Bede's Questions on the Book of Kings

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

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To the most beloved brother Nothelmus, Bede, greetings!

Concerning the questions you sent, dearest brother, about the book of Kings to be elucidated, I have immediately endeavored, with the help of the Lord, to explain as best as I could. I did this with the distinction that I included thirty propositions, which seemed perhaps more grave, separated by brief chapters in this volume so that they might be found more easily. The other names or words you noted mixed together, which could be solved more easily and briefly, I sent separately compiled in other notes to your fraternity. Although I knew that there were many things in the same book much more obscure than those you judged fit to ask me. But I was also aware that it often happens that someone who has well understood some more obscure points, because they had evidently found them sufficiently explained in the treatises of great authors, might still remain uncertain and doubtful about some easier points, which perhaps those who dealt with deeper matters did not consider worthy of inquiry. It also happens that not everything written by the fathers can be possessed by everyone, and questions of Scripture may be unknown to readers; not because they were not explained by the teachers, but because the questions themselves are either not available or, if available, are not understood by those asking; as was the case with many of those whose responses you both requested and received from me. In these responses, because I endeavored to satisfy your petitions by following the steps of the fathers, I pray that you, returning the due service of our devotion, may remember to intercede for the safety of our mind and body, together with the brothers who serve the Lord with you in those places. And if by chance you find elsewhere any of what I wrote more aptly explained, which can easily happen, do not hesitate to send it to us quickly. Farewell well, always most beloved in Christ brother.

Thirty Questions

1. "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will act according to my heart, etc. [1 Samuel 2:35] What the prophet says, speaking to Eli in the person of God: And I will raise

up for myself a faithful priest, who will act according to my heart and my soul: and I will build him a faithful house, and he will walk before my Christ all days, must be understood under the figure of Samuel as referring to the Lord Savior, namely the highest and true high priest. For just as Samuel succeeded Eli in the priesthood after his death, chosen not from the lineage of Aaron, but from another family of Levi: For he was the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, the son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, the son of Tahath, the son of Asir, the son of Abiasaph, the son of Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel (I Chronicles VI), as the words of the Chronicles narrate: so also the Mediator of God and men, to be our priest, took on flesh not from Levi but from another tribe, namely Judah; he offered another sacrifice than the legal one, that is, his own flesh to the Father for us;

he left others than those of the lineage of Aaron as heirs of his priesthood, namely the sons of grace of the new testament, gathered from the whole nation of the Gentiles. And God, as if speaking in a human manner, says: Who will act according to my heart and my soul; it can be rightly taken to refer to Samuel, who in all things obeyed his will as a man would obey God; but concerning the Lord Savior, it means that as the only begotten Son, he is aware of all the secrets of the Father, as he himself clearly testifies about himself, saying: And I do nothing of myself, but as the Father has taught me, so I speak. And he who sent me is with me; and he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him (John VIII). To whom the Father builds a faithful house, which house we are, if we hold firmly to the confidence and the glory of hope until the end. And this house will walk before his Christ, that is, the highest priest himself, all days; for the holy Church up to the end of the world will never cease to grow with the increase of its members. Otherwise, how can it be understood about Samuel, that a faithful house was built for him, which would walk before the Christ of the Lord, that is, Samuel himself, all the days; since we read later that his sons turned aside from his ways after greed, and perverted judgment?

Unless perhaps in this place we understand his house to mean the Israelite people, who served the Lord all the days of his priesthood. Concerning which it is written: And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And shortly after: So the children of Israel put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served only the Lord (1 Samuel VII). But as for what follows: However, it shall come to pass, that whoever remains in your house, shall come to pray for him, and to offer a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread (1 Samuel II); this both in the present time is somewhat fulfilled, and in the end of the world will be completely fulfilled. For even if few, yet some daily from the Jews, not only of the common people, but also from the priestly lineage flee to the Church; and when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then all Israel shall be saved (Romans II). Whoever from these is to be saved is indeed the one who is said to remain in the house. With the priesthood of Eli perishing, it is necessary for him to offer to the Church for himself a piece of silver of devoted confession to God, which is contained in the creed; short in word, but significant in virtue. Silver represents the clarity of the heavenly word, as gold often represents the splendor of spiritual wisdom.

He shall also offer the bread of the saving sacrifice, with the legal victim's flesh rejected, and shall say:

Grant me, I pray, one priestly portion (1 Samuel II), that is, to the same people splendid with Christ as priest, to whom Peter said: But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (1 Peter II). And what he adds: That I may eat a morsel of bread (1 Samuel II), he also elegantly expressed the very type of sacrifice, concerning which the priest himself said: The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world (John VI). For what he had said above, that he had given to the house of Aaron food from the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were the sacrifices of the Jews; therefore here he said that one should ask to eat a morsel of bread, which is in the New Testament the sacrifice of Christians.

2. "And none of his words fell to the ground." [1 Samuel 3:19] This was said of Samuel, after he had reported to Eli in the morning the divine oracle he had received during the night: "And none of his words fell to the ground," meaning that nothing of what he spoke was in vain, but all things he said came to pass. For the words that fall to the ground are the idle ones, which are to be regarded as nothing and trodden underfoot by everyone in disdain, just as the blessed Job said: "And the light of my face did not fall to the ground" (Job 29), because he had so habituated himself to bearing a countenance of such dignity that he was never resolved into contemptible joy; but whenever he presented himself with a more cheerful disposition to those present, he always did so for their benefit for a good reason.

3. "And he struck down from the people seventy men, and fifty thousand of the common people." [1 Samuel 6:19] This was said of those who dared to see the Ark of the Lord returned from the land of the Philistines, although they were not of the Levitical lineage: "And he struck down from the people seventy men, and fifty thousand of the common people." The terms "people" and "common people" are used interchangeably to signify the same thing. For both are commonly translated from the Greek term "laos." However, there seems to be a distinction here, as the word "men" is added in the first phrase of the verse. For what your Codex reads, "seventy-two," is entirely erroneous; for "men" refers to elders, implying that seventy of the dignitaries of the people were struck down, while fifty thousand were from the general crowd of common men; thus, to prevent this in Exodus, the people stood far off, and prayed, with only Moses ascending to the Lord (Exod. 20).

