



ANCIENT
CHRISTIAN
COMMENTARY
ON SCRIPTURE

OLD TESTAMENT
XII

JEREMIAH,
LAMENTATIONS

EDITED BY
DEAN O. WENTHE

GENERAL EDITOR
THOMAS C. ODEN

**PRAISE FOR THE
ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE**

“The conspectus of patristic exposition that this series offers has been badly needed for several centuries, and the whole Christian world should unite to thank those who are undertaking to fill the gap. For the ongoing ecumenical conversation, and the accurate appreciation of early Christian thought, and the current hermeneutical debate as well, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture will prove itself to be a really indispensable resource.”

J. I. PACKER
Board of Governors Professor of Theology
Regent College

“In the desert of biblical scholarship that tries to deconstruct or get behind the texts, the patristic commentators let the pure, clear waters of Christian faith flow from its scriptural source. Preachers, teachers and Bible students of every sort will want to drink deeply from the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture.”

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
President, Religion and Public Life
Editor-in-Chief, First Things

“The fathers of the ancient church were enabled, by the grace of God, to interpret the divine Scriptures in a way that integrates spirituality and erudition, liturgy and dogma, and generally all aspects of our faith which embrace the totality of our life. To allow the fathers to speak to us again, in our contemporary situation, in the way that you have proposed in your project, provides a corrective to the fragmentation of the faith which results from the particularization and overspecialization that exists today in the study of the Holy Bible and of sacred theology.”

FR. GEORGE DRAGAS
Holy Cross Seminary

“This new but old Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture takes us out of the small, closed-minded world in which much modern biblical scholarship is done into an earlier time marked by a Christian seriousness, by robust inquiry and by believing faith. This Commentary is a fresh breeze blowing in our empty, postmodern world.”

DAVID F. WELLS
Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical and
Systematic Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“Composed in the style of the great medieval *catenae*, this new anthology of patristic commentary on Holy Scripture, conveniently arranged by chapter and verse, will be a valuable resource for prayer, study and proclamation. By calling attention to the rich Christian heritage preceding the separations between East and West and between Protestant and Catholic, this series will perform a major service to the cause of ecumenism.”

AVERY CARDINAL DULLES, S.J.
Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society
Fordham University

“The initial cry of the Reformation was *ad fontes*—back to the sources! The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture is a marvelous tool for the recovery of biblical wisdom in today’s church. Not just another scholarly project, the ACCS is a major resource for the renewal of preaching, theology and Christian devotion.”

TIMOTHY GEORGE
Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

“Modern church members often do not realize that they are participants in the vast company of the communion of saints that reaches far back into the past and that will continue into the future, until the kingdom comes. This Commentary should help them begin to see themselves as participants in that redeemed community.”

ELIZABETH ACHEMEIER
Union Professor Emerita of Bible and Homiletics
Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

“Contemporary pastors do not stand alone. We are not the first generation of preachers to wrestle with the challenges of communicating the gospel. The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture puts us in conversation with our colleagues from the past, that great cloud of witnesses who preceded us in this vocation. This Commentary enables us to receive their deep spiritual insights, their encouragement and guidance for present-day interpretation and preaching of the Word. What a wonderful addition to any pastor’s library!”

WILLIAM H. WILLIMON
Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Christian Ministry
Duke University

“Here is a nonpareil series which reclaims the Bible as the book of the church by making accessible to earnest readers of the twenty-first century the classrooms of Clement of Alexandria and Didymus the Blind, the study and lecture hall of Origen, the cathedrae of Chrysostom and Augustine, the scriptorium of Jerome in his Bethlehem monastery.”

GEORGE LAWLESS
Augustinian Patristic Institute and Gregorian University, Rome

“We are pleased to witness publication of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. It is most beneficial for us to learn how the ancient Christians, especially the saints of the church who proved through their lives their devotion to God and his Word, interpreted Scripture. Let us heed the witness of those who have gone before us in the faith.”

METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS
Primate, Orthodox Church in America

“Across Christendom there has emerged a widespread interest in early Christianity, both at the popular and scholarly level. . . . Christians of all traditions stand to benefit from this project, especially clergy and those who study the Bible. Moreover, it will allow us to see how our traditions are both rooted in the scriptural interpretations of the church fathers while at the same time seeing how we have developed new perspectives.”

ALBERTO FERREIRO
Professor of History, Seattle Pacific University

“The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture fills a long overdue need for scholars and students of the church fathers. . . . Such information will be of immeasurable worth to those of us who have felt inundated by contemporary interpreters and novel theories of the biblical text. We welcome some ‘new’ insight from the ancient authors in the early centuries of the church.”

H. WAYNE HOUSE
Professor of Theology and Law
Trinity University School of Law

Chronological snobbery—the assumption that our ancestors working without benefit of computers have nothing to teach us—is exposed as nonsense by this magnificent new series. Surfeited with knowledge but starved of wisdom, many of us are more than ready to sit at table with our ancestors and listen to their holy conversations on Scripture. I know I am.

EUGENE H. PETERSON
Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology
Regent College

“Few publishing projects have encouraged me as much as the recently announced Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture with Dr. Thomas Oden serving as general editor. . . .

How is it that so many of us who are dedicated to serve the Lord received seminary educations which omitted familiarity with such incredible students of the Scriptures as St. John Chrysostom, St. Athanasius the Great and St. John of Damascus? I am greatly anticipating the publication of this Commentary.”

