilled craftsman, etc. "The work of a skilled craftsman," means the work of many kinds. Just as perfection of works was in the ephod, so in the breastplate of judgment that covered the priest's chest, expressing the purity of his heart and mind. And appropriately, after the ephod follows the breastplate of judgment; so that, when someone appears innocent in hands before men, he strives even more to stand pure in heart before the sight of the supreme judge, striving diligently so that whatever he does or judges externally towards others, all should shine approved by the rule of internal reason and pleasing to his Creator. Also, the priest is commanded to carry the breastplate of judgment on his chest, because the ruler must always discern good and evil with a subtle examination, and thoughtfully consider what fits with whom, when, and how. The breastplate was made double so it could more easily bear the weight of the stones. But this doubling of the garment on the typical priest's chest advises us that the reasoning of our examination must be approved by the invisible inner judge, and never deservedly despise human opinion externally. Or certainly, we bear the double breastplate of judgment on our chest, when both the matters of the faith of truth and the invisible life that we speak or think about stand firm in reason;

and also, those things we do visibly or plan to do are equally proven to be balanced by the judgment of just discretion. But having the measure of a handspan in a square indicates the indefatigable and perpetual effort of a pious intention. For he who measures something with a hand certainly shows the greatest effort with his fingers spread out, so that he can

fully hold the measure he seeks without a doubt of scruple. Hence, deservedly, just as an operation is expressed by the hand, so by the handspan itself is expressed the inflexible striving of good operation, while each one strives to extend his right hand in all the signs of virtues he can achieve. And it is well that the same breastplate is commanded to have the measure of a handspan both in length and in width; because whether the mind's desire raises in the length of eternal life, or inclines its affection in the width of charity towards the care of the neighbor, it is necessary that the priestly heart should remain neither sluggish nor lazy in any aspect, but always extended with burning zeal to comprehend the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And you shall set in it four rows of stones, etc. This positioning of different gems on the breastplate symbolizes the multiple operations of various virtues, which, arranged in a harmonious series, must always appear in the heart of the priest. Furthermore, each stone is inscribed with the names of the fathers, while the rector, inspecting the life of the saints, diligently examines which works of virtues they flourished in most; and he strives to collect all these by meditating within the hidden parts of his own heart and to express them through his actions. For it is not without a certain reasoning of the sacrament that both garments are adorned with precious stones and inscribed with the names of the fathers; such that the names are inscribed on the ephod on two stones of the same kind, whereas on the breastplate they are inscribed with twelve names of different kinds. But the fact that the fathers are engraved on precious stones of one and the same kind clearly signifies that the one faith in God, the same love, and the common hope of heavenly life fill the hearts of all the fathers. However, the fact that the same names are inscribed on stones of different kinds figuratively declares that there is a multiple variety and grace of good works, by which the aforementioned faith, hope, and love of the saints are confirmed and shine forth.

That there are four rows on the breastplate, each having three stones, what do they typically indicate to us, except that in the virtues distinguished in four, we should hold firmly the principal faith in the Holy Trinity without deceit? For the priest has four rows of gems on his breast when everything he contemplates is circumspect with prudence, firm with fortitude, exceptional with justice, and secret from all evils with temperance. But the same rows have three gems when the same prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance are consecrated by faith in the Holy Trinity. For since our life in the present consists of faith and upright action, the priest aptly carries four rows of gems on his breast, so that he may be paramount in action. But to be chaste with sincerity of faith along with actions, he has three gems in each row, so that to all who look upon him, he shows both the confession of true faith and examples of good action, so that they too, by imitating the right faith and action, may deserve to become members of the high priest. Surely, in the varied decor of stones, we can take the manifold brightness of the priestly act and thoughts, as well as the spiritual gifts of virtues and the miracles of healings. Concerning which the Lord himself says to the apostles: Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons (Matt. X). And again: These signs will follow those who believe:

in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them (Mark XVI). Indeed, whether this or that, or both are designated, rightly the number twelve is prescribed for the breastplate, so that we may know that the actions and miracles of those who follow the unity of apostolic faith, doctrine, and charity are accepted by God. Otherwise, if anyone speaks in tongues, if anyone distributes all his goods to the poor, if anyone gives his body to be burned, if he does not have the unity of catholic charity, it profits him nothing (I Cor. XIII). Rightly also, the two onyx stones on the ephod were sculpted with the same number of twelve fathers, to signify that the doctrine and faith of the apostles will be beneficial to both peoples, that is, of the Jews and of the Gentiles. Accordingly, the Lord openly promised through the prophet to the same intellectual Jerusalem, that is, to His Church, saying: You will break forth to the right hand, and to the left; and your seed will inherit the nations (Isa. LIV). Moreover, the onyx is said to be of a reddish color, having little fiery spots surrounded by white zones; who would not see that this designates either the ardor of charity or the light of knowledge accompanied by the belt of chastity?

The priest carries the names of the fathers inscribed on stones of this kind when, following the example of previous righteous ones, he devotes constant effort to charity, chastity, humility, doctrine, and other works of virtues. And this on both shoulders, so that whether someone is from the Jews or from the Gentiles, he may always behold the brightness in the teacher of truth and piety by which he himself may progress to better things.

You will make chains on the breastpiece, etc. The order of the work, as it seems to us, was as follows. There were two hooks placed above on the two corners of the ephod, and two corresponding rings on the two upper rings of the breastpiece. From these hung two golden chains, which, at the time of dressing, were inserted into the hooks that stuck out from the corners of the ephod, as is more clearly written in the following, so that the ephod and the breastpiece were mutually connected. The description of their upper connection thus far has been described. Now follows concerning the lower one, which was below the armpits. The scripture continues: You will also make two golden rings, etc. This means: And on the borders, which are opposite the ephod; does not mean on the borders of the ephod, but on those borders which are opposite the ephod, that is, on the borders of the breastpiece, which indeed are borders opposite to the ephod. For those rings that were on the outermost and lowest corners of the breastpiece had corresponding rings on each side of the ephod, to which they were joined by binding ribbons. About which it is subsequently added:

Likewise, two other golden rings, etc. Opposite the face of the lower joining; because he had previously spoken of the upper joining, which was above the shoulders. Between these joinings indeed, the difference was that the upper was made with small chains, but the lower was made with binding ribbons. Hence it is aptly added:

And the breastplate shall be fastened by its rings to the rings, etc. However, it is not to be thought that both garments were terminated at the same time. For the rationale, which had the measure of a palm in height as well as in width, was not sufficient to cover much

more than just the chest. The ephod, however, extended down to the girdle, as is very clearly shown in the latter parts, where it is written: These were joined together both before and behind, so that the ephod and the breastplate were mutually connected, tightly bound to the belt, and more strongly joined by rings, which were smeared with a blue ribbon, lest they become loose and fall apart from each other. These things have been said about the literal connection of the ephod and the breastplate. But because, as it has often been said, the ephod pertains to the consummation of good works, and the breastplate pertains to the signification of pure thoughts, the connection which associates them with each other rightly signifies that industriousness of mind by which the intellect and faith of learned believers are joined with their actions. For the skillful joining remains, so that the breastplate and the ephod cannot be separated from each other, because the ruler precedes with such erudition and zeal of work that he leaves nothing imperfect of the things he knows must be done; he deprives nothing of the things seen to be right from the virtue of rectitude through carelessness of heart.