4. "From the day the ark of the Lord remained in Cariathiarim, the days were multiplied, etc. [1 Samuel 7:2] What is said, that from the day the ark remained in Cariathiarim, the days were multiplied, indeed it was already the twentieth year, and all the house of Israel rested after the Lord, should not be understood as if the twenty years in which the ark stayed in Cariathiarim until the eighth year of David's reign, when the gathering crowd of the people brought it to Jerusalem, ought to be counted. For it is found later that in Saul's times, it was taken out from this city and brought into the camp, while he fought against the Philistines. Thus it is written: And Saul said to Achia: Bring the ark of the Lord, for the ark of God was there on that day with the children of Israel. And because it is certain

that David brought it to Jerusalem, having taken it from the house of Abinadab, into which it is said to have been brought, it remains to understand that in the days of Saul, it was brought back from the camp and into the aforementioned city, from which it was brought again to Jerusalem, during David's reign. Therefore, the meaning of the aforementioned passage is that from the time the ark stayed in Cariathiarim, it was the twentieth year (Book of Antiquities VI, chap. 13), when it happened to be transferred from there during Saul's times because of the war.

Or certainly it was the twentieth year, when all the house of Israel still rested after the Lord, having cast away idols, serving Him alone. What it did during the entire time of Samuel's leadership, which, as testified by Josephus, was completed in twelve years; and in the first period of Saul's reign, which, according to the same historian, lasted for twenty years, no one curious about sacred history is ignorant of. For afterwards, when the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, especially in pursuing the innocent and just David, it was necessary that a part of his military or populace participated in his wrongdoing.

5. "If I live, you will show me the kindness of the Lord, etc. [1 Samuel 20:14] This, said by Jonathan to David, whom he lamented was being harassed by the unjust persecutions of his father: If I live, you will show me the kindness of the Lord; but if I die, you will not withdraw your kindness from my house forever, when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the earth; when the Scripture added: Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, immediately adding, saying: And the Lord required it at the hand of David's enemies; by anticipation, indeed, he did it, first inserting into the history what happened much later, when Saul was killed and the kingdom was transferred to the house of David; and those who unjustly persecuted him without cause were justly punished by divine vengeance. For then the Lord required of the hand of the enemies why they had afflicted the holy man. Then they were compelled to give an account of their hatred, with which they had raged against him for so long. This can be understood in the case of Absalom, and Sheba son of Bichri, and the other enemies of David.

Otherwise, if you want to know what the Lord required of the hand of David's enemies, it can be understood, if I am not mistaken, from the previous sentence, where it is said that Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, that the Lord required this of the hand of David's enemies, that is, why they also did not want to enter into a covenant of peace with him, with whom they saw was the Lord. Therefore, it seems that the Scripture anticipates this sentence and interposes it, so that the testimony of Jonathan, which he said: When he has cut off the enemies of David, every one from the earth, would be proven true, because evidently the enemies of David were cut off from the earth, not by David himself avenging against the adversaries, but by the Lord judging for him. It is rightly added: And Jonathan made David swear again, because he loved him; for as he loved his own soul, so he loved him; so that he, who embraced David with such perfect love according to the law of God, would be shown to be immune from the destruction of his enemies. Although he

was taken away by death and could not have the earthly kingdom with him, as he hoped, he nevertheless without any contradiction received the partnership of the heavenly kingdom with him, whom he loved for the glory of his virtues, as he too was full of virtues.

6. "For if a man ever rises to pursue you, etc. [1 Samuel 25:29] This Abigail, interceding on behalf of herself and her household, said to David, whom her husband had offended by his foolishness and drunkenness: "For if a man ever rises to pursue you and seek your life, the life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God. But the souls of your enemies will be whirled about, like in the circuit and sling's round; she beautifully distinguishes the state of the just from the lot of the reprobate with this comparison. For indeed she calls the souls of these living, so as to imply on the contrary that those are preoccupied with spiritual death, according to that saying of the prophet: The soul that sins shall die (Ezek. XVIII). She likens these to a bundle, and those to a stone of a sling; for a bundle is tied up, so that it may remain whole and be preserved; the stone is placed in the sling to be cast away. So indeed in this world the elect are compressed by the pressures of tribulations, so that being thus admonished, they may bind themselves more closely to each other with mutual love and be preserved forever in unity by the hand of their Redeemer.

But the reprobate, the more freely they are let loose to their own pleasures in this life, the further they are cast away from the glory of the divine vision in the future, so that it may rightly be said of them: And indeed they are expelled from your hand. However, it marvelously describes the omnipotent providence of the heavenly protector when it says the soul of the holy man is necessarily kept with Him like in a bundle of the living. For as it is very easy for anyone to preserve a bundle of grass or hay held in their hand, so the power of our Lord and Savior effortlessly protects all the elect throughout the world from the beginning to the end of the age, so that none of them may perish in any way. According to what He Himself speaks of them in the Gospel under the figure of sheep: "And they follow me," He says, "and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John X). Just as a single bundle is bound with any kinds of ties, so the whole assembly of saints is bound together by the one and the same faith, hope, and love, and surrounded by one divine protection. The meaning of the letter is clearly evident, because the soul of David, despite his enemies pursuing him, was always kept in the land of the living.

Moreover, his enemies, beset by adversities, were to be disturbed and driven out of their territories, like a stone whirled in a sling, or even taken away from human affairs.

7. "And he commanded that the children of Judah be taught the bow, etc. [2 Samuel 1:18] This was written about David when he was mourning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan: And he commanded that the children of Judah be taught the bow, he did this because he knew that the Philistines abounded in archers, and Saul had perished particularly by their arrows, so he wanted his soldiers to learn the same art of war to defeat them. As for the following: As it is written in the book of the just, they assert that the very book cannot be

found anywhere today, not even among the Hebrews, just as the book of the wars of the Lord mentioned in the book of Numbers; nor the songs of Solomon, nor his wisest discussions on the nature of trees, all herbs, likewise beasts, birds, reptiles, and fish; or what is said in the book of the Chronicles: The rest of Solomon's deeds, former and later, are written in the words of Nathan the prophet, and in the books of Ahijah the Shilonite. In the vision of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam son of Nebat (II Chron. IX), and many such volumes which are proven to have existed in Scripture but are acknowledged as no longer extant today. Judah was indeed ravaged by the Chaldeans, and even the library, formerly gathered, was consumed by enemy fire along with other provincial treasures.

From this, the few books that now remain in the holy Scriptures were later restored through the efforts of Ezra the priest and prophet. Hence it is written about him: Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses (I Esdras VII). Ready indeed, because he discovered quicker forms of letters than the Hebrews had up to that time. And in the letter of the king of Persia: Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the most learned scribe of the law of the God of heaven, greetings (Ibid.).