FR. PETER E. GILLQUIST

*Director, Department of Missions and Evangelism
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*

“The Scriptures have been read with love and attention for nearly two thousand years, and listening to the voice of believers from previous centuries opens us to unexpected insight and deepened faith. Those who studied Scripture in the centuries closest to its writing, the centuries during and following persecution and martyrdom, speak with particular authority. The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture will bring to life the truth that we are invisibly surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”

FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN

Commentator, National Public Radio

“For those who think that church history began around 1941 when their pastor was born, this Commentary will be a great surprise. Christians throughout the centuries have read the biblical text, nursed their spirits with it and then applied it to their lives. These commentaries reflect that the witness of the Holy Spirit was present in his church throughout the centuries. As a result, we can profit by allowing the ancient Christians to speak to us today.”

HADDON ROBINSON

*Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary*

“All who are interested in the interpretation of the Bible will welcome the forthcoming multivolume series Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Here the insights of scores of early church fathers will be assembled and made readily available for significant passages throughout the Bible and the Apocrypha. It is hard to think of a more worthy ecumenical project to be undertaken by the publisher.”

BRUCE M. METZGER

*Professor of New Testament, Emeritus
Princeton Theological Seminary*

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ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY
PROJECT RESEARCH TEAM

GENERAL EDITOR

Thomas C. Oden

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Christopher A. Hall

OPERATIONS MANAGER AND
TRANSLATIONS PROJECT COORDINATOR

Joel Elowsky

RESEARCH AND ACQUISITIONS DIRECTOR

Michael Glerup

EDITORIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

Jill Burnett Comings

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE VERSION DIRECTOR

Konstantin Gavrilkin

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Jennifer Barry-Lenger

Kathleen Gallagher Elkins

Stephen Finlan

Melissa M. Hartley

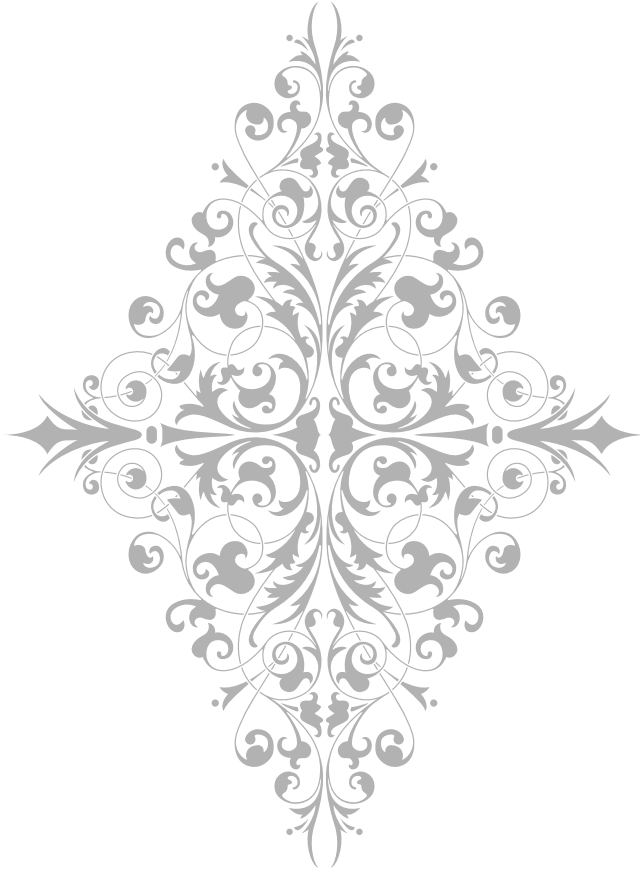
Jennifer T. Kaalund

Shanell T. Smith

Jeffery Wittung

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Judy Cincotta



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE REGARDING
THIS DIGITAL EDITION

Due to limitations regarding digital rights, the RSV Scripture text is linked to but does not appear in this digital edition of this Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture volume as it does in the print edition. Page numbering has been maintained, however, to match the print edition. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (hereafter ACCS) is a twenty-eight volume patristic commentary on Scripture. The patristic period, the time of the fathers of the church, spans the era from Clement of Rome (fl. c. 95) to John of Damascus (c. 645-c. 749). The commentary thus covers seven centuries of biblical interpretation, from the end of the New Testament to the mid-eighth century, including the Venerable Bede.

Since the method of inquiry for the ACCS has been developed in close coordination with computer technology, it serves as a potential model of an evolving, promising, technologically pragmatic, theologically integrated method for doing research in the history of exegesis. The purpose of this general introduction to the series is to present this approach and account for its methodological premises.

This is a long-delayed assignment in biblical and historical scholarship: reintroducing in a convenient form key texts of early Christian commentary on the whole of Scripture. To that end, historians, translators, digital technicians, and biblical and patristic scholars have collaborated in the task of presenting for the first time in many centuries these texts from the early history of Christian exegesis. Here the interpretive glosses, penetrating reflections, debates, contemplations and deliberations of early Christians are ordered verse by verse from Genesis to Revelation. Also included are patristic comments on the deuterocanonical writings (sometimes called the Apocrypha) that were considered Scripture by the Fathers. This is a full-scale classic commentary on Scripture consisting of selections in modern translation from the ancient Christian writers.