For the garments of the priest fall down and move from each other if either the honor of good work is stained by deficient heart's keeping, or the integrity of pure thought is not followed by the perfection of action. But lest these can be dissolved from each other, the priest must have two chains made of pure gold on the breastplate, that is, the continuation of chaste and unfeigned love firmly fixed to his heart; which never allows his hands and tongue to dissent from the purity of right thinking. And rightly two, so that he may proceed rightly adorned in both those things which pertain to the worship of divine service, and in those that pertain to the aid of fraternal necessity. And indeed the work of charity is openly expressed through golden chains; for just as a chain is woven together from many strands of gold, so charity is perfected through manifold operations of virtues. Which indeed the Apostle explains: Charity is patient, is kind: charity does not envy, does not act wrongly, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, does not seek its own, is not easily angered, does not think evil, does not rejoice in iniquity; but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (I Cor. XIII). Let her also have golden rings, from which the same chains hang;

that is, the constant memory of perpetual and never-ending glory in the heavenly homeland, from which only by memory it is customary to be made, so that the eternal bonds of glory can remain with us. She had two hooks protruding in the corners of the ephod, to which chains are fastened, that is, in the very beginning of every good action, she should have a firm intention pleasing to God, which is suitable in all respects for receiving and bearing within itself the love of God and neighbor; so that whether any favorable or adversarial things occur, she never loosens the most beneficial bonds of pious devotion. This means that the priest has hooks on both shoulders, to hold the chains of the breastplate; and whether in prosperity or in the challenging events of things, he bears a firm desire to please God, and with this intention of zeal is strengthened in the love of Him and neighbor simultaneously. The hooks of the ephod, therefore, are fitted to the golden chains, which are offered from the top of the breastplate; whenever what the mind rationally tastes from the internal light

of charity, shortly, the eagerness of good work embraces it willingly, lest sooner the most beautiful habit of the breastplate from the priest's breast falls off, if the unyielding hook of good work does not take hold to retain it. Let also the chains themselves be substituted as an aid by hyacinth-colored lives, by which each habit of the priest is mutually joined;

that is, the very strong bindings of heavenly desire, which inserted into golden rings, bind the ephod with the breastplate, when by the received light of the eternal homeland, we breathe towards that ineffable glory; certainly, so that we may deserve to enter it, with ever harmonious faith and life, by work and profession, we strive to serve the Lord in the tabernacle of the present Church. But as the ephod was bound tightly with a belt, as is more clearly indicated in the following, where the high priest was clothed; and he says that he laid the ephod, which he secured tightly with a belt fitting it to the breastplate; who cannot see that the most faithful guardian of good works is the virtue of continence? concerning which the Lord in the Gospel says: Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning (Luke XII). Loins evidently girded by continence; lamps burning by the operation of virtues.

And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment, etc. It is always indeed necessary for the priest to carry the memory of the fathers in his heart; but especially then, when about to minister before the Lord at the altar, in order that as the ministry is more sacred, with that much more diligent effort, purifying himself wholly, adorning his mind and body with all industry, he looks to the examples of the saints; and being a diligent imitator of them, he strives to present himself fit in the sight of the divine. Likewise, Aaron carries the names of the children of Israel on his chest as a perpetual memorial before the Lord, when any faithful prelate never ceases to have care for those he is set over; but always fortifies their life by exhorting, reproving, and consoling, striving to commend those being strengthened and guarded to the Lord frequently in prayers.

And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the doctrine and the truth, etc. Therefore, the doctrine and the truth were imposed in the breastplate of judgment either inscribed in letters, or by the mere sacrament of the name, so that the priest, clothed with the same garment, would remember that he was consecrated by the received priesthood for the studies of doctrine and truth to be sought, not for managing and examining secular affairs; so that what shone outwardly as a type in the garment might truthfully gleam expressed inwardly in the heart. Likewise, the doctrine and truth were placed in the breastplate, to clearly symbolize that the garment not only clothed the legal priest, but also foreshadowed the Gospel, or indeed the Lord himself, of whom it is written: For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1). Or certainly his apostles, indeed all proclaimers of the same grace and truth.

And he bore the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart, etc. The priest bears the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart in the sight of the Lord, when he discusses the causes of his subjects solely with the intention of the internal judge, so that he does not mix any humanity in what he dispenses in the divine position.

CHAPTER VI. The Tunic of the Ephod. Make the entire tunic of the ephod of blue. The tunic is called that of the ephod, since a not insignificant part of it was covered by the ephod, distinguishing it from the interior tunic, which was linen. Of which the same is mentioned previously, saying: "These are the garments which they shall make; a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a checkered tunic." The inner tunic was of linen, or byssus, known to be the noblest type of linen. The outer tunic was entirely of blue, admitting no color at all of any other kind. By its uniform appearance, the priestly life, as it should be, is clearly taught: that is, continuously fixed on heavenly desires alone, and having conduct according to the Apostle in the heavens, and from there eagerly awaiting the coming of its Savior (Philippians 3). This tunic, as well as the byssus, reached down to the feet; whence both were called by the Greeks "poderes," to show that nothing base or sordid should remain in the priestly life, but that everything he does, as if with an ethereal color most beautiful, should cover all his members from head to toe with the grace of virtues. Again, the priest is clothed in a full-length blue tunic, to be reminded not only to begin celestial work, but also to persevere in it to the end for all who wish to be saved. For to be clothed with a blue tunic down to the feet is to persist in good works until the end of his life, as the Lord commands and promises: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2). And thus, because we shall reach the perfection of good action only by an unfatigued purpose, if we begin it with a fixed intention of heavenly reward, it rightly follows concerning the same tunic:

In whose middle above there shall be an opening, etc. Indeed, the opening of the blue tunic has a very strong edge, and woven from itself, so that it is not easily torn, since the beginning of our good action is supported by the strong root of divine fear, and is proven to be fortified against all the snares of the ancient enemy. Such an edge clothes and adorns the priest's neck all around, when it provides the ruler with great confidence in speaking to his subjects and preaching heavenly things, because he has not only lived rightly in the course of his life but has also begun the very beginning from uprightness, after the example of the blessed prophets Samuel, Jeremiah, and John, who filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit from infancy were set apart into the order of teachers. For the voice is in the neck, and therefore the proper use of speaking is expressed through the neck. Moreover, it is fitting because it was commanded that the edge of the opening be made woven all around, that it was immediately added: As it is usually done on the edges of garments. For just as works are to garments, so the very completion of works can not inconveniently be figured by the edges of garments.

Or rather the edges of garments are our last concerns, by which each of the faithful, when they are compelled to finish this life, anxiously strive to cleanse themselves from all stain of evil more intently than usual, with fear and trembling, lest they, brought before the strict judge, are expelled for the filthy habit of vices, and thrust into eternal darkness, but rather appear clothed, as the elect of God holy and beloved with compassion, kindness, humility, modesty, patience: above all these things, charity, which is the bond of perfection. And therefore truly the wedding garment, which in his banquet, that is, in the holy Church, our King and Judge delights to find. Therefore, the priest's blue tunic has a woven edge in the

opening, as is usually done on the edges of garments; when each deserving teacher begins the work of virtues with such great perfection, as scarcely anyone else, laboring for a long time, ever reaches: with such fear of service at every hour, walking with the Lord his God, as the prophet's word says (Mic. VI), as scarcely anyone on the point of death, about to enter into the last judgment of his Lord, is able to have. But because the entire perfection of the priest consists in works and the doctrine of truth, as blessed Luke says in his gospel, describing it, he made a discourse on those things which Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts I); it is rightly added:

Down to the feet of this same tunic all around, etc. Indeed, at the feet of the tunic are made, as it were, pomegranates and bells in a circle, when the priest reaches such a height of a God-devoted life that nothing in him can be seen but splendor and grace, and, so to speak, the varied flower of good works: nothing but the most pleasant sound of these is heard when he opens his mouth. For as many grains are covered inside the pomegranate by one peel outside, the manifold operation of virtues covered on all sides by the one shield of charity is rightly designated by the pomegranates. Moreover, the same image of pomegranates is made from blue, and purple, and twice-dyed scarlet, and, as found later, even from twisted byssus; which four colors often suggest the diversity of virtue. Among them, bells are mingled in the middle, when the works of the priest are never separate from the sound of the word he speaks; nor does the sound of the tongue disagree in the face of adversities from the correctness of the work. Hence it is beautifully added:

So that there is a golden bell, etc. Golden bells are indeed inserted into the blue tunic of the high priest, and are surrounded on every side, when all his speech resonates with the clarity of the heavenly light, and the same sound, as if firmly fixed in the blue tunic, is commended to the minds of the listeners by the sublimity of his works. And double pomegranates are placed around each bell, and double bells around each pomegranate, when all that he speaks is confirmed by good deeds and more deeply fixed in the hearts of listeners, and all that he does is shown by the discernible sound of his speech to be rational. It well follows:

And Aaron will be clothed in it for the office of ministry, so that the sound may be heard, etc. For when a priest enters or exits, he will die if no sound is heard from it; because he incurs the wrath of the hidden judge against him if he proceeds without the sound of proclamation. But if we wish to heed the words of Josephus, who says that there were seventy-two bells and pomegranates on the priest's tunic, this suits the figures of mysteries; so that as he was commanded to bear the apostolic number on his shoulder and chest, he would also have the number of the seventy-two disciples assigned around his feet. It is certain that just as the number of twelve apostles initiated the grade of episcopal dignity, so the seventy-two disciples, who were also sent by the Lord to preach the word, marked by their election the grade of lesser priesthood, now called the presbyterate. Hence, their number was figured at the lower part of the priestly garment, while the former was figured at the upper part. For it was fitting that those who were to be greater in rank in the body of the high priest, that is, in the Church of Christ, would have a higher place in the garment of the typical priest.