8. "And he struck down Moab, and measured them with a line, aligning them to the ground, etc. [2 Samuel 8:2] What is written about David: "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, laying them on the ground," should be understood hyperbolically. For it was not possible that men living on the earth would be so humbled that, lying on the ground, they would appear equal with the ground itself, as confirmed by a line stretched over them; but the Scripture wanted to accumulate the immense humiliation of the captured and oppressed nation with this word, to say they were made equal to the ground, as if by God they were emasculated and despised, so that they living on earth no longer mattered more than the ground that had no people. You have many examples of this kind of expression in the Scriptures, such as that one from the Gospel: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did; if they were written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John XXI). For how could the world not contain the books that could have been written in the world? But to imply the greatness and multitude of the Lord's deeds, the Scripture wished to use such an expression. And in David's lament, "They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions" (II Samuel I). Which is similar to that secular expression: "Who would surpass the whiteness of snow, in their courses the winds.

That he said "measured them with a line," he put the line allegorically for destiny, because fields are usually measured by a line. Hence it is written: "And he divided the land to them by lot with a measuring line. It means that David would distribute the regions of the Moabites to the heirs according to his will, as freely as any possessor might divide his own fields at his whim by stretching the line here and there. He measured two lines, one for putting to death, and one for keeping alive. And this is said allegorically, signifying that David had the power, with no one contradicting, to put to death those who were rebellious and to spare those who were submissive.

9. "He is like the most delicate worm of wood." [2 Samuel 23:8] This is said of the wisest leader of David's mighty men, whose name indeed is not mentioned in the Book of Kings, but in the Book of Chronicles he is called Jeshbaam and is noted to have been the son of Hachmoni (I Chron. XI). "He is like the most delicate worm of wood" (II Sam. XXIII, 8). This signifies both the man's martial strength and his modest civility, as he appeared, like a woodworm, indeed tender and fragile in his whole body, and even very small, yet nonetheless consumed and hollowed out the strongest wood, rendering it decayed. Hence, the woodworm takes its name from gnawing through wood. In the same way, he seemed to be affable to all at home, quiet and humble; yet in public battle, he showed himself to be a lion, strong and unbearable to his enemies.

10. "He went down and struck the lion in the middle of the cistern." [2 Samuel 23:20] As it is said of Benaiah: And he went down and struck the lion in the middle of the cistern on a snowy day (Book VII, Antiquities, ch. 12), how this was done, Josephus recounts more clearly, because the cistern was indeed very deep, which in the wintertime, when everything was filled with snow, it too was leveled with an excessive heap of snow. When the lion, unbeknownst to danger, happened upon it and fell in, and being trapped there roared greatly, people ran to see what it was. And when Benaiah came with others to such a spectacle, he immediately jumped into the cistern, and attacked and killed the lion in the midst of the snow. 11. Why is it said in the book of Kings [1 Kings 6:2] that the temple had a height of 30 cubits, while in the book of Chronicles [2 Chronicles 3:4] it is stated as 120 cubits? What is said regarding the construction of the temple in the book of Kings, that it had a height of 30 cubits, while in the books of Chronicles it is written: "Moreover, the height was 120 cubits" [2 Chronicles 3:4], is by no means contradictory, but both are to be understood as true. For, as Josephus narrates in his History: there were 30 cubits from the floor to the middle chamber, another 30 from the middle to the third, up to where the height of the porticos, which were attached to the temple on the southern, western, and northern sides, extended—that is, together 60; then another 60 up to the roof of the house: thus, the total height of the temple was completed at 120 cubits (Antiquities of the Jews, Book VIII, chapter 3).

12. "The door of the middle side was on the right side of the house. [1 Kings 6:8] When it is said: The door of the middle side was on the right side of the house, it does not indicate, as some think, that the door through which one would enter the temple was on the southern side, that is, on the middle side of the southern wall. Otherwise, Scripture would simply say: The door of the house was positioned towards the South. But now the door, through which one would enter for the everyday services of the temple, was to the East, as Josephus reports; and the portico before its face, also open to the East, so that the equinoctial rising sun would send its rays without any obstacle through the doors of the temple and the oracle into the ark itself, which was in the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, the ascent leading to the upper house, and from the upper to the third, was on the southern side of the temple (which is the right part of the house) made in a hidden manner, having a very small door below on the East in the very corner of the right wall. Hence it is consequently added: And through

the winding stairs, they would ascend to the middle chamber, and from the middle to the third. The layout of this ascent commends to us a mystery much worth remembering;

for it is clear that this temple which Solomon made figuratively indicates the body of the peaceful king Christ, not only that which is His entire Church but also that which He received most sacredly from the Virgin, to be the head of the Church. Now, the door of the middle side was on the right side of the house, through which one would secretly ascend from the lower to the middle chamber, and from the middle to the third. Just as when our Lord suffered on the cross, one of the soldiers opened His right side with a lance, and immediately blood and water came out, which is the blood of our redemption, and the water of our cleansing, by whose sanctifying mysteries, cleansed and consecrated, from this life which we conduct on earth we aim towards the rest of the spirit in the future, as it were, to the upper house. And when we ascend to the rest of the spirit having been released from the flesh, we also await the ascension of our flesh in the day of resurrection, as it were to the highest chamber.

13. "He also covered the house with cedar ceilings. [1 Kings 6:9] The term "He also covered the house with cedar ceilings" refers to the timber-frame ceilings that, when fastened with nails, display the wondrous beauty of their paintings to those who behold them. There were three ceilings in the temple. The first had thirty cubits from the floor; the second had sixty cubits, aligned with the height of the porticos; the third had one hundred and twenty cubits at the top of the entire house. For in Palestine, as in Egypt, roofs are not raised high but instead built flat, suitable for sitting or walking. Hence, the Lord says in the Gospel: "And what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops. Such a place is most appropriate for proclaiming the word—to those sitting with the speaker or to listeners below. As Solomon says in Proverbs: "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious woman" (Prov. XXI); for what is called "roof" in Latin is "doma" in Greek. Moreover, the porticos around the temple had three levels of ceilings. The first from the ground had twenty cubits, the second forty, and the third sixty. Their roofs were also flat. There were thirty porticos on the lower level, thirty in the middle, and thirty above, not separated by walls but by wooden planks, so each of the ninety porticos measured five cubits in width and length, and twenty in height. These porticos are frequently mentioned in the book of Chronicles.

Josephus explains their arrangement in more detail. "And he built a platform over the whole house five cubits high; this is what Moses commanded in Deuteronomy: "When you build a new house, make a parapet for your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from it" (Deut. XXII). This platform at the top of the temple walls acted as a parapet to prevent someone ascending to the roof from falling off carelessly. This is mentioned as the cause of King Ahaziah's death, as he fell through the lattice of his upper chamber and suffered fatal injuries. When these panels, walls, or parapets are placed for safety, the common people call them "lattices. "And he covered the house with

cedar wood; signifies the upper covering of the entire structure, that is, the panel added above those beams on which the uppermost ceilings we mentioned earlier were affixed.