The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture has three goals: the renewal of Christian *preaching* based on classical Christian exegesis, the intensified study of Scripture by *lay* persons who wish to think with the early church about the canonical text, and the stimulation of Christian historical, biblical, theological and pastoral *scholarship* toward further inquiry into the scriptural interpretations of the ancient Christian writers.

On each page the Scripture text is accompanied by the most noteworthy remarks of key consensual exegetes of the early Christian centuries. This formal arrangement follows approximately the traditional pattern of the published texts of the Talmud after the invention of printing and of the *glossa ordinaria* that preceded printing.¹

¹Students of the Talmud will easily recognize this pattern of organization. The Talmud is a collection of rabbinic arguments, discussions and comments on the Mishnah, the first Jewish code of laws after the Bible, and the Gemara, an elaboration of the Mishnah. The study of Talmud is its own end and reward. In the Talmud every subject pertaining to Torah is worthy of consideration and analysis. As the Talmud is a vast repository of Jewish wisdom emerging out of revealed Scripture, so are the Fathers the repository of Christian wisdom

Retrieval of Neglected Christian Texts

There is an emerging felt need among diverse Christian communities that these texts be accurately recovered and studied. Recent biblical scholarship has so focused attention on post-Enlightenment historical and literary methods that it has left this longing largely unattended and unserved.

After years of quiet gestation and reflection on the bare idea of a patristic commentary, a feasibility consultation was drawn together at the invitation of Drew University in November 1993 in Washington, D.C. This series emerged from that consultation and its ensuing discussions. Extensive further consultations were undertaken during 1994 and thereafter in Rome, Tübingen, Oxford, Cambridge, Athens, Alexandria and Istanbul, seeking the advice of the most competent international scholars in the history of exegesis. Among distinguished scholars who contributed to the early layers of the consultative process were leading writers on early church history, hermeneutics, homiletics, history of exegesis, systematic theology and pastoral theology. Among leading international authorities consulted early on in the project design were Sir Henry Chadwick of Oxford; Bishops Kallistos Ware of Oxford, Rowan Williams of Monmouth and Stephen Sykes of Ely (all former patristics professors at Oxford or Cambridge); Professors Angelo Di Berardino and Basil Studer of the Patristic Institute of Rome; and Professors Karlfried Froehlich and Bruce M. Metzger of Princeton. They were exceptionally helpful in shaping our list of volume editors. We are especially indebted to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew and Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Vatican, for their blessing, steady support, and wise counsel in developing and advancing the Drew University Patristic Commentary Project.

The outcome of these feasibility consultations was general agreement that the project was profoundly needed, accompanied by an unusual eagerness to set out upon the project, validated by a willingness on the part of many to commit valuable time to accomplish it. At the pace of three or four volumes per year, the commentary is targeted for completion within the first decade of the millennium.

This series stands unapologetically as a practical homiletic and devotional guide to the earliest layers of classic Christian readings of biblical texts. It intends to be a brief compendium of reflections on particular Septuagint, Old Latin and New Testament texts by their earliest Christian interpreters. Hence it is not a commentary by modern standards, but it is a commentary by the standards of those who anteceded and formed the basis of the modern commentary.

emerging out of revealed Scripture. The Talmud originated largely from the same period as the patristic writers, often using analogous methods of interpretation. In the Talmud the texts of the Mishnah are accompanied by direct quotations from key consensual commentators of the late Judaic tradition. The format of the earliest published versions of the Talmud itself followed the early manuscript model of the medieval *glossa ordinaria* in which patristic comments were organized around Scripture texts. Hence the ACCS gratefully acknowledges its affinity and indebtedness to the early traditions of the *catena* and *glossa ordinaria* and of the tradition of rabbinic exegesis that accompanied early Christian Scripture studies.

Many useful contemporary scholarly efforts are underway and are contributing significantly to the recovery of classic Christian texts. Notable in English among these are the Fathers of the Church series (Catholic University of America Press), Ancient Christian Writers (Paulist), Cistercian Studies (Cistercian Publications), The Church's Bible (Eerdmans), Message of the Fathers of the Church (Michael Glazier, Liturgical Press) and Texts and Studies (Cambridge). In other languages similar efforts are conspicuously found in Sources Chrétiennes, Corpus Christianorum (Series Graeca and Latina), Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Patrologia Orientalis, Patrologia Syriaca, Bibliotheca patristica, Les Pères dans la foi, Colana di Testi Patristici, Letture cristiane delle origini, Letture cristiane del primo millennio, Cultura cristiana antica, Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae and the Cetedoc series, which offers in digital form the volumes of Corpus Christianorum. The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture builds on the splendid work of all these studies, but focuses primarily and modestly on the recovery of patristic biblical wisdom for contemporary preaching and lay spiritual formation.

Digital Research Tools and Results

The volume editors have been supported by a digital research team at Drew University which has identified these classic comments by performing global searches of the Greek and Latin patristic corpus. They have searched for these texts in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) digitalized Greek database, the Cetedoc edition of the Latin texts of Corpus Christianorum from the Centre de traitement électronique des documents (Université catholique de Louvain), the Chadwyck-Healey Patrologia Latina Database (Migne) and the Packard Humanities Institute Latin databases. We have also utilized the CD-ROM searchable version of the Early Church Fathers, of which the Drew University project was an early cosponsor along with the Electronic Bible Society.