But if anyone also wishes to interpret mystically the numbers of both orders, Aaron bore the twelve gems on his chest to signify the future time when the faith of the Holy Trinity would be preached to the human race in all parts of the square world; or certainly, as we taught above, he bore twelve gems, that is, three times four, to remind all teachers always to have and to commend to their disciples the works of justice encompassed principally by the four virtues, together with faith in the truth, which is in the Trinity. He also carried seventy-two golden bells, with as many pomegranates, to show mystically that the same faith and operation of justice would lead the whole world from the darkness of errors to the true light. For three days and nights have seventy-two hours. And because this visible sun traverses all parts of the world in seventy-two hours, both above and below, in three circuits; rightly is this number of bells and fruits of various colors put on the priest's tunic, to figuratively teach that the Sun of righteousness, Christ, would illuminate the whole world, and provide it with the gift of true faith, which is in the recognition and confession of the Holy Trinity, and of good works, which are in the flourishing and splendor of various virtues. We can certainly also understand figuratively expressed in the number of twelve gems of the breastplate that the same Sun of righteousness would fill all our times and all parts of our world with His light;

in the example of the worldly sun, which customarily traverses the zodiac circle over twelve months and encompasses the whole world. And this having four rows of three stones each in the breastplate suits the order of the turning year, which is distinguished into four seasons by three months each. The year in the Scriptures calls the whole time of our salvation, during which we contend for eternal retribution, as the Savior Himself testifies, who, according to the word of Isaiah, was sent to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of retribution (Isa. 61), and the Psalmist sings of the same year, saying, "You crown the year with your bounty" (Ps. 64). Those to whom He has given in the present the kindness of right faith and works, He will give on the day of retribution the crown of everlasting blessing.

CHAPTER VII. Golden Plates. "And you shall make a plate of pure gold, etc. The golden plate on the forehead of the high priest, on which "Holy to the Lord," or "Holy of the Lord" as it is called in the following words, was engraved, was more sacred than his other garments. And rightly so, because just as divine power surpasses everything that it created, it was fitting that His name, surpassing the other attire and ornament of the high priest, should eminently lie above and, as sanctifying everything, hold a prominent place on his forehead. It signifies the very confidence of our profession that we carry on our forehead, each saying with the Apostle: "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6). And rightly, this one thing is made of pure gold in the whole attire of the high priest, to show the purity of heart or body, in which we ought to conceal or carry the mysteries of our redemption. Or certainly, the priest carries on his forehead the inscribed gold "Holy of the Lord," to mystically indicate that we must so venerate and embrace the passion of our Lord and Savior, through which we were redeemed, as to know that the glory of His divine majesty, through which we were created, must equally be confessed in Him:

thus confessing the death of humanity assumed by Him, so that we may soon declare the same humanity has risen from death into eternal glory.

However, "Holy of the Lord," which is ordered to be engraved on the plate, signifies His holy and venerable name; which among the Hebrews is used to be written with four vocal letters, that is, whose interpretation in their language is ineffable, not because it cannot be said, but because it cannot be comprehended by the sense and intellect of any creature. And because nothing can be said worthily enough about Him, therefore it is most rightly called ineffable, according to that of the Apostle: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts" (Philippians 4). And the Psalmist says: "Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unfathomable" (Psalm 145). And it was appropriately written with four letters of the Lord's name on the forehead of the high priest; evidently because of the significance of the four parts of the Lord's cross, which we were going to carry on our foreheads, that is, the upper part, right, left, and lower part. Also, we carry "Holy of the Lord" engraved in gold on our foreheads, when purified from the filth of vices that we had from the first parent, we receive in ourselves the image and likeness of our Creator, to whom we were created; and we do not conceal having received this in secret, but make it openly known to all people and proclaim it with our voice, according to that of the Apostle:

"Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15). He explains this more clearly speaking to the Colossians, saying: "But now you also, put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth, do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3). Of this "Holy of the Lord" also John writes in Revelation: "I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand having His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14). Further describing the brightness of the heavenly homeland, he says: "And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22). Therefore, since all those who follow the Lamb, that is, all the faithful, ought to have the most holy name of reverence in the very forefront of their profession, how much more necessary is it for those who, having received the priesthood and spiritual authority, have been chosen as leaders of the Lord's flock, to show an example of virtue to all in themselves? However, the plate, which contains "Holy of the Lord," is bound with a blue ribbon to the high priest's tiara;

as with the hope of heavenly goods, which the blue signifies, we are strengthened in faith, and we strive the more ardently to keep either the sacraments of our redemption or the immaculate image and likeness of our Creator and Redeemer, knowing well that there is no other way of salvation. The figure of the tiara will be spoken of in its proper place in what follows. But, because a priest of such industry should be of such merit with God, who can

correct and admonish the sins of the people by his exhortation, reproof, and counsel, and with his prayers cleanse them, it is rightly added:

And Aaron shall bear their iniquities, etc. For the high priest bears the iniquities of the subjects, that is, he carries them out and removes them by teaching him or them repentance for the offenses, or by entreating grace from the righteous judge for the penitents. He does this with the gifts and offerings that they offered to the Lord and sanctified, when for good works worthy of the fruits of repentance, that is, alms and other works of righteousness which they have done, he absolves the penitents from the guilt of the crimes they once committed. Indeed, this is to be done according to divine instruction, both mystically figured in the attire of the high priest and manifestly taught in the words of holy Scripture. But, alas, how differently some prelates act, who wish to receive, or rather exact, gifts or presents from the people and care nothing to labor for their iniquities to be carried out and punished and for them to receive pardon, although they ought to receive temporal gifts from their subjects for this reason alone, that by preaching they have corrected them from error and led them to the way of truth, after the example of the first teachers of the holy Church, who confidently said to those from whom they received temporal support: If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things? (1 Cor. 9:11) Truly, however, each prelate or minister of the word can only labor effectively for the subjects, either by preaching the word or by praying to the Lord, if his mind is always endowed with the memory of the divine name, it is aptly added:

And it shall be always upon his forehead, etc. For if the plate inscribed with the name of the Lord is always upon Aaron's forehead, the Lord will be merciful to the sons of Israel; because when the teacher has faithfully submitted himself to divine service with a pure mind, immediately even the subjects, inflamed by his examples and admonitions, strive themselves to live rightly and to merit the grace of the inner beholder. CHAPTER VIII. The fine linen tunic and tiara. You shall bind the tunic with fine linen. This is the inner tunic, which he calls the straight tunic. But why it is called the straight tunic and commanded to be bound with fine linen was explained above, and now it is to be added that soldiers usually have tunics, which they call shirts, so fitting to their limbs and close to their bodies, that they are prepared either for running or for directing missiles in battle, holding a shield, wielding a sword, and whatever necessity may require; as also Joab is read to have had when he killed Amasa (2 Samuel 20), specifically tight to the measure of his stature.

Thus, priests also, prepared for the service of God, wear this tunic, so that, having the beauty of garments, they may move swiftly as if they were naked. This tunic, because it reached down to the feet like the hyacinth tunic, was also called poderis, that is, reaching to the feet, in Greek, whose mystical meaning is obvious: since it is established that linen or fine linen signifies the continence and chastity of our body, as often explained above, priests have the straight linen or fine linen tunic, when they keep the purpose of continence not slackly and weakly, but with such utmost intent, that flesh desires nothing of war against the spirit, nor does spirit wage war against the flesh. They have a tight tunic, when the

soul, desiring and fainting completely, their heart and flesh equally exult in the living God in the courts of the Lord. This line is not only tight, but also poderis, that is, descending to the feet, since continence is not forcibly imposed on a single member, but delightfully accomplished throughout the whole body. For this linen must bind the hands and arms of the priest, so that they do nothing but what is useful; the chest, so that it thinks nothing vain; the stomach, so that in desiring more than necessary delights, it does not presume to offend God with gluttony; and also the members subject to the stomach, so that by wanton behavior, they corrupt all the beauty of the priestly habit; the knees, so they do not become sluggish in the persistence of prayer; the shins and feet, so they do not run towards evil.