14. "And when the poles protruded, and the ends of them appeared, etc. [1 Kings 8:8] As the ark was brought into the holy of holies, it is said: And when the poles protruded, and the ends of them appeared outside the sanctuary before the oracle, they no longer appeared outside; this is written more clearly in the volume of Chronicles. The ends of the poles, he says, with which they carried the ark, since they were a little longer, appeared before the oracle. But if anyone had been slightly outside, they could not see them (II Chron. V). Where it should be noted that even if the ends of the poles appeared to those who came closer and looked more carefully before the oracle, it was not possible for the very ends of them to protrude before the oracle, because it was indeed necessary, with the oracle closed and the veil hung before the doors, for the poles themselves also to be hidden entirely within along with the ark and the cherubim. This could not happen if the poles protruding further did not allow space for the doors to be shut. The positioning of the poles which Scripture has taken care to explain so diligently is not without reason, but rather with great consideration of a sacrament. For it is evident that the outer house of the temple designates the Church journeying on earth, while the holy of holies designates the internal happiness of the heavenly homeland.

Likewise, the ark brought into the holy of holies typifies the assumed humanity of Christ, brought within the veil of the heavenly kingdom; and the poles with which the same ark was carried typically denote the preachers of the word, through whom He was made known to the world. Now in the ark there was a golden urn holding manna, which in the man Christ all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily. There was Aaron's rod, which had blossomed again after being cut off, signifying that all the power of judgment belongs to Him, whose judgment in the humility of His passion seemed to be removed. There were also the tablets of the covenant, because in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Attached to it were the carrying poles, by which it was carried, signifying the teachers who formerly labored in the word of Christ, now rejoice in the present vision of the glory of Christ. For what one of them said of himself: "I desire to depart and be with Christ" (Philippians 2), he undoubtedly left to be understood of all the companions of his work. The ends of the poles appeared outside in front of the oracle not always, but when the doors of the same oracle happened to be opened; and this not to everyone, but only to those who, approaching closer, diligently strive to behold the things inside.

But the ark itself, what it was like and how it was placed, was allowed to be seen only by those who had entered the oracle, because none of the saints still in this life, even if they are highly elevated in mind, but only the citizens of that homeland fully behold the glory of their Redeemer there. The poles and the ark are also stored together in the oracle, signifying that even now the perfect elect who have gone before us into the hidden presence of God, from the turmoil of men, are also hidden. Nevertheless, the ends of the poles are sometimes seen through the open oracle by those who approach, when divine grace grants to the more

perfect and to those who purify the eye of their heart with all intention, some glimpse of the joy of the citizens above; which certainly is not granted to those who have retreated a little further, because as much as they remain outwardly empty of mind, so much less do they see the internal joys.

15. "Solomon held a great feast, etc. [1 Kings 8:65] It is said that Solomon held a great feast, and all Israel with him; a great multitude from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of Egypt before the Lord; by the entrance of Hamath, it means the northern region of the promised land; by the brook or torrent of Egypt, as the Chronicles name it, it designates the southern. I think the reader will be pleased to quote some passages more extensively from the words of Saint Jerome. It is written in the book of Numbers, in which the entire promised land is divided in a brief speech by the four regions: The southern part shall begin from the wilderness of Sin, which is near Edom, and shall have its boundaries against the east at the Salt Sea, and shall circle the southern region by the ascent of Scorpions, so that they pass through Zin, and reach as far as the south to Kadesh-Barnea. From there the boundaries will proceed to the village called Adar, and extend to Azmon, and the border will go round from Azmon to the brook of Egypt and shall end at the Great Sea shore. Concerning which in the last vision of the prophet Ezekiel it is thus said: The southern boundary southward from Tamar unto the waters of Meribah (Ezek. 47), that is, of contradiction.

Also Kadesh, and the brook until the Great Sea, which means the broad wilderness of Sin, which is near Edom, and in the Red Sea to circle its boundary, and by the ascent of Scorpions, and by Zin, and Kadesh-Barnea, and the courtyard or village of Adar, and from Azmon to reach up to the brook of Egypt, which flows into the sea near the city Rhinocorura. Here indeed, the boundary of the southern region begins at Thamar, which is a city in the wilderness, which Solomon built with remarkable works, and today is called Palmyra, and in the Hebrew language is called Thamar, which in our language sounds as "palm"; up to the waters of the dispute of Kadesh, which is undoubtedly in the desert. And the stream enters the Great Sea, which extends along the shores of Egypt and Palestine. It follows in the book of Numbers: But the western region will begin at the Great Sea, and will be closed by that end (Num. XXXIV): that is, from sea to sea, from the stream namely of Rhinocorure, which flows into the sea, up to the place where the city of Hemath of Syria is. Whose name Ezekiel puts in this region: And the border, he says, of the sea, the Great Sea from the boundary straight on, until you come to Hemath (Ezek. XLVII), which is now called Epiphania, with the name changed from the cruelest tyrant Antiochus; for he had the surname Epiphanes.

Moreover, to the northern part, he says, the boundaries will begin from the Great Sea, reaching to the highest mountain, from which they will come to Hemath up to the borders of Sedada, and the boundaries will go up to Zephron and the village of Enan. These will be the boundaries in the northern part (Num. XXXIV). The Hebrews say that the northern region begins from the Great Sea, which extends along the shores of Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria, which is called Coele, and Cilicia, and through Egypt extends to Libya. But what he

says, reaching the boundaries up to the highest mountain, the same Hebrews consider it to mean either Mount Amanus or Taurus, which seems more likely to us. And the boundaries will go, he says, up to Zephron, which city today is called Zephyrium, a town of Cilicia. What follows, and the village of Enan, for which in Hebrew is written Haser Enan, which means the atrium of the fountain, is the boundary of Damascus. Hence Ezekiel says: And the boundary will be from the sea to the atrium of Enan, or Haser Enan, the boundary of Damascus, and from the north to the north, the northern region (Ezek. XLVII). From there, he says, they will measure the boundaries toward the eastern region from the village of Enan to Sephama, and from Sephama the boundaries will descend to Rebla opposite the fountain.