This has resulted in a plethora of raw Greek and Latin textual materials from which the volume editors have made discriminating choices.² In this way the project office has already supplied to each volume editor³ a substantial read-out of Greek and Latin glosses, explanations, observations and comments on each verse or pericope of Scripture text.⁴ Only a small percentage of this raw material has in fact made the grade of our selection criteria. But such is the poignant work of

²Having searched Latin and Greek databases, we then solicited from our Coptic, Syriac and Armenian editorial experts selections from these bodies of literature, seeking a fitting balance from all available exegetical traditions of ancient Christianity within our time frame. To all these we added the material we could find already in English translation.

³Excepting those editors who preferred to do their own searching.

⁴TLG and Cetedoc are referenced more often than Migne or other printed Greek or Latin sources for these reasons: (1) the texts are more quickly and easily accessed digitally in a single location; (2) the texts are more reliable and in a better critical edition; (3) we believe that in the future these digital texts will be far more widely accessed both by novices and specialists; (4) short selections can be easily downloaded; and (5) the context of each text can be investigated by the interested reader.

the catenist, or of any compiler of a compendium for general use. The intent of the exercise is to achieve brevity and economy of expression by exclusion of extraneous material, not to go into critical explanatory detail.

Through the use of Boolean key word and phrase searches in these databases, the research team identified the Greek and Latin texts from early Christian writers that refer to specific biblical passages. Where textual variants occur among the Old Latin texts or disputed Greek texts, they executed key word searches with appropriate or expected variables, including allusions and analogies. At this time of writing, the Drew University ACCS research staff has already completed most of these intricate and prodigious computer searches, which would have been unthinkable before computer technology.

The employment of these digital resources has yielded unexpected advantages: a huge residual database, a means of identifying comments on texts not previously considered for catena usage, an efficient and cost-effective deployment of human resources, and an abundance of potential material for future studies in the history of exegesis. Most of this was accomplished by a highly talented group of graduate students under the direction of Joel Scandrett, Michael Glerup and Joel Elowsky. Prior to the technology of digital search and storage techniques, this series could hardly have been produced, short of a vast army of researchers working by laborious hand and paper searches in scattered libraries around the world.

Future readers of Scripture will increasingly be working with emerging forms of computer technology and interactive hypertext formats that will enable readers to search out quickly in more detail ideas, texts, themes and terms found in the ancient Christian writers. The ACCS provides an embryonic paradigm for how that can be done. Drew University offers the ACCS to serve both as a potential research model and as an outcome of research. We hope that this printed series in traditional book form will in time be supplemented with a larger searchable, digitized version in some stored-memory hypertext format. We continue to work with an astute consortium of computer and research organizations to serve the future needs of both historical scholarship and theological study.

The Surfeit of Materials Brought to Light

We now know that there is virtually no portion of Scripture about which the ancient Christian writers had little or nothing useful or meaningful to say. Many of them studied the Bible thoroughly with deep contemplative discernment, comparing text with text, often memorizing large portions of it. All chapters of all sixty-six books of the traditional Protestant canonical corpus have received deliberate or occasional patristic exegetical or homiletic treatment. This series also includes patristic commentary on texts not found in the Jewish canon (often designated the Apocrypha or deuterocanonical writings) but that were included in ancient Greek Bibles (the Septuagint). These texts, although not precisely the same texts in each tradition, remain part of the recognized canons of the

Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

While some books of the Bible are rich in verse-by-verse patristic commentaries (notably Genesis, Psalms, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Matthew, John and Romans), there are many others that are lacking in intensive commentaries from this early period. Hence we have not limited our searches to these formal commentaries, but sought allusions, analogies, cross-connections and references to biblical texts in all sorts of patristic literary sources. There are many perceptive insights that have come to us from homilies, letters, poetry, hymns, essays and treatises, that need not be arbitrarily excluded from a catena. We have searched for succinct, discerning and moving passages both from line-by-line commentaries (from authors such as Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyr, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and Bede) and from other literary genres. Out of a surfeit of resulting raw materials, the volume editors have been invited to select the best, wisest and most representative reflections of ancient Christian writers on a given biblical passage.

For Whom Is This Compendium Designed?

We have chosen and ordered these selections primarily for a general lay reading audience of nonprofessionals who study the Bible regularly and who earnestly wish to have classic Christian observations on the text readily available to them. In vastly differing cultural settings, contemporary lay readers are asking how they might grasp the meaning of sacred texts under the instruction of the great minds of the ancient church.

Yet in so focusing our attention, we are determined not to neglect the rigorous requirements and needs of academic readers who up to now have had starkly limited resources and compendia in the history of exegesis. The series, which is being translated into the languages of half the world's population, is designed to serve public libraries, universities, crosscultural studies and historical interests worldwide. It unapologetically claims and asserts its due and rightful place as a staple source book for the history of Western literature.

Our varied audiences (lay, pastoral and academic) are much broader than the highly technical and specialized scholarly field of patristic studies. They are not limited to university scholars concentrating on the study of the history of the transmission of the text or to those with highly focused interests in textual morphology or historical-critical issues and speculations. Though these remain crucial concerns for specialists, they are not the paramount interest of the editors of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Our work is largely targeted straightaway for a pastoral audience and more generally to a larger audience of laity who want to reflect and meditate with the early church about the plain sense, theological wisdom, and moral and spiritual meaning of particular Scripture texts.