Therefore, let the priest first be clothed with the tight tunic, so that he restrains his body from wicked deeds and his mind from perverse thoughts. Then let him take the hyacinthine, so that after the restriction of salutary continence, he may equally beautify his body and soul with the habit of spiritual virtues. But since there are five senses of the body: sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch, of which the first four are specifically of the head, and the last is common to the whole body; this tunic, which we have said properly denotes both the continence of touch and justice. Following this, how the innocence of the other four senses should be cared for, or their sanctification acquired, is shown by the figurative attire of the high priest, when it is said:

And you shall make a fine linen tiare. For the tiare, which was also called cidaris and mitra, covered and adorned the head of the high priest; so that with this garment he might be reminded to keep all his senses consecrated to God, neither allowing his eyes to see vanity, nor his ears to willingly hear reproach against his neighbor, nor his mouth to speak evil, nor his tongue to devise deceit; or that his heart might not be weighed down with gluttony and drunkenness, nor his sense of smell embrace a bed sprinkled with myrrh, aloe, and cinnamon of a harlot. Rather, his eyes should see righteousness, his ears be inclined to hearing words of wisdom, the words of the Lord should be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to his mouth, as long as breath remained in him, he should not speak wickedness, nor depart from his integrity. Care should also be taken for the fifth sense, which is common to the whole body, so that the prophetic saying might be fulfilled: "Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean" (Isa. 52). And as the Apostle admonishes: "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). But how this tiare was made, Josephus teaches (Antiq. 3,2), saying: "Upon his head he wears a cap in the form of a small roll or helmet, which extends over the top of the head, and slightly exceeds the middle of the vertex;

and it is such that it appears to be made of linen fabric, having straps which are folded and often connected, and do not easily come undone. Moreover, Josephus narrates that another larger covering was added to this cap, which covered the whole surface of the head: perfectly fitted, so that it would not fall off while the priest was busy with sacrifices; but he does not show what color it was. And this indeed is about the cap of the lesser priest. Concerning the tiare of the high priest, he testifies in this way: The high priest has a cap made similarly

to that of the other priests, and another sewn from blue variegated material. Moreover, a golden crown is placed around it, made three times, above which rises in the middle of the forehead, as a kind of little golden chalice similar to the herb which among us is called "acharo," and which the Greeks call Hyoscyamus. And a little later, having described the marvelous variety, he added, saying: However, it has flowers similar to plantain, and the entire crown is engraved with these flowers, from the back of the head to each temple; in the front, however, it does not have this, but there is a golden plate, on which the sacred letters of God's name are inscribed. Holy Scripture seems to remain silent on this second veil and the golden crowns of the high priests. However, it briefly mentioned the crowns in the following passages, saying:

They also made tunics of woven work for Aaron and his sons, and turbans with their little crowns of fine linen (Exod. XXXIX). But it did not say of what material they were made. For when it says, "And turbans with their little crowns of fine linen," it could be understood that both were made of fine linen, if Josephus did not identify the crowns as golden, who, with the Temple still standing, and the legal observance celebrated, being of priestly lineage, could very easily know all the manner of priestly attire, not just by reading but also by seeing it. However, whether the little crowns were of fine linen or golden, since it is known that they were made with the turbans, let us briefly speak of the figure. Priests have turbans with little crowns of fine linen, who thus guard their sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch in the beauty of chastity, hoping to receive the crown of life which God promised to those who love Him for this same watchfulness. For he who strives for continence or good works in such a manner that he neglects to seek the eternal rewards of recompense, indeed seems to have a linen turban on his head, but he does not have the little crowns; because evidently, he shows the image of virtue before men but does not find the reward of virtue with the Lord. Therefore, whether the little crowns were golden, signifying the clarity of perpetual light;

or whether they were of fine linen, figuratively announcing the immortality of our body itself, which will be eternal. And rightly the priest wears crowns placed additionally with his linen robes so that he may continually meditate on eternal rewards in his own continence, and in the sanctification of continence or good operation, at the same time promise the same joys of heavenly beatitude to those who listen; lest by placing the burden of labor without the hope of recompense, he may make the yoke of Christ harsh and His light burden severe to his listeners, and difficult. While the Lord thus commanded the making of the turban, He added:

And the belt, the work of an embroiderer. About the making of this belt, it is more clearly written later. The belt they made of twisted fine linen, blue, purple, and twice-dyed scarlet, the work of an embroiderer. This belt, as Jerome writes from Josephus, is woven in the likeness of the skin of a snake, which it sheds in old age, so roundly woven that you would think it a longer purse. It was woven under a covering of scarlet, purple, blue, and linen thread for beauty and strength, and so distinctly adorned with artistic skill, that you would

think the various flowers and gems were not woven by the hand of an artisan, but added. It had a width of four fingers, which belt the high priest specifically used, and with it the blue tunic and also the ephod were fastened. For in the following it is clearly said of the conjunction of the ephod and the breastplate: These were joined together both before and behind, so that the ephod and the breastplate were mutually knitted, fastened tightly to the belt and more strongly coupled with rings; which were joined by a blue ribbon, so that they did not loosely flow and move from each other. Nor is there any doubt that the belt or girdle, to which the ephod was fastened, also bound the blue tunic, which was also called the tunic of the ephod; for all things that have been said so far pertain to the attire of the high priest. Next, the belts and other garments of his sons are also consecutively explained, when it is said:

Furthermore, you shall prepare linen tunics for the sons of Aaron, as well as belts, etc. Whether these belts had to be made with embroidered work or of a single color is not specified. Therefore, we must first discuss the belt of the high priest, which was made of those four noble and God-worthy colors; for it was fitting that the high priest should have such a one, whom it was always proper to gird with exceptional virtues. The high priest appropriately walked girded with the varied bloom of shining colors, because just as anyone else must be girded with the diligence of restraint, so that the flesh, rebelling against the spirit, may not disturb the inward peace of the mind; so also must the high priest and the teacher of the faithful, with every desire of the mind or body already subdued, be surrounded by the very glory of virtues. So that, according to the example of that flower which sprang from the root of Jesse, the Lord's Savior may have righteousness as the belt of His loins and faith as the girdle of His reins.

As for the linen tunics, belts, and tiaras, which were commanded to be made for the sons of Aaron for glory and beauty, what they commend to us in terms of internal beauty and glory can very easily be understood from the things explained above. For priests wear linen tunics when they dedicate their entire body to the whiteness of chastity. They gird their tunics with belts when they guard the same purity with vigilant custody of the mind, lest the neglect of that purity should make them more slack in the practice of good works, and lest by boasting of chastity, they lose the merit of chastity itself. For he who walks wearing a long tunic without a belt, the tunic becomes loose, and leaving the body exposed, it gives space for winds and cold to enter; and it hinders progress by tripping the feet, or even becomes a cause of falling for those who walk. In this way, indeed, the chastity of the flesh often deprives some of the chastity of the heart, as they care less diligently to insist on good works the less they perceive that the custody of chastity is worth nothing without the addition of other good deeds, which, however, when joined with good deeds, achieve great glory for the possessor.

Finally, the virgins' foolishness availed them nothing, as their bodily chastity did not help because, when the bridegroom came, they lacked the light of inward purity. Let the sons of Aaron therefore be girt with linen tunics, that they may have chastity. Let priests be

girded with belts, so that this chastity may not be slack and negligent; lest the wind of pride provides entry to the mind, lest with iniquity increasing, their love grows cold, lest the presumption of their boasting hinders the progress of good works, lest, with the course of virtues obstructed, it becomes polluted by the filth of earthly desire, and ultimately drives its own author to ruin through pride. After being girded, let priests also take tiaras on their heads, so that after vigilant and cautious custody of bodily chastity, the same custody and carefulness may be kept for sight, hearing, taste, and smell in a manner worthy of God.

CHAPTER IX. Breeches. And you shall clothe your brother Aaron with all these, etc. Aaron and his sons were to be clothed with all these; but with the distinction that Aaron himself was to use them all, while his sons were to use only the last three specifically assigned to them, as it is said: Moreover, for Aaron's sons you shall make linen tunics, and belts and caps for glory and adornment. But what follows: You shall make also linen breeches, etc. This pertains to both Aaron and his sons alike, as the very words clearly demonstrate; and thus it is that Aaron himself is clothed with all eight garments that are mentioned—namely, linen breeches, linen tunic, blue robe, ephod, breastplate, belt, turban, and golden plate. His sons, however, use only four of these, namely, the breeches, linen tunic, belt, and turban. But since the others have been discussed above, these breeches, which are commanded to be made to cover the nakedness of the flesh, properly symbolize that portion of chastity which restrains the desire for marital intercourse, without which no one can assume the priesthood or be consecrated to the ministry of the altar—that is, unless he either remains a virgin or dissolves the ties of matrimonial union.