From there they will reach toward the east to the sea of Chinnereth, and extend to Jordan, and finally end at the most salty sea (Num. XXXIV). Thus from the boundary of the northern region, that is, the atrium of Enan, the boundaries extend to Sephama, which the Hebrews name Apamea. And from Apamea the boundaries descend to Rebla, which is now called Antioch in Syrian. And so you may know that this Rebla signifies the city which now in Coele Syria is the most famous, it follows, opposite the fountain, which is clear to signify Daphne, from which the above-mentioned city enjoys abundant waters. From there, he says, the boundaries will reach toward the east to the sea of Chinnereth, that is, the lake of Tiberias. However, it is called a sea, though it has sweet waters, according to the idiom of Scripture, where gatherings of waters are called seas. And the boundaries will extend, he says, to the Jordan, and finally be closed by the sea, either the Dead Sea or (as some think) the tongue of the Red Sea, on whose shore Aila is situated.

16. "In his days, Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. [1 Kings 16:34] What is written about the times of Ahab's reign: 'In his days, Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundations with Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with Segub his youngest,' the sense is clear: when the stated builder of the city began to lay its foundations, his firstborn, named Abiram, died; and when, with the city built, he tried to fortify its gates, he lost his youngest son named Segub. This was foretold by Joshua, who, when dedicating the destroyed and cursed city Jericho, predicted it with an imprecation: 'Cursed before the Lord is the man who rises up and rebuilds this city Jericho. He shall lay its foundation at the cost of his firstborn, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates' (Joshua 6). That Ahiel, living for God, interpreted as Bethel which means house of God, restores the walls of Jericho that were destroyed and cursed by Joshua, is evident when one among those who have assumed the habit of religion in the Church returns to commit the crimes that the Lord Jesus forgave him on the day of his baptism, and those pomps of the devil which he himself anathema-tized, he returns to by living luxuriously; when he prefers the dogmas of heretics or the fables of pagans to the churchly truth in which he was imbued, it is as if, departing from Bethel, he resurrects the ruins of Jericho.

And rightly is such a person cursed before the Lord, and loses both the first of his sons in the foundation of the wicked city and the youngest in the setting up of its gates. Because

he loses the foundations of faith with which he should have begun good buildings, and the house of good action with which he should have finished. These things I have expounded in an allegorical sense, to remind you how true is the word of the apostle, who says that all these things happened to them as examples, and were written down for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10).

17. "May the gods do so to me, and more also, etc. [1 Kings 20:10] What Benhadad king of Syria, besieging and beginning to assault Samaria said: 'May the gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria will be enough to fill the hands of all the people who follow me,' has this sense: Samaria, like other cities, had earth inside near the walls, almost equal to the walls, lest the walls standing without the support of the adjacent earth, should be frequently struck down by the assaulting hand with the battering ram. From the outside, the height of the walls far exceeded the surface of the ground, especially since, as Scripture relates, the city itself had been set on the summit of a mountain. Therefore, the haughty king, threatening the besieged city, said that he had such a multitude of troops with him that even if each of his soldiers brought only one stone, or clod, or log to construct a rampart against the city, such a high rampart could rise from it that the surface of the city itself, which was within the walls, would seem equal, so that they might fight on an equal footing against the city, sending missiles or torches. The king of Israel, restraining the king of Syria's arrogance with a modest utterance, said, "Say to him: Let not him who girds on his armor boast as he who takes it off.

There is a difference between a man who is girded, a man who is ungirded, and a man who is not girded. A man who is girded is one who walks about with a belt; an ungirded man is one who recently took off his belt, for example, to enter a bath, or to get into bed, or perhaps to put on another tunic; a man who is not girded is one who, having recently put on a tunic, has not yet fortified himself with the addition of a belt. Thus, one who is in a military expedition can rightly be called girded, that is, armed. One who has returned home victoriously from a battle, having laid down his arms, is rightly called ungirded, because he wields the repose of peace longed for. One who has not yet begun to fight, nor begun to prepare for the contest, is rightly called not girded. Therefore, the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, boasting that he had already captured Samaria, which he had begun to besiege, "Let not him who girds on his armor boast as he who takes it off. As if to say plainly: Do not boast as if you were already the victor of war's peril, who, still set in the field, do not yet know whom victory will favor. And indeed he spoke the truth. For soon after the battle commenced, Benadab, not triumphing over the conquered adversaries, but with his army defeated, fled home.

18. "Let a third part of you come in on the Sabbath, etc. [2 Kings 11:5] This is what the high priest Jehoiada said to the priests and Levites when he brought forth Joash the son of Azariah, whom he had secretly nurtured in the temple for six years during Athaliah's reign: "Let a third part of you come in on the Sabbath and keep watch at the house of the king; let a third part be at the Gate of Seir, and a third part at the gate which is behind the habitat of

the guards; you will keep watch at the house of Mesha. Let two parts of you, all going out on the Sabbath, keep watch at the house of the Lord around the king, and you shall surround him, having weapons in your hands," and the rest which is mentioned or done there. These things can be better understood if some things about the places in the temple where these events occurred are more broadly recalled. The temple itself, excluding the porticos which surrounded it on all sides, was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide within its walls (this is the initial measurement named in the Words of the Days). The entire circumference of the courtyard was surrounded by a wall three cubits high, having an entrance on the east side, of which Scripture in the Book of Kings thus makes mention: "And he built the inner court three rows of hewn stone and one row of cedar logs" (I Kings VI).

This court is called inner because there are other outer courts surrounding it. Furthermore, in the Words of the Days, it is thus written: "He made also the court of the priests and a great hall and doors in the hall which he covered with bronze" (II Chronicles IV). This court of the priests is so named because it was made to guard against the entrance of others into the temple, signifying that only the priests were permitted to enter. This same court was closer to the wall of the temple from the south, west, and north sides. Further to the east, where it also had an entrance through steps, it extended to a great length from the temple, as in that part it had the altar of burnt offerings, in that part ten lavers in which the offerings were washed, in that part the bronze sea in which the priests who were about to enter for ministry washed, in that part the choirs of Levites for the sacrificing and chanting priests. This courtyard, however, was surrounded all around at a distance by a very large square building. Its inner wall, that is, the one facing the temple from the four parts of the world, was constructed entirely in arches below, but further up it was founded in solid firmness. And it had bronze doors, as we mentioned earlier. And doors in the basilica, which it covered with bronze; which was also provided with very large porticos and was separated by suitable upper rooms.