There are various legitimate competing visions of how such a patristic commentary should be developed, each of which were carefully pondered in our feasibility study and its follow-up. With

high respect to alternative conceptions, there are compelling reasons why the Drew University project has been conceived as a practically usable commentary addressed first of all to informed lay readers and more broadly to pastors of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Only in an ancillary way do we have in mind as our particular audience the guild of patristic academics, although we welcome their critical assessment of our methods. If we succeed in serving lay and pastoral readers practically and well, we expect these texts will also be advantageously used by college and seminary courses in Bible, hermeneutics, church history, historical theology and homiletics, since they are not easily accessible otherwise.

The series seeks to offer to Christian laity what the Talmud and Midrashim have long offered to Jewish readers. These foundational sources are finding their way into many public school libraries and into the obligatory book collections of many churches, pastors, teachers and lay persons. It is our intent and the publishers' commitment to keep the whole series in print for many years to come and to make it available on an economically viable subscription basis.

There is an emerging awareness among Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox laity that vital biblical preaching and teaching stand in urgent need of some deeper grounding beyond the scope of the historical-critical orientations that have dominated and at times eclipsed biblical studies in our time.

Renewing religious communities of prayer and service (crisis ministries, urban and campus ministries, counseling ministries, retreat ministries, monasteries, grief ministries, ministries of compassion, etc.) are being drawn steadily and emphatically toward these biblical and patristic sources for meditation and spiritual formation. These communities are asking for primary source texts of spiritual formation presented in accessible form, well-grounded in reliable scholarship and dedicated to practical use.

The Premature Discrediting of the Catena Tradition

We gratefully acknowledge our affinity and indebtedness to the spirit and literary form of the early traditions of the catena and *glossa ordinaria* that sought authoritatively to collect salient classic interpretations of ancient exegetes on each biblical text. Our editorial work has benefited by utilizing and adapting those traditions for today's readers.

It is regrettable that this distinctive classic approach has been not only shelved but peculiarly misplaced for several centuries. It has been a long time since any attempt has been made to produce this sort of commentary. Under fire from modern critics, the catena approach dwindled to almost nothing by the nineteenth century and has not until now been revitalized in this postcritical situation. Ironically, it is within our own so-called progressive and broad-minded century that these texts have been more systematically hidden away and ignored than in any previous century of Christian scholarship. With all our historical and publishing competencies, these texts have been regrettably denied to hearers of Christian preaching in our time, thus revealing the dogmatic biases of moder-

nity (modern chauvinism, naturalism and autonomous individualism).

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century exegesis has frequently displayed a philosophical bias toward naturalistic reductionism. Most of the participants in the ACCS project have lived through dozens of iterations of these cycles of literary and historical criticism, seeking earnestly to expound and interpret the text out of ever-narrowing empiricist premises. For decades Scripture teachers and pastors have sailed the troubled waters of assorted layers and trends within academic criticism. Preachers have attempted to digest and utilize these approaches, yet have often found the outcomes disappointing. There is an increasing awareness of the speculative excesses and the spiritual and homiletic limitations of much post-Enlightenment criticism.

Meanwhile the motifs, methods and approaches of ancient exegetes have remained shockingly unfamiliar not only to ordained clergy but to otherwise highly literate biblical scholars, trained exhaustively in the methods of scientific criticism. Amid the vast exegetical labors of the last two centuries, the ancient Christian exegetes have seldom been revisited, and then only marginally and often tendentiously. We have clear and indisputable evidence of the prevailing modern contempt for classic exegesis, namely that the extensive and once authoritative classic commentaries on Scripture still remain untranslated into modern languages. Even in China this has not happened to classic Buddhist and Confucian commentaries.

This systematic modern scholarly neglect is seen not only among Protestants, but also is widespread among Catholics and even Orthodox, where ironically the Fathers are sometimes piously venerated while not being energetically read.

So two powerful complementary contemporary forces are at work to draw our lay audience once again toward these texts and to free them from previous limited premises: First, this series is a response to the deep hunger for classical Christian exegesis and for the history of exegesis, partly because it has been so long neglected. Second, there is a growing demoralization in relation to actual useful exegetical outcomes of post-Enlightenment historicist and naturalistic-reductionist criticism. Both of these animating energies are found among lay readers of Roman, Eastern and Protestant traditions.

Through the use of the chronological lists and biographical sketches at the back of each volume, readers can locate in time and place the voices displayed in the exegesis of a particular pericope. The chains (*catenae*) of interpretation of a particular biblical passage thus provide glimpses into the history of the interpretation of a given text. This pattern has venerable antecedents in patristic and medieval exegesis of both Eastern and Western traditions, as well as important expressions in the Reformation tradition.

The Ecumenical Range and Intent

Recognition of need for the Fathers' wisdom ranges over many diverse forms of Christianity. This

has necessitated the cooperation of scholars of widely diverse Christian communities to accomplish the task fairly and in a balanced way. It has been a major ecumenical undertaking.

Under this classic textual umbrella, this series brings together in common spirit Christians who have long distanced themselves from each other through separate and often competing church memories. Under this welcoming umbrella are gathering conservative Protestants with Eastern Orthodox, Baptists with Roman Catholics, Reformed with Arminians and charismatics, Anglicans with Pentecostals, high with low church adherents, and premodern traditionalists with postmodern classicists.