This particular virtue, indeed, is commanded by no law of God to anyone, but must be voluntarily offered to the Lord out of devotion, as He Himself says concerning this: Not all can accept this saying (Matt. XIX). Yet He immediately invites those who can with a kind exhortation, saying: He who can accept it, let him accept it. And shortly afterwards, He promises those same people who leave behind wives or other relatives and the ties of this world for His sake a reward a hundredfold in this life and eternal life in the age to come. Therefore, it is certainly by the grace of distinction that Moses is commanded to clothe Aaron and his sons with this garment, as it is said: And you shall clothe your brother Aaron and his sons with all these. But He says: You shall make linen breeches to cover the nakedness of their flesh. They themselves, He says, shall cover the nakedness of their flesh; you shall make the breeches for the high priest and his sons; you shall teach the rule of chastity; you shall inform those who are to perform the priesthood that they must abstain from the marital embrace. Nevertheless, no one shall be forcibly imposed upon with the yoke of this kind of continence; but whoever wishes to become priests and serve the altar shall of their own accord cease to be servants of wives.

When they have accomplished this, and once they agree to be ministers of the sanctuary and altar by adopting the intention of continence, there will be the divine law, which, imposing the rest of their priestly attire as suitable, will abundantly instruct how they should live or teach, rejoicing in their voluntary devotion and adding to them the ornaments that befit

the priesthood—wisdom, patience, gentleness, mercy, spiritual zeal, humility, the fear of the Lord, and other such virtues. Otherwise, they die guilty of iniquity. For indeed, the surest death of the soul is incurred if anyone, living in luxury, presumes to usurp the priestly grade for himself. This sense is affirmed by the subsequent words of the Lord, which, moreover, He adds shortly thereafter:

And when you have washed the father and his sons with water, etc. For here, neither is anything about the undergarments to be taken from Moses prescribed: where it is clearly evident that Aaron and his sons had first clothed themselves with this type of garment, and thus came to Moses to be washed, clothed, anointed, and consecrated by him. It is also noted that when Moses was about to consecrate them, he first washed them with water and then placed upon them the attire of the sacred order; for it is necessary that whoever is to be promoted to the office of the altar, be cleansed at the time of dedication with a flow more abundant than usual, whether of tears or compunction, so that the cleaner he approaches to receive the degree, the more perfectly he may fulfill what he has received. Moreover, in this washing, the baptism of the sacred font might be understood, if it were appropriate: that one elected to the priesthood should then first be washed with the water of baptism for the remission of sins, and not that the Apostle would contradict such an ordination, saying: "Do not ordain a neophyte, lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. But the high priest, clad in sacred vestments, is straightway anointed with the oil of consecration, so that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the consecration may be perfected;

not that we can possess the virtues which these garments signify without the grace of God, but because the greater aid of grace must be bestowed by the Lord where one is elevated to a higher degree or placed over the governance of more people. Meanwhile, it should be noted that although Aaron is said to be dressed in eight vestments in this book of Exodus, it seems that a ninth, namely, the belt, is added in Leviticus, by which the linen tunic was girded before the blue robe was put on. Thus, it is written: "And when he had washed them, he clothed the high priest with the linen garment, and girding him with the girdle, and putting on him the blue robe; and over it, he placed the ephod, which he attached with a belt fit to the priestly breastplate" (Leviticus VIII). But how this was done is clearly evident from the things explained, an intellectual figure of the garment.

CHAPTER X. Concerning the four colors of priestly garments, the four elements, and the consecration of priests. Indeed, because we have briefly touched upon the priestly attire, following the sayings of the fathers, we thought it noteworthy that those four distinguished colors of which it was made are fittingly compared to the elements of the world. Byssus or linen corresponds to the earth, because it is born from it; purple to the waters, because it is dyed from marine shellfish; hyacinthine and scarlet to the air and fire due to the similarity of color. And scarlet was twice dyed, because fire is endowed with a twin power, namely of shining and burning. The Hebrews say that the high priest carried the figure of all elements in his attire because he was to intercede in sacrifice not only for Israel but for the whole world. To which, perhaps not incongruously, we may add that in each human being

is contained the figure of all the elements: fire in heat, air in breath, water in moisture, and earth in the very solidity of the limbs. Hence, also, man is called microcosmos in Greek by physiologists, that is, a smaller world. And if you inquire what gold signifies in the same attire according to this understanding, understand it as the rational virtue of the inner man. Hence also, 'Holy to the Lord' is inscribed on it: because by this alone can anyone ascend to the knowledge of their Creator.

For this reason, the Apostle says, Christ dwells in our hearts through faith in the inner man (Eph. III). Therefore, the Scripture shows us the high priest of the Old Testament thus clothed, so that the high priest of our time might know to intercede for the whole human race, especially for those who have known the truth and bear the mark of that faith on their forehead, admonished by the Apostle saying: I exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and all that are in authority (I Tim. II). If we understand the Lord the Savior in the high priest whom Moses consecrated, it is right that in his attire he has the figure of the whole world and of man. For he is, as the Apostle says, the brightness of glory and the image of the substance of God the Father, upholding all things by the word of his power. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world: he is the priest forever, adorned with all the ornaments of holiness, not which he deserved by being born in the flesh through the exercise of labor, but which he wholly received incarnate in the womb of the Virgin through the coming grace of the Holy Spirit (Heb. I). Of his priesthood, beautifully commending intercession for us, the Apostle says: But he, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood;

wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. VII). He also equally commended the garments and ornaments of virtues, adding: For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who truly had the golden plate on his head, on which 'Holy to the Lord' was inscribed; because he came in the name of the Father, saying: I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and he who sees me sees the Father (John XIV). Thus far, the habit of Aaron and his sons is designated by heavenly oracle as it should be. It also follows the manner of consecration by which they themselves, or the tabernacle with all its furnishings, ought to be dedicated.

Evidently, by offering to the Lord a calf, etc., all these things symbolically demonstrate that solely through the priests are consecrated both the devotion of good works and the purity of faith, as well as the grace of divine enlightenment. For who does not know that the immolation and blood of those animals prefigure the death and the sprinkling of the blood of our Lord, through which we are both absolved from sins and confirmed in good works? The Apostle teaches what mystery of the Savior the unleavened breads contain, saying: Therefore 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. Moreover, the cakes and wafers are anointed or sprinkled with oil; so that we might be reminded to have works

not only chastened from the leaven of malice and wickedness but also worthy of divine sight with the richness of charity. Or certainly, we offer a small cake sprinkled with oil for our consecration to the Lord, when all that we do grows rich in the devotion of our heart through the internal grace of the Holy Spirit. We offer wafers anointed with oil, when we also show to men externally, without doubt as an example of living, that what we do is spiritual. By these offerings, our consecration is perfected when through good works and pure thoughts, we acquire for ourselves the merit of holiness granted by the Lord. After fulfilling the commands of this consecration, Aaron and his sons, the Scripture returns to also taking account of the making of the altar of incense, on which the same Aaron was to offer daily incense.

CHAPTER XI. Description of the Altar of Incense. (Exod. XXX. You shall also make an altar to burn incense, etc. If the altar of burnt offering, mentioned above, generally signifies the life of the just, who daily crucify their flesh with its vices and desires, and offer it as a living sacrifice to the Lord; what does this altar made for burning incense signify, except the special life of certain perfect ones? For it is not in vain that on the former altar the flesh of animals was burned, while on this one incense was burned; because on that altar were figured those who do not walk according to the desires of the flesh, but, as if sacrificing these to the Lord, dedicate all the senses of their body to His will through the fire of the Holy Spirit: whereas on this altar is expressed the type of those who, with greater perfection of mind, having extinguished and lulled all the allurements of the flesh, offer only the vows of prayers to the Lord: having nothing of the flesh to contend with, nor any consciousness of sin to disturb and terrify them, but desiring to come and appear before the face of God by the shedding of sweet tears. Hence this altar is appropriately placed inside near the veil and the ark, while the other is placed outside before the tabernacle; because those evidently shine before the holy Church as examples of virtues to all;

while these, with the higher fervor of desire, even though still detained bodily, draw near to the contemplation of future blessedness. Fittingly, the former is commanded to be covered with bronze, while this one with gold: for bronze is more resonant and durable than other metals; while gold, though it falls short in sound, surpasses bronze in splendor. Clearly, therefore, the bronze altar, on which the flesh was burned, and the blood of the victims was poured, represents those who, having subdued and as if sacrificed the pleasures of the flesh to God, perseveringly pursue the path of truth which they have once begun, and also frequently proclaim this path to others by the word of preaching. The golden altar, on the other hand, is fittingly adapted to those who are more illuminated by the grace of heavenly brightness; but who, less than others, disclose by speaking what sweetness they taste internally in the secret contemplation of the face of God: they are less capable of expressing in words the sweetness with which they are internally refreshed in the hidden presence of God. Fittingly also, the altar of incense excelled as much in the brightness of its metal as it was smaller in measure; because the holier some are in the Church, the fewer they are. Fittingly, from the same setim wood, which we have said resembles white thorn and is incorruptible, it is commanded that both altars be made:

because assuredly there is one steadfastness of unfeigned faith, with which the hearts of all the elect should be fortified, and prepared to receive the fire of love and to offer sacrifices of virtues to God: because the Apostle speaks generally to both the small and the great, saying: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. VII): which is to say, in other words. Let us cut off and remove from ourselves the thorns of vices and the stings of titillating pricks, which the soil of our body has been accustomed to produce for us out of the sin of the first transgression, and diligently hewing them away with a certain ax of careful chastisement, let us strenuously cultivate both our inner and outer man, who may become worthy, upon receiving the fire of the Holy Spirit, to offer a sacrifice of virtues in the sight of his Creator. Fittingly, the same fire was not dissimilar, which in this altar consumed the victims, and in that one burned the incense; because assuredly there is one spirit, which enlivens the minds of all the faithful with varying grace of gifts.