And again outside this building, another one was made in a similar scheme in a circle. But also a third one, nonetheless, made in the same order around those, surrounded all the interior at length and breadth in a circle, differing only from the previous buildings in that its Eastern and Northern wall did not have doors, for each of them pertained to the walls of the city. However, these are the courts sung about in the Psalms: "Who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God" (Psalms 113, 135). And since the house of the Lord itself was constructed in a higher place, it happened that the farther the courtyards were made, the higher their walls were, as they had foundations below; so much so that the outermost had walls in height up to four hundred cubits, yet they did not come close to matching the height of the temple. Of all these things there is a general mention in the book of Chronicles as follows: "And David gave Solomon his son the description of the porch and of the temple, and of the storerooms, and of the upper rooms, and of the innermost chambers, and of the place of atonement, and also of all that he had thought of the courts of the house of the Lord and of all the surrounding rooms and of the treasuries of the house of God and of the treasuries of the dedicated things" (1 Chronicles 28:11-12).

But the writing or painting of Joseph formed by the ancients distinguishes more fully how these were made in order. With these thus arranged, it was the prerogative of only the high priest to enter into the Holy of Holies once a year with the blood of sacrifices, into the sanctuary before the oracle, only purified priests entered, into the inner court all priests and Levites. Around this courtyard, under the open sky, or if weather prevented, in the surrounding buildings, Israelite men would gather to pray or hear the word. In the third order of courts, Israelite women stood to pray under the open sky, or if the weather did not allow it, they moved under the nearest roofs of the surrounding buildings. Moreover, into the outermost order of courts, the Gentiles, who had perhaps come to pray, would enter. Where also, after times of dispersion, those who had recently come from among the Gentiles, purified for seven days, finally sought the inner sanctums. And the pavements between the courts or in the courts were all paved with various stones. The doors in the buildings were so positioned opposite to each other that even those standing in the outermost parts could see the temple. There were, moreover, twenty-four lots of priests and Levites and doorkeepers, who would succeed each other in as many weeks, with a new group entering for duty on the Sabbath and after the Sabbath, the group that had served for the previous week returning home.

But this high priest, because of the necessity of increasing the army around the new king, both welcomed those who were due to enter for the week and retained those who had already served their week of ministry so that they would not leave. He also gathered other Levites from all the cities of Judah, as well as the leaders of the families of Israel, having sent centurions for this purpose to Jerusalem, as the Chronicles recount (2 Chronicles 23). When bringing them out, he distinguished the king's son in such a way that all those who had completed the Sabbath, and were about to depart, divided into two parts, would surround the king armed in the inner parts of the court. But the remaining crowd, that is, those who were not of the tribe of Levi, would guard the outer gates of the courts against the queen's rage, in case she attempted anything adverse. Moreover, those priests, Levites, and doorkeepers who had recently come for the Sabbath, divided into three parts, would observe the house of the king, that is, the palace, so that the queen would not defend it against the king with a gathered army. They would also keep the gate of the shield-bearers' residence, through which one would descend from the temple to the palace, as is said below: And they led the king out of the house of the Lord, and came by the way of the gate of the shield-bearers to the palace, and he sat on the throne of the kings.

Here also the gate of Seir and the house of Millo, named with the gate of the shield-bearers, seem to be present. He calls the shield-bearers guardians of the king, as the book of Chronicles affirms; and when Rehoboam had made bronze shields in place of the golden ones, he added: And he handed them over to the leaders of the shield-bearers, who guarded the entrance of the palace (2 Chronicles 12). In which book, of course, all these things are recounted more distinctly: A third part of you who come to the Sabbath, of priests, and Levites, and doorkeepers, shall be at the gates. A third part at the house of the king, and a third at the gate that is called the Foundation. And let all the remaining crowd be in the

courts of the house of the Lord. And let no one else enter the house of the Lord, except the priests and those of the Levites who minister; they only shall enter who are sanctified, and let all the remaining crowd observe the watches of the Lord. But let the Levites surround the king, each having his weapon (2 Chronicles 23), etc.

19. "And he brought out the king's son, and put the diadem and the testimony upon him." [2 Kings 11:12] What follows about the same: He brought out the king's son, and put the diadem and the testimony upon him, signifies the kingly insignia on the head in the diadem, and the decrees of God's law, by which it is declared what the king should do and how he is commanded to live, in the testimony. Finally, more openly in the book of Chronicles: And they put the diadem on him, and gave him the law to hold in his hand (2 Chronicles 23); and it was indeed of great and salutary wisdom, that after the death of the tyrannical and impious queen, to the succeeding son of the legitimate king, simultaneously with the state of kingship, the discipline of God's law should also be entrusted, so that he who saw himself set over the people in rule should remember that he himself was to be subject to divine laws in rule.

20. "And no account was made with the men who received the money, etc." [2 Kings 12:15] This is said, about the restoration of the house of the Lord by the aforesaid king Jehoash: And no reckoning was made with the men who received the money to distribute it to the craftsmen, but they dealt with it in faith, showing their devotion, because they had so much fervor in religion that no one doubted but that they handled the Lord's money without suspicion of any fraud, and that they faithfully offered it, taken from the treasury, to the workmen for repairing the house, as each had need.

21. "He struck down ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt, etc." [2 Kings 14:7] It is said of Amaziah, the king of Judah: He struck down ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and took Sela in war, and called its name Joktheel; the Valley of Salt was where they made salt, either from a spring of brine, as in many places, or by cutting, drying, and burning, or by boiling salty well waters until they solidified into salt, or by any other method by which salt is usually made. In that place, Joab is also recorded to have struck down twelve thousand Edomites. It must also not be overlooked that the old edition, for the Valley of Salt, placed Gemelach, as if it were the name of a region. Petra, however, is a noble city of Arabia, in the same land of Edom, which in the Book of Numbers is called Rekem, and by the Syrians today is still called thus (Num. 31). Joktheel, which Amaziah as victor gave it as a name, is interpreted as the assembly of God, or the help of God, acting faithfully so that it would be recorded for perpetual memory, because he took it either with the assembly of the people of God or with God's help.

22. "He restored the boundaries of Israel from the entrance of Hamath, etc." [2 Kings 14:25] It is said of Jeroboam, king of Israel: He restored the boundaries of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah. Hamath, which is now called Epiphania, was the northern boundary of Israel. However, the sea of the Arabah, which in Hebrew is called

Araba, designates the Dead Sea, which in length extends for 580 stadia to Zoaras of Arabia, and in width for 150 stadia to the nearby Sodoms.