How is it that such varied Christians are able to find inspiration and common faith in these texts? Why are these texts and studies so intrinsically ecumenical, so catholic in their cultural range? Because all of these traditions have an equal right to appeal to the early history of Christian exegesis. All of these traditions can, without a sacrifice of intellect, come together to study texts common to them all. These classic texts have decisively shaped the entire subsequent history of exegesis. Protestants have a right to the Fathers. Athanasius is not owned by Copts, nor is Augustine owned by North Africans. These minds are the common possession of the whole church. The Orthodox do not have exclusive rights over Basil, nor do the Romans over Gregory the Great. Christians everywhere have equal claim to these riches and are discovering them and glimpsing their unity in the body of Christ.

From many varied Christian traditions this project has enlisted as volume editors a team of leading international scholars in ancient Christian writings and the history of exegesis. Among Eastern Orthodox contributors are Professors Andrew Louth of Durham University in England and George Dragas of Holy Cross (Greek Orthodox) School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. Among Roman Catholic scholars are Benedictine scholar Mark Sheridan of the San Anselmo University of Rome, Jesuit Joseph Lienhard of Fordham University in New York, Cistercian Father Francis Martin of the Catholic University of America, Alberto Ferreiro of Seattle Pacific University, and Sever Voicu of the Eastern European (Romanian) Uniate Catholic tradition, who teaches at the Augustinian Patristic Institute of Rome. The New Testament series is inaugurated with the volume on Matthew offered by the renowned Catholic authority in the history of exegesis, Manlio Simonetti of the University of Rome. Among Anglican communion contributors are Mark Edwards (Oxford), Bishop Kenneth Stevenson (Fareham, Hampshire, in England), J. Robert Wright (New York), Anders Bergquist (St. Albans), Peter Gorday (Atlanta) and Gerald Bray (Cambridge, England, and Birmingham, Alabama). Among Lutheran contributors are Quentin Wesselschmidt (St. Louis), Philip Krey and Eric Heen (Philadelphia), and Arthur Just, William Weinrich and Dean O. Wenthe (all of Ft. Wayne, Indiana). Among distinguished Protestant Reformed, Baptist and other evangelical scholars are John Sailhamer and Steven McKinion (Wake Forest, North Carolina), Craig Blaising and Carmen Hardin (Louisville, Kentucky), Christopher Hall (St. Davids, Pennsylvania),

J. Ligon Duncan III (Jackson, Mississippi), Thomas McCullough (Danville, Kentucky), John R. Franke (Hatfield, Pennsylvania) and Mark Elliott (Hope University Liverpool).

The international team of editors was selected in part to reflect this ecumenical range. They were chosen on the premise not only that they were competent to select fairly those passages that best convey the consensual tradition of early Christian exegesis, but also that they would not omit significant voices within it. They have searched insofar as possible for those comments that self-evidently would be most widely received generally by the whole church of all generations, East and West.

This is not to suggest or imply that all patristic writers agree. One will immediately see upon reading these selections that within the boundaries of orthodoxy, that is, excluding outright denials of ecumenically received teaching, there are many views possible about a given text or idea and that these different views may be strongly affected by wide varieties of social environments and contexts.

The Drew University project has been meticulous about commissioning volume editors. We have sought out world-class scholars, preeminent in international biblical and patristic scholarship, and wise in the history of exegesis. We have not been disappointed. We have enlisted a diverse team of editors, fitting for a global audience that bridges the major communions of Christianity.

The project editors have striven for a high level of consistency and literary quality over the course of this series. As with most projects of this sort, the editorial vision and procedures are progressively being refined and sharpened and fed back into the editorial process.

Honoring Theological Reasoning

Since it stands in the service of the worshipping community, the ACCS unabashedly embraces crucial ecumenical premises as the foundation for its method of editorial selections: revelation in history, trinitarian coherence, divine providence in history, the Christian *kerygma*, *regula fidei et caritatis* (“the rule of faith and love”), the converting work of the Holy Spirit. These are common assumptions of the living communities of worship that are served by the commentary.

It is common in this transgenerational community of faith to assume that the early consensual ecumenical teachers were led by the Spirit in their interpretive efforts and in their transmitting of Christian truth amid the hazards of history. These texts assume some level of unity and continuity of ecumenical consensus in the mind of the believing church, a consensus more clearly grasped in the patristic period than later. We would be less than true to the sacred text if we allowed modern assumptions to overrun these premises.

An extended project such as this requires a well-defined objective that serves constantly as the organizing principle and determines which approaches take priority in what sort of balance. This objective informs the way in which tensions inherent in its complexity are managed. This objective has already been summarized in the three goals mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. To alter any one of these goals would significantly alter the character of the whole task. We view our

work not only as an academic exercise with legitimate peer review in the academic community, but also as a vocation, a task primarily undertaken *coram Deo* (“before God”) and not only *coram hominibus* (“before humanity”). We have been astonished that we have been led far beyond our original intention into a Chinese translation and other translations into major world languages.

This effort is grounded in a deep respect for a distinctively theological reading of Scripture that cannot be reduced to historical, philosophical, scientific or sociological insights or methods. It takes seriously the venerable tradition of ecumenical reflection concerning the premises of revelation, apostolicity, canon and consensuality. A high priority is granted here, contrary to modern assumptions, to theological, christological and triune reasoning as the distinguishing premises of classic Christian thought. This approach does not pit theology against critical theory; instead, it incorporates critical methods and brings them into coordinate accountability within its overarching homiletic-theological-pastoral purposes. Such an endeavor does not cater to any cadre of modern ideological advocacy.