But the altar of incense was square, having one cubit in length, and another in width, but two in height, to the long-suffering patience, as discussed in the exposition of the altar of burnt offerings, the width pertains to the abundance of love, the height pertains to the sublimity of hope, through which, in the endurance of temporal labors, and in the cheerfulness of sincere love, we rejoice with a pure mind. One cubit in both the length and the width of the altar, signifies when the highest and most perfect men in the Church, with a view to nothing other than eternal retribution, both bear temporal evils calmly and by charity bestow whatever good they can upon their neighbors. Likewise, because love is patient, it is kind. Patient, namely, to tolerate the injury inflicted by a neighbor; kind, so that to him whose adversities it tolerates, it also provides acts of mercy when needed. Fittingly, it is commanded that the altar of incense be made square in length and width; to signify that the mind of the perfect, united in mutual virtues, can equally love a brother and bear with him, and as much as it can endure his trouble with patience, it can also bestow upon him benevolence through the love of its own piety. But it has two cubits in height, because the elect hope to receive a double reward in the future life, namely, one of the rest for their souls, when, putting off this corruptible and mortal body, they will enter the heavenly kingdom;

the other, when receiving the same body incorruptible and immortal, they will rejoice more perfectly in the presence of their Creator, with the promise of the prophet fulfilled, which says: "In their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be unto them" (Isa. LXI).

Horns proceed from it, etc. Horns often in Scriptures are accustomed to designate the eminence of faith and virtues: through which we must blunt and overcome the attacks of the ancient enemy confronting us, saying with the prophet to the Lord: In you we will knock down our enemies with a horn (Psalm XLVIII). He who soon declared about which horn he said, by adding: And in your name we will scorn those rising against us. Conversely, sometimes the wars of vices, which attempt to conquer us, are accustomed to be indicated by the name of horns. Which both are briefly encompassed by the Lord through the prophet saying: And I will break all the horns of sinners, and the horns of the just will be exalted

(Psalm XLVII). Hence, well in the law only animals of the horned kind are decreed to be clean and edible for the people of God. Indeed, it is established that animals which chew the cud and split the hoof are also horned; so that it may be shown mystically that only those can be incorporated into the Church of God with spiritual union, who by the strength of faith are proven invincible against the wars of vices. However, horns proceed from the altar of incense itself, when the chosen do not show the works of virtues to the face of men superficially, but exercise them from the internal root of the mind with a fixed and immovable affection.

But hypocrites, as if having horns borrowed from elsewhere, have the appearance of piety, but deny its power. To whom that fable of Aesop aptly fits, which tells of a crow adorned with peacock feathers carried off in bundles, vainly boasting of its beauty, indeed almost stripped of all the feathers and its life by the burning jealousy of the peacocks. The altar is vested with purest gold, when the perfect ones shine with the true light of internal wisdom, when in all they do, the splendor of charity, as if the glory of daily habit, is displayed, when they always show to those seeing or hearing them that they possess the memory of perpetual clarity, when they manifest that they consider and seek the kingdom of God and His justice above all. And well it is commanded that both the grate of the altar and the walls and horns be vested with gold. The grate indeed was inside in the middle of the altar prepared undoubtedly to receive incense. But the walls appeared outside, the horns themselves standing out higher outside with special eminence. The grate is gilded, when the grace of Christ shines through faith in our interior man. The walls are gilded, when the same grace of the Lord's love is extended outward through good works.

And the horns are gilded, when the very confidence of the strength of the just, by which they have learned either to endure opponents of truth bravely through patience, or to refute or correct wisely through wisdom, sparkles with the brightness of internal light in all things. And because such ones can rightly say: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness (II Tim. IV), it is fittingly added.

And you shall make for it a gold crown all around. For indeed, a golden crown is made all around the altar of incense when the saints, remembering what they have done for us, await their eternal rewards. And the crown is fittingly made all around the altar, so that it may be shown that everything they have done is worthy of heavenly reward: nor should anything remain in such persons that, after the release of the flesh, ought to be chastised by purgatorial fire. Likewise, the altar of incense has a gold crown all around also in those who, though they are lesser in merits and dare not openly declare, still have a certain reward laid up for them for their good fight and kept faith, yet whatever they do, they act with the intention of pleasing God and with the hope of receiving the same heavenly reward. It follows:

And two golden rings under the crown, etc. Indeed, in these rings by which the altar was carried, just as it was above in the altar of burnt offering, the ark and the table were set

forth, the books of the four Gospels can not inappropriately be understood, by whose faith and doctrine the saints are carried and uplifted from earthly thoughts; through the desert of this life, by daily progress in good works, they are borne to the heavenly homeland. However, because it is clearly commanded there to make four circles, namely two on one side and two on the other, but here with the number four not explicitly mentioned, two rings are made on each side: it is certain that there the number of evangelists is more plainly evident, while here also some other spiritual mystery, which mainly concerns the love of God and neighbor, is present. For the altar is surrounded by golden rings on each side; because the heart of the elect is confirmed on both sides by the love of God and neighbor. Which is well compared to rings, because prophecy will be done away with at the end, knowledge destroyed, tongues will cease, but love will never cease. There are, however, two rings on each side; because each commandment of charity is distinguished by a dual virtue. For the love of God is perfected through the sincerity of faith and purity of life (Hebr. II); for without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith without works is dead (James II).

Both are embraced by one verse when the prophet says: "But the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. II); clearly insinuating that one will come to life only if he has the works of justice along with the faith of truth. Similarly, brotherly love consists in dual virtue, namely of patience and kindness, as the Apostle testifies, saying: "Charity is patient, is kind" (I Cor. XIII). Hence also the Lord says, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you" (Luke VI); teaching patience in forgiving debts, and the grace of kindness in giving what is necessary. In one, so that we may bear the inconveniences of others strongly: in the other, so that we may joyfully offer our goods to others. Therefore, the altar has two rings on each side, with the dual perfection of charity, the holy ones are girded both in honor of their Creator and in care and service to their neighbor. And into these rings gilded poles are inserted, so that the altar may be carried, when they receive with the prepared bosom of the mind the most illustrious sayings of the preceding Fathers, by which they are lifted more and more from earthly things to the love of eternal goods. For that such men in both mind and merit approach heavenly things is also mystically signified by the following words, when it is said:

And you shall place the altar opposite the veil, etc. For the Ark, as has been explained in its place, represents the Lord Savior, the veil that hung before the Ark signifies heaven itself, into whose heights the Lord entered after conquering death; so that, as the Apostle says, He might now appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9). And the altar stands opposite the veil that is before the Ark, just as every intention of the just is directed towards entering the heavenly kingdom. It stands before the propitiatory, which covers the Ark, as they approach the vision of their Creator with purity of mind, and although enclosed, still conduct their conversation in heavenly places.