23. "And each nation made its own gods." [2 Kings 17:29] It is said of those nations brought into Samaria by the king of Assyria: And each nation made its own gods and placed them in the high places that the Samaritans had made, each nation in the cities in which they lived; for the men of Babylon made Socoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima; moreover, the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; indeed, in the Book of Places it is read that Benoth and Nergal were cities that the Samaritans who had come from Babylon built in the region of Judea. Asima also a town, which they who had come from Hemath built. For Nebaaz and Thartha are cities which the Hevites founded in the same land of Judea. But it seems, according to the logic of the speech, that the names of the idols which these peoples had previously worshipped in their own land can also be understood here. Because it was said: And each nation made its own god, it was added as if to complete the thought: For the men of Babylon made Socoth Benoth, that is, tabernacles of Benoth. And better, if I am not mistaken, would the translator do, if he translated Socoth into tabernacles in Latin, and placed the name of the idol Benoth absolutely; and as is clearly said in what follows: But those who were from Sepharvaim burned their sons in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim; where it is shown that Adrammelech and Anammelech were idols of the city of Sepharvaim. Thus it seems consequent that Nergel of the Cutheans, Asima of the Hemathites, Nebaaz and Thartha were idols of the Hevites.

24. "Where is the god of Hemath and Arphad? Where is the god of Sepharvaim?" [2 Kings 18:34] Rabsheh said this among other things with which he blasphemed God, crying out against Jerusalem: Where is the god of Hemath and Arphad? Where is the god of Sepharvaim, Ana and Ava? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? He showed that the Samaritans served the gods of all these cities or nations, and that they were not gods but idols, rightly subverted as those who worshipped vanity deserved. Hemath is a city of Coele-Syria, which is now called Epiphania, near Emesa, as we previously noted; Arphad is a city of Damascus, which Jerome also writes was conquered by the king of Assyria (Jeremiah 40). Sepharvaim, in the plural, means books or letters, is the name of places from which the Assyrians who were moved settled in Samaria, as we find in the Books of Places. In Isaiah, however, this term also appears to be a city name, where it is clearly said: Where is the god of the city of Sepharvaim? (Isaiah 37). Although it is said in the plural, like Thebes or Athens. For Ana and Ava, the old edition placed the name Aneugava as if it were one city, and indeed it is written so in Hebrew; but since the syllable u in the middle of the name signifies a conjunction, it may also be distinguished as Ana and Gava, as Aquila translated; or Ana and Ava, as our translator rendered.

25. "Do you wish the shadow to go forward ten lines or to go back ten steps, etc.? [2 Kings 20:9] What the prophet Isaiah said to King Hezekiah: Do you wish the shadow to go forward ten lines, or to go back ten steps? signifies the same thing by the name of steps as by lines,

that is, the division of hours, which we usually mark twelve per day on a sundial; or, as Jerome says, the steps were constructed by mechanical art, so that the shadow descending each one would mark the intervals of the hours. It was then the tenth hour of the day when the prophet spoke to the king: Do you wish, therefore, he said, that the shadow go forward ten lines, the sun proceeding above the earth through northern regions to the east, which it was about to do daily in the usual course: or that the shadow go back ten steps, the face of the sun being turned backward and returning through the southern region to the east? But the king said, It is easy, he said, for the shadow to grow by ten lines; I do not wish this to happen, but that it should go back ten steps. For he saw that it could be a greater miracle if the sun acted contrary to its usual course, than if it proceeded in the usual manner; although much higher, i.e., lifted above the earth to the east, as if flying to the morning of the second day without any intervening night.

For indeed those who live in the island of Thule, which is beyond Britain, or in the farthest boundaries of the Scythians, see this happen for several days during the whole summer, because the sun, having set for the rest of the world and placed under the earth, nonetheless appears above the earth to them the whole night; and it is visibly seen how it returns from the western part to the eastern lowly, until it is again given back to the whole world at the common rising, as both the histories of the ancients and the abundant evidence of our men of this age, who come from those parts, testify. However, those who inhabit the innermost parts of the south never see the sun return from the western to the eastern through the meridian regions.

26. "She who dwells in Jerusalem in the second district." [2 Kings 22:14] What is said about Huldah the prophetess: "She who dwells in Jerusalem in the second district"; what this means is explained in the book of Chronicles, where it is written about the aforesaid King Hezekiah: "He also built, with great earnestness, all the wall that had been broken down, and reared up towers on it, and another wall outside" (2 Chron. 32). Zephaniah mentions this place, saying: "A voice of crying from the Fish Gate, and a wailing from the Second Quarter" (Zeph. 1). For which the old edition translated it as a proper name of the place, in Masena. Masena indeed means Second Quarter. Therefore, what is said about the prophetess dwelling in the Second, understand it as part of the second wall.

27. "He also defiled Topheth, etc. [2 Kings 23:10] What is said about King Josiah: "He also defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, so that no man might consecrate his son or his daughter through the fire to Molech"; these places are frequently mentioned in Scripture, especially in the book of Kings and the prophet Jeremiah. Now the Valley of Hinnom, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, is near the wall of Jerusalem, toward the east, in which the beautiful grove of Siloam is watered by springs. But Topheth, or Tophet (both spellings are used), was a place in the same valley, near the fuller's pool, which is mentioned in Scripture, and near the field of Aceldama, which is shown to this day on the southern side of Mount Sion. In Topheth, which was a very pleasant place, altars were set up to sacrifice to demons, and to consecrate their children to a wicked fire, or to

offer burnt offerings, as it is written in the book of Chronicles about King Ahaz: "He it was who burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire. Ben-Hinnom indeed means the son of Hinnom.

The Valley of Hinnom is called Gehinnom in Hebrew, from which in the New Testament, the name Gehenna is applied to the punishment of hell, because just as in the Valley of Hinnom, those who served idols in it perished, as testified by the prophets, so too will sinners be punished with eternal damnation for their sins. Therefore, when Jeremiah relates that the Lord commanded him and said, "Go out to the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Pottery Gate"; soon after he says: "And this place shall no longer be called Topheth, nor the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter: and I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword" (Jer. 19). Isaiah also most clearly calls Topheth hell; he, while describing the perpetual destruction of the devil under the name of Asshur, saying: "For through the voice of the Lord shall Asshur be beaten down, who smote with a rod. And the passage of the rod is prepared, which the Lord shall cause to rest upon him" (Isa. 30), forthwith added how and where he should perish, saying: "For Topheth is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; it is deep and large. Beautifully he says "And large," because Topheth means width. His nourishments, it is said, are fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of sulfur, sets it ablaze.

But Josiah defiled Tophet, either by scattering the bones of the dead there, as it is read that he did in other places of idols, or by dispersing any other unclean things, so that the place would appear to all who looked at it as more fitting for abomination than for delight.