Why Evangelicals Are Increasingly Drawn Toward Patristic Exegesis

Surprising to some, the most extensive new emergent audience for patristic exegesis is found among the expanding worldwide audience of evangelical readers who are now burgeoning from a history of revivalism that has often been thought to be historically unaware. This is a tradition that has often been caricatured as critically backward and hermeneutically challenged. Now Baptist and Pentecostal laity are rediscovering the history of the Holy Spirit. This itself is arguably a work of the Holy Spirit. As those in these traditions continue to mature, they recognize their need for biblical resources that go far beyond those that have been made available to them in both the pietistic and historical-critical traditions.

Both pietism and the Enlightenment were largely agreed in expressing disdain for patristic and classic forms of exegesis. Vital preaching and exegesis must now venture beyond the constrictions of historical-critical work of the century following Schweitzer and beyond the personal existential storytelling of pietism.

During the time I have served as senior editor and executive editor of *Christianity Today*, I have been privileged to surf in these volatile and exciting waves. It has been for me (as a theologian of a liberal mainline communion) like an ongoing seminar in learning to empathize with the tensions, necessities and hungers of the vast heterogeneous evangelical audience.

But why just now is this need for patristic wisdom felt particularly by evangelical leaders and laity? Why are worldwide evangelicals increasingly drawn toward ancient exegesis? What accounts for this rapid and basic reversal of mood among the inheritors of the traditions of Protestant revivalism? It is partly because the evangelical tradition has been long deprived of any vital contact with these patristic sources since the days of Luther, Calvin and Wesley, who knew them well.

This commentary is dedicated to allowing ancient Christian exegetes to speak for themselves. It will not become fixated unilaterally on contemporary criticism. It will provide new textual resources for the lay reader, teacher and pastor that have lain inaccessible during the last two centuries. Without avoiding historical-critical issues that have already received extensive exploration in our time, it will seek to make available to our present-day audience the multicultural, transgenerational, multi-lingual resources of the ancient ecumenical Christian tradition. It is an awakening, growing, hungry and robust audience.

Such an endeavor is especially poignant and timely now because increasing numbers of evangelical Protestants are newly discovering rich dimensions of dialogue and widening areas of consensus with Orthodox and Catholics on divisive issues long thought irreparable. The study of the Fathers on Scripture promises to further significant interactions between Protestants and Catholics on issues that have plagued them for centuries: justification, authority, Christology, sanctification and eschatology. Why? Because they can find in pre-Reformation texts a common faith to which Christians can appeal. And this is an arena in which Protestants distinctively feel at home: biblical authority and interpretation. A profound yearning broods within the heart of evangelicals for the recovery of the history of exegesis as a basis for the renewal of preaching. This series offers resources for that renewal.

Steps Toward Selections

In moving from raw data to making selections, the volume editors have been encouraged to move judiciously through three steps:

Step 1: *Reviewing extant Greek and Latin commentaries.* The volume editors have been responsible for examining the line-by-line commentaries and homilies on the texts their volume covers. Much of this material remains untranslated into English and some of it into any modern language.

Step 2: *Reviewing digital searches.* The volume editors have been responsible for examining the results of digital searches into the Greek and Latin databases. To get the gist of the context of the passage, ordinarily about ten lines above the raw digital reference and ten lines after the reference have been downloaded for printed output. *Biblia Patristica* has been consulted as needed, especially in cases where the results of the digital searches have been thin. Then the volume editors have determined from these potential digital hits and from published texts those that should be regarded as more serious possibilities for inclusion.

Step 3. *Making selections.* Having assembled verse-by-verse comments from the Greek and Latin digital databases, from extant commentaries, and from already translated English sources, either on disk or in paper printouts, the volume editors have then selected the best comments and reflections of ancient Christian writers on a given biblical text, following agreed upon criteria. The intent is to set apart those few sentences or paragraphs of patristic comment that best reflect the mind of the believing church on that pericope.

The Method of Making Selections

It is useful to provide an explicit account of precisely how we made these selections. We invite others to attempt similar procedures and compare outcomes on particular passages.⁵ We welcome the counsel of others who might review our choices and suggest how they might have been better made. We have sought to avoid unconsciously biasing our selections, and we have solicited counsel to help us achieve this end.

In order that the whole project might remain cohesive, the protocols for making commentary selections have been jointly agreed upon and stated clearly in advance by the editors, publishers, translators and research teams of the ACCS. What follows is our checklist in assembling these extracts.

The following principles of selection have been mutually agreed upon to guide the editors in making spare, wise, meaningful catena selections from the vast patristic corpus:

1. From our huge database with its profuse array of possible comments, we have preferred those passages that have enduring relevance, penetrating significance, crosscultural applicability and practical applicability.

2. The volume editors have sought to identify patristic selections that display trenchant rhetorical strength and self-evident persuasive power, so as not to require extensive secondary explanation. The editorial challenge has been to identify the most vivid comments and bring them to accurate translation.

We hope that in most cases selections will be pungent, memorable, quotable, aphoristic and short (often a few sentences or a single paragraph) rather than extensive technical homilies or detailed expositions, and that many will have some narrative interest and illuminative power. This criterion follows in the train of much Talmudic, Midrashic and rabbinic exegesis. In some cases, however, detailed comments and longer sections of homilies have been considered worthy of inclusion.

3. We seek the most representative comments that best reflect the mind of the believing church (of all times and cultures). Selections focus more on the attempt to identify consensual strains of exegesis than sheer speculative brilliance or erratic innovation. The thought or interpretation can emerge out of individual creativity, but it must not be inconsistent with what the apostolic tradition teaches and what the church believes. What the consensual tradition trusts least is individualistic innovation that has not yet subtly learned what the worshipping community already knows.

Hence we are less interested in idiosyncratic interpretations of a given text than we are in those

⁵A number of Ph.D. dissertations are currently being written on the history of exegesis of a particular passage of Scripture. This may develop into an emerging academic methodology that promises to change both biblical and patristic studies in favor of careful textual and intertextual analysis, consensuality assessment and history of interpretation, rather than historicist and naturalistic reductionism.

texts that fairly represent the central flow of ecumenical consensual exegesis. Just what is central is left for the fair professional judgment of our ecumenically distinguished Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic volume editors to discern. We have included, for example, many selections from among the best comments of Origen and Tertullian, but not those authors' peculiar eccentricities that have been widely distrusted by the ancient ecumenical tradition.

4. We have especially sought out for inclusion those consensus-bearing authors who have been relatively disregarded, often due to their social location or language or nationality, insofar as their work is resonant with the mainstream of ancient consensual exegesis. This is why we have sought out special consultants in Syriac, Coptic and Armenian.

5. We have sought to cull out annoying, coarse, graceless, absurdly allegorical⁶ or racially offensive interpretations. But where our selections may have some of those edges, we have supplied footnotes to assist readers better to understand the context and intent of the text.

6. We have constantly sought an appropriate balance of Eastern, Western and African traditions. We have intentionally attempted to include Alexandrian, Antiochene, Roman, Syriac, Coptic and Armenian traditions of interpretation. Above all, we want to provide sound, stimulating, reliable exegesis and illuminating exposition of the text by the whole spectrum of classic Christian writers.

7. We have made a special effort where possible to include the voices of women⁷ such as Macrina,⁸ Eudoxia, Egeria, Faltonia Betitia Proba, the Sayings of the Desert Mothers and others who report the biblical interpretations of women of the ancient Christian tradition.

8. In order to anchor the commentary solidly in primary sources so as to allow the ancient Christian writers to address us on their own terms, the focus is on the texts of the ancient Christian writers themselves, not on modern commentators' views or opinions of the ancient writers. We have looked for those comments on Scripture that will assist the contemporary reader to encounter the deepest level of penetration of the text that has been reached by its best interpreters living amid highly divergent early Christian social settings.

Our purpose is not to engage in critical speculations on textual variants or stemma of the text, or

⁶Allegorical treatments of texts are not to be ruled out, but fairly and judiciously assessed as to their explanatory value and typicality. There is a prevailing stereotype that ancient Christian exegesis is so saturated with allegory as to make it almost useless. After making our selections on a merit basis according to our criteria, we were surprised at the limited extent of protracted allegorical passages selected. After making a count of allegorical passages, we discovered that less than one twentieth of these selections have a decisive allegorical concentration. So while allegory is admittedly an acceptable model of exegesis for the ancient Christian writers, especially those of the Alexandrian school and especially with regard to Old Testament texts, it has not turned out to be as dominant a model as we had thought it might be.

⁷Through the letters, histories, theological and biographical writings of Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Palladius, Augustine, Ephrem, Gerontius, Paulinus of Nola and many anonymous writers (of the Lives of Mary of Egypt, Thais, Pelagia).

⁸Whose voice is heard through her younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa.

extensive deliberations on its cultural context or social location, however useful those exercises may be, but to present the most discerning comments of the ancient Christian writers with a minimum of distraction. This project would be entirely misconceived if thought of as a modern commentary on patristic commentaries.

9. We have intentionally sought out and gathered comments that will aid effective preaching, comments that give us a firmer grasp of the plain sense of the text, its authorial intent, and its spiritual meaning for the worshiping community. We want to help Bible readers and teachers gain ready access to the deepest reflection of the ancient Christian community of faith on any particular text of Scripture.

It would have inordinately increased the word count and cost if our intention had been to amass exhaustively all that had ever been said about a Scripture text by every ancient Christian writer. Rather we have deliberately selected out of this immense data stream the strongest patristic interpretive reflections on the text and sought to deliver them in accurate English translation.

To refine and develop these guidelines, we have sought to select as volume editors either patristics scholars who understand the nature of preaching and the history of exegesis, or biblical scholars who are at ease working with classical Greek and Latin sources. We have preferred editors who are sympathetic to the needs of lay persons and pastors alike, who are generally familiar with the patristic corpus in its full range, and who intuitively understand the dilemma of preaching today. The international and ecclesiastically diverse character of this team of editors corresponds with the global range of our task and audience, which bridge all major communions of Christianity.

Is the ACCS a Commentary?

We have chosen to call our work a commentary, and with good reason. A commentary, in its plain sense definition, is “a series of illustrative or explanatory notes on any important work, as on the Scriptures.”⁹ *Commentary* is an Anglicized form of the Latin *commentarius* (an “annotation” or “memoranda” on a subject or text or series of events). In its theological meaning it is a work that explains, analyzes or expounds a portion of Scripture. In antiquity it was a book of notes explaining some earlier work such as Julius Hyginus’s commentaries on Virgil in the first century. Jerome mentions many commentators on secular texts before his time.

The commentary is typically preceded by a proem in which the questions are asked: who wrote it? why? when? to whom? etc