CHAPTER XII. On burning incense on the altar. And Aaron shall burn incense upon it, etc. It is known that incense or thymiama signifies the power of prayer, as the Psalmist says: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight" (Psalm 140). And in the Apocalypse

of John, he saw the saints holding golden bowls full of incense. Which he immediately explained by adding: "Which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5). And since Aaron, as mentioned above, signifies both the high priest specifically, namely, the Lord Savior, and also the priests of our order: Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on this altar in the morning, whether when the Lord Himself enlightens the hearts of the faithful with a new beam of His grace, urging them to the sweetness of prayer, or when the participants of His priesthood by diligent exhortation stir the faithful to beseech the face of their Creator. The priest also burns incense not only in the morning but also in the evening. Incense is burned in the morning so that at the beginning of every good deed, which we intend to do by the inspiration of God, we may invoke His aid by which we may bring it to completion. And in the evening, so that when we finish what has been well begun, we may return vows of gratitude to Him from whom we received it, for the gifts He granted. Or certainly, because in the morning and with the sun risen, we clearly see everything around us;

but when evening comes, with uncertain sight we are veiled in darkness. Therefore, we need the light of a lamp to see what we wish. Those sacraments of our Redeemer or words, which we can clearly recognize even according to the order of human reason to the extent we are able, we now see as if in the day. But in whatever things human reason fails, but the authority of Scripture alone is to be followed by us, there, as if in the night, the eye of our understanding is darkened. But the lamp of God's word helps our feet, lest they stumble and stray from the path of truth. Hence Peter, speaking of the sacrament of the Lord's faith, said: "And we have the more sure word of prophecy, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1). Therefore, it is well said: "And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it in the morning when he dresses the lamps, he will burn it, and when he lights them in the evening. For Aaron burns incense on the altar in the morning when the Lord inflames the hearts of the faithful to the grace of compunction in those mysteries of truth which they are now able to understand.

He burns it in the evening when he lights the lamps, when He teaches from those things which they cannot yet grasp, because they also know these sacred things, as much as they are undoubtedly divine, to love the heavenly where all secrets are revealed. And the incense is fragrant and sweet when touched by sudden divine compunction, they find it sweet to be alone with tears and prayers. It is well followed by:

Perpetual incense will burn before the Lord, etc. Because it is indeed necessary that the soul, after prayer and weeping, should not turn to idle words or deeds, but should keep itself in the same vigor of devotion which it received in prayer, even after the prayer is finished; according to the example of Anna, of whom it is said while praying: And her countenance was no longer changed in different ways (1 Samuel 1). You shall not offer incense of another composition upon it. In the following parts of this volume, from which spices this incense ought to be composed are specifically named: namely stacte and onycha, galbanum of good odor, and pure frankincense, all of which pertain to the signification of eternal goods which

must primarily be sought from the Lord. Therefore, incense of another composition than what the Lord has prescribed shall not be offered upon the golden altar; because those who pray should seek nothing else from the Lord than what He has commanded and promised to give; and we should believe nothing about Him other than what He has taught.

A sacrifice is not to be offered upon it, etc. For all these things pertain to the outer altar, which designates the life of those beginning and still placed in progress. For the life of the righteous perfect ones is of such great sublimity that nothing carnal, which they might have to sacrifice to the Lord, can be found in it. And indeed the libations of wine are known sometimes to designate the great virtue of spiritual grace, that is, whether it be the cup of doctrine, or the chalice of passion, or the fervor of principal love, or the very perception of the Holy Spirit, or something of this kind. But whenever the wine of libations is offered with the flesh of victims, it certainly designates according to the tropological exposition the sanctity of those who still have something of carnal desires, which are contrary to the purity of the spirit, and which ought to be burned by the fire of the Holy Spirit on the altar of the heart. However, the perfect righteous, who can say: "My heart and my flesh have failed, God of my heart, and God is my portion forever"; as if, with the cessation of the libations of victims, which pertain to the outer bronze altar, they offer only inward on the golden altar the fragrances to the Lord of heavenly desire; because, being made more secure about the remission of sins, they lament only for the delayed entrance into the eternal kingdom, and with the sweet flow of tears they water their bed every single night. Of this very altar, it is still well said:

And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns, etc. For indeed our High Priest offered His blood once a year for the sin of the whole world. In that specific year, of which He speaks through Isaiah: To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Isa. 61); that is, in the whole time in which He deigned to unite the Church to Himself. He also gave to each of the believers once the washing of the holy font, in the mystery of His blood, to loosen the bonds of sins, and with the beautiful diversity of all kinds of figures. The pontiff indeed was commanded to offer atonement on the horns of the altar in the blood of the oblation once a year, but daily to burn fragrant incense upon it; because the Lord and our Savior, who daily renews His faithful by the grace of inner compunction, redeemed them once overcoming death by the sacrifice of His blood. Those faithful, who are usually accustomed to wash away daily sins with daily prayers and tears, once by the sacrament of His passion rejoice that they are freed from all sins. Aaron shall make atonement upon the horns of the altar, because He Himself not only lived among men and prayed for men; but also now sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavens, He intercedes for us, and dwelling in the hearts of the chosen through faith, while He stimulates them to pray, He is rightly said to make atonement.

Aaron shall make atonement upon the horns of the altar, when the Lord commends His chosen ones to the Father, by the memory of the virtues which they performed. Hence, as if touching the horns of the golden altar, He speaks of the devotion of the disciples: Whom

You gave me out of the world, they were Yours, and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word. Now they know that all things You have given me are from You (John 17). For whom, even praying, He added: I pray for them, not for the world, but for those You have given me, for they are Yours (Ibid.). And because for the merits and intercessions of eminent men, the Lord often has mercy on our weakness, it is rightly added:

And he shall propitiate upon it in your generations, etc. For Aaron propitiates upon the altar of incense when, on account of the righteousness of the saints whom we seek as intercessors and patrons for ourselves, the Lord is propitiated. Finally, when Hezekiah was besieged by enemies and called for his help, he said: "And I will save this city and protect it for my sake and for the sake of David my servant" (IV Kings XIX). Likewise, Moses, interceding for the sinning people, made remembrance of the fathers and, as if pleading upon the horns of the altar, sought to placate the Lord: "Let your anger rest," he said, "and be merciful toward the iniquity of your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by yourself, saying: 'I will multiply your offspring like the stars of the sky'" (Exod. XXXII). Indeed, we can interpret these altars in such a way that we accept the bronze one, on which the flesh was burned and the blood of the sacrifices was shed, as representing the whole church of this time, in which no one is without sin, even if his life on earth were only a single day. There is no one born carnally from the sin of Adam's transgression who does not need to be reborn in Christ, and his spirit purified by fire. The golden altar, however, signifies the Lord himself, who in a miraculous and ineffable manner took true flesh from Adam, but was truly free from the sin of Adam's flesh;

just as both altars were made from the same kind of wood, but not both were covered with gold. On this altar, nothing carnal was offered but only incense was burned; for the Lord, pouring out prayers or tears, did this not for his own sins, of which there were none, but for our salvation. For just as the ark placed within the veil signifies the God-man sitting at the right hand of the majesty in the heights, so too, the altar placed outside the veil but near its entrance can figuratively express the same Mediator of God and men, who indeed conversed among men humanly, but by the power of his divinity penetrated the innermost heavens. The incense altar stood in the sanctuary, where the lampstand and table were; because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John I). The ark stood within the veil; because the same Lord Jesus, after his passion and resurrection, was taken up into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. Upon whose horns of the altar Aaron intercedes in the blood that was offered for sin, and propitiates upon it, those who pray for the people of God, or for their own ignorance, the priests, trusting to be helped and saved by the only-begotten Son through the sacrament of his passion, as the Apostle instructs and says: "Through him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God" (Hebr. XII), that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name.

This can also be suitably accepted of all the elect, that is, members of the high priest, who pray to the Father in spirit and truth. To which altar better than this does it apply what is said: "Holy of holies shall they be to the Lord," of which the archangel said to the vir-

gin mother about the one to be born into the world: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, etc. (Luke I). Described thus far is the making of the incense altar; there still remains the description of the bronze basin, in which the priests washed their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle; but one command of the Lord is preemptively mentioned, which we also should briefly touch upon and explain as best we can.

CHAPTER XIII. On the price for the souls of individuals, the numbered people. When you take the sum of the children of Israel, etc. David had forgotten this command, when he numbered the people, and thus brought a plague upon that people by numbering them. However, in a spiritual sense, the sum of the children of Israel represents the sum of all the elect, whose names are written in heaven. And each gives a price for their souls to the Lord, when they exhibit to Him the service of diligent servitude in good works. Otherwise, there will be a plague upon them when they have been counted; because, without doubt, perpetual vengeance awaits those who, associated nominally with the number of the faithful, refuse to offer the perfect works of faith to the Lord. And it is said of such: They will not give to God their appeasement, nor the price of the redemption of their soul (Psalm 48). For the redemption of a man's soul is his riches (Proverbs 13), as Solomon says: whether temporal, namely, when he has distributed them and given them to the poor, so that his righteousness remains forever; or spiritual, that is, the justice he has done, either by showing mercy to the poor, or by doing other good deeds. But everyone who advances to the name will give a half-shekel, that is, ten obols; which can be understood by us as nothing other than the observance of the Decalogue law.