28. "He also removed the horses that the kings of Judah had given, etc. [2 Kings 23:11] What follows about the same king Josiah, he also removed the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun at the entrance of the temple of the Lord; and shortly after: He burned the chariots of the sun with fire; this shows that the Jews at all times were devoted to all kinds of idolatry and superstition, so much so that in adoration of the sun, which they believed to be a god after the manner of the Gentiles, they attached his image which they had made to horses and chariots, and this in the courts of the temple of the Lord. For the Gentiles are accustomed to depict or make an image of the sun in this way, placing a young boy in a chariot, and attaching horses to him as if rushing towards the sky. They represent him as a boy because the sun, as if born anew each day with its rise, never falls into old age through the ages. But that they attribute chariots and horses to him is believed to have been taken from the miracle of the prophet Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot with fiery horses, as John, the bishop of Constantinople, estimates. For that which is called Helios in Greek means the sun (as even Sedulius shows, when he sang about Elijah's ascent, saying:

How well the fiery path of heaven suits Elijah, who glows rightly even by name. He was worthy of this aid: for if one letter of the Greek word is changed by accent, it means the sun. Hearing from the Israelites, reputed to have divine letters, that Elijah was transported to

the heavens by a fiery chariot and fiery horses, or certainly seeing this depicted among other things on the wall, the Greeks, deceived by the similarity of the name, believed this to signify the sun's passage through the heavens, and transformed a divinely performed miracle into a testimony of error, conceived by human folly; the Jews themselves, imitating them, strove not to be less foolish than the most foolish of the Gentiles in any matter.

29. "Also the high places that were in Jerusalem, etc. [2 Kings 23:13] What is said shortly after about the same king: Also the high places that were in Jerusalem, to the right side of the Mount of Offense, etc., up to, The king defiled and crushed the statues; it is clear as daylight that Scripture usually names high places as locations set on leafy hills, in which they sacrificed either to demons or even to the Lord, drawn by the pleasantness of the locations, contrary to the prohibition of leaving the altar which was in the temple and offering sacrifices. Whence it is often said in this book about kings who were less perfectly just: Nevertheless he did not remove the high places. But the Mount of Offense, he calls the Mount of the idol, because it is customary in Scriptures to name idols as offense, because either God is offended in them, or they bring offense and ruin to their worshipers, as is indicated in this very sentence that follows, when it says: Which Solomon, the king of Israel, had built for Astaroth, the idol of the Sidonians, and for Chamos, an offense to Moab, and for Melchon, an abomination to the children of Ammon. Where this also, if I am not mistaken, is clearly shown, which I wish had not been shown: that evidently Solomon never perfectly repented of the crime of idolatry he had committed.

For if he had produced fruits worthy of repentance, he would have striven above all to remove the idols he had built from the holy city; and not, to the scandal of the foolish, would he have left what he, although once the wisest, had done erroneously, as if done wisely and rightly. Scripture mentions this above, saying: Then Solomon built a shrine for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, on the mountain opposite Jerusalem, and for Molech, the idol of the children of Ammon (1 Kings 11). Nor should it seem contradictory that the mountain where these idols were made is said to be against Jerusalem, here it is stated to be placed in Jerusalem; because undoubtedly it was situated so near the city, that it seemed to belong to it, and also to stain it with the filth gathered there.

30. "And he carried away all Jerusalem, etc. [2 Kings 24:14] Reporting this about Nebuchadnezzar, who carried away all Jerusalem, and all the leaders, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, Scripture adds, saying: "And all the craftsmen and smiths. This is what was said above to have been done by the Philistines to the people of Israel when it was said: "Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel. For the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears" (1 Samuel 13:19). Just as then, they took care that the Hebrews, having blacksmiths, might not make arms to resist, so now the Chaldeans, having destroyed Jerusalem and laid waste the whole land of promise, make sure that no craftsman, no smith, remains in it, who either could repair the polluted walls of the city or restore the broken structures; on the contrary, whatever skill they found among the exterminated people, they transferred entirely to Babylon; so that it might ei-

ther be useless or serve the interests of that city. Because this most lamentable history is so much in line with the negligence of our times, I do not think its allegory should be kept silent. It is known that Jerusalem and the land of Israel represent the city of Christ, that is, the holy Church; but Babylon and the Chaldeans or the Philistines signify the city of the devil, that is, all the multitude of either wicked men or angels.

And Israel serves the Philistines or Chaldeans, when any of the faithful, nominally existing in the Church, but otherwise deceived by unclean spirits or men, submit their minds to greed, luxury, or any other sin. Nebuchadnezzar carries away Israel and all the leaders, the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, when either the teachers of the people, those who seemed to serve the Lord with an invincible spirit and to faithfully observe the Decalogue in love of God and neighbor, either suddenly, overcome by the temptations of the world or adversities, or defile themselves with greater crimes, or certainly, by deviating into heresy, incur the mark of open apostasy. But the weapons with which, resisting the devil, we defend the freedom given to us by God, what else are they but the words of the Scriptures? In which, by the examples of the Lord Himself and His saints, we learn more clearly than daylight how the wars against vices ought to be overcome. But the Philistines deprive the sons of Israel of armor smiths, just as malicious spirits obstruct the souls of the faithful from the meditation of sacred reading by inserting secular affairs, so that they neither gain confidence from this exercise in resistance for themselves, nor approach others, possibly those who cannot read, by exhorting or correcting them to resist vices. They take away the weapons smiths when they oppress those knowledgeable in the sacred words with such crimes that they are utterly ashamed to speak the good they have learned.

They transfer every artisan and engraver to Babylon from Jerusalem, when they turn those who used to benefit many by various works of virtue and to fortify the city of God against the incursions of temptations away from their purpose; and compel them to use the talent, which should have been devoted to the protection of the holy Church, instead to serve the will of the king of vices. However, if we wish to understand "engraver" here not as the maker of doors or walls, but rather of gold and gems, it certainly refers to the same spiritual exposition. It is indeed said of wisdom that it is gold and a multitude of gems (Prov. 20); and therefore, we can aptly understand the engravers of these as the teachers, who, as long as they live and teach rightly, devote their art to the adornment of the holy city. But if they happen to err, what else but that they are taken captive by the Chaldean people and transferred to Babylon? And since to transfer the artisan and the engraver from Jerusalem to Babylon is to bury the talent of the word received from heaven in the earth, that is, to convert spiritual knowledge to the works of sins. I beg you, reader, if I have said anything pleasing to you in these little explanations, refer it to the praise of the God who gives.

But if otherwise, may you grant forgiveness to my ignorance or presumption, so that you yourself, with all whom you can, apply to frequent meditation, continuous observance, fitting preaching of divine Scriptures; and let us strive with communal effort, so that we may be found faithful traders of the Lord's money, artisans and engravers of spiritual gems or

walls, defenders of the holy city, and artificers of heavenly weapons; that on His return from the wedding, the supreme Householder may deign to say to us: "Because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25). Amen.

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.