For whoever knows how to understand this rightly has recognized that all the fullness of faith and work, and the promise of future reward, is contained in it. Indeed, in the first three, the love of God, in the following seven, the love of neighbor is comprehended; and as the Apostle testifies: Love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13). But also another sacrament, by no means to be passed over, is contained in the same number ten. For the name of Jesus among the Hebrews begins with the letter Yod, among the Greeks with iota; both of which in their respective nations are the sign of the number ten. And they offer ten obols as a price for their soul to the Lord, who, believing in Jesus Christ, bring forth the sign of His name, which begins with the number ten, on their forehead and profession. And perhaps for the grace of this sacrament the Lord testifies in the Gospel that one iota cannot pass from the law (Matthew 5); because the power of the Decalogue, which is contained there, and the faith of His name, which is mystically signified there, can never be corrupted by the perturbation of the unfaithful.

Whoever is counted in the number from twenty years old and above, shall give the price. The number twenty signifies the conjunction of both Testaments, namely, the law which is written in five books, and the Gospel, which is four; for four times five make twenty. Therefore, anyone is counted in the number of the people of God from twenty years old; because he is worthy of the fellowship of the elect, who, having spiritually understood the decrees of the law, aided by the grace of the Gospel, fulfills them according to his measure

and capacity, and awaits the eternal rewards in heaven promised by the same grace. The rich shall not add to the half shekel, etc. Because whether one is great in merits and perfect, or still tender and placed in the progress of virtues, the same law of the Decalogue is imposed on all, by which they love God and their neighbor.

And the money received, which is collected from the sons of Israel, etc. The money received from the sons of Israel is brought as a memorial before the Lord, when whatever good we do is kept in eternal memory with our Creator and Judge; so that from what we have offered to Him, by the fruits of good works, He may deign to be propitious to us. And the same money is kept for the use of the tabernacle, when the habits and acts of subsequent believers in Christ are confirmed by the good deeds of the righteous; and the lesser ones strive to become such as they know those to have been, whom they recognize as reigning with the Lord. Indeed, it is to be noted that the aforementioned money was to be given not according to the assessment of the people, but according to the measure of the temple. For the measure of the temple is the disposition of the divine law, which the Lord commands to be kept in His Church, and whose observance He promises eternal rewards in the future. However, if anyone tries to serve God according to the pleasure of human will, he who does not offer the money of his devotion according to the measure of the temple, with a rejected and cast away offering, will be struck by the punishment of the final reprobation.

CHAPTER XIV. Description of the bronze laver. The appearance and rim, etc. This laver or basin, as it is called in the following passages, can principally be understood as the water of baptism; through whose washing it is necessary for all who enter the gates of the Church to be cleansed. But since it was placed between the tabernacle of testimony and the altar of holocausts, and since the same priests were commanded to wash in it twice daily, that is, morning and evening, when they entered the altar to offer incense to the Lord, and because we can only be washed once with the water of baptism; this laver commends to us the washing of contrition and tears, which we always need, especially when we approach to minister the heavenly mysteries. For the altar of holocausts, on which the flesh of the victims was burned to the Lord, signifies the extinguishing of carnal desires by the fire of the Holy Spirit; but the altar of incense signifies the purity of those who, having subdued the allurements of the flesh in every way, and pacified the struggle with vices, shed tears out of expectation and desire for the heavenly entrance. Rightly, then, is the laver placed near the altar of holocausts, in which the washed priests may enter the tabernacle and burn incense to the Lord. For the state of tears and contrition is distinguished in two ways; first, it is necessary for everyone converted to the Lord to implore pardon with tears for the sins they have committed.

If this is accomplished over a long time with the fitting fruits of repentance, it remains that, made more secure by the acceptance of pardon for sins, they must already come with longing desires to the time when they may deserve to see the face of their Creator among the most blessed choirs of angels. He who truly does this does not at all tolerate without tears either the length of this life or the delay of that one, saying of this life: Woe is me, that

my sojourning is prolonged! I dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar (Psalm 119), that is, with those who wander in the darkness of errors and crimes; which the name Cedar signifies, he already longing for the joys of perpetual light: the more I thirst for the heavenly homeland, the more I dread the proximity of the wicked, among whom I converse as a sojourner. Saying again of that life: My soul thirsted for the living God, when shall I come and appear before the face of God (Psalm 42)? This thirst, which he could not bear without tears, the following words declare: My tears have been my bread day and night. As if he were openly saying: The longer I am deferred from seeing the face of God, for whom I ardently thirst, the more sweetly I am refreshed with the bread of tears, which I shed in his memory. Therefore, the altar of holocausts suggests the tears of penitents for the sins they have committed.

The altar of incense expresses the weeping of those rejoicing in the good works they have completed with the Lord's help; and desiring the rewards which they trust they will receive from the Lord as their remunerator. This weeping indeed excels the former as much as gold excels bronze, as much as the holy of holies, where the ark of the Lord was, is known to have surpassed the first tabernacle, in which the lampstand and table of the Lord stood. After the altar of burnt offering, the basin was placed, in which those who entered the altar of incense would wash: for no one becomes the highest suddenly, but with advancing merits, each person ought first to overcome the battles of vices, and then, with compunction of tears, humbly beseech their Creator, to be able to shed sweet tears for the entrance into the kingdom, who previously shed bitter tears for fear of punishments. But what is more fitting than to take the base on which the same basin was placed as the very desire for the kingdom and heavenly life? Certainly, it is for this cause that even perfect and highest men daily wash themselves in a fountain of tears; and though they cannot yet fully see the joy of inward peace, at least through sighing they taste it. For that in this laver, placed between the tabernacle and the altar, the tears of the perfect are symbolized, the very words testify, in which it is said:

And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet in it. For no one of the people was permitted to wash there; but the high priest and his sons, namely the priests of lower rank, were commanded, showing that with great men, as their life is more perfect, so also their compunction is loftier. We do not say this, as if only the ministers of the altar could or ought to have such compunction; but mindful of the words of the blessed apostle Peter, who speaking to all the faithful about the cornerstone, which is Christ, said: And you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. II). And what John says in Revelation: Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ (Rev. XX). We urge all the faithful to be counted under the mystical name of priests, as members of Christ, namely the eternal priest. The blessed apostle Paul also shows what sacrifices they should offer, saying: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. XII). Therefore, Moses set this laver not only for the ministers of the sacred

altar, but also for all perfect individuals in any rank; because the law of God generally preached the grace of saving compunction to all the faithful.

If we want to take the great high priest, our Lord Savior, in the person of Aaron, it is also clear that he was washed with the water of this basin before entering the altar to offer; for before he offered the incense of His most holy body on the altar of the cross for our salvation, He also wept for our love, as was well known in the resurrection of Lazarus. It is well added:

That they may offer incense to the Lord, etc. For the death of the spiritual soul is truly to be feared, and eternal, if anyone chosen for the ministry of the altar neglects to render the incense of prayers to God. Death is to be feared, if anyone presumes to enter the holy mysteries without the special cleansing of compunction, and to handle the holy things of the Lord with common hands. Therefore, let them wash their hands and feet in the water of the bronze basin, and thus approach the altar. Let them wash their deeds and steps with tears, and then extend their hands to touch the mysteries of Christ, and place the steps of their feet in the courts of the Lord. I equally consider this commandment to be for those who are to be cleansed by receiving these same sacraments, that they first examine, winnow, and purify their deeds and thoughts with more careful diligence, and thus proceed to partake of the sacraments of faith, lest they deserve to hear that saying of the Apostle: For anyone who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord (I Cor. XI); that is, not discerning the food of the living bread from the common food with a cautious and diligent mind. These things about the basin and the approach to the altar can also be very usefully taken in this way; although principally that altar signifies the internal vows of spiritual prayers. But it must be more diligently considered what is added in the conclusion:

It will be a perpetual statute for him, etc. For even if the basin, or altar, which Moses made is taken away, if the priesthood which he established is changed to the new priesthood of the Church, nevertheless the legitimate washing and spiritual incense remains perpetual in the life of the faithful; which was typically signified by the incense of that altar, and the water of that basin; just as many other things, which the law commanded to be done or warned to be observed perpetually, have ceased to be observed literally; but according to typological understanding will never cease to be spiritually observed by the saints, as the one who did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it testifies: Because one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law until all things are accomplished (Matthew V). For our humility also pertains to that seed, about which it was said: Because it will be a perpetual statute for him and for his seed through generations; not indeed by being born from the line of Aaron, but by believing in him, in whom Aaron with his saints of that age believed; about whom it was promised to Abraham, Because in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis XXV). Mentioning these families, Isaiah says: All who see them will recognize them; because these are the seed which the Lord has blessed (Isaiah LXI).

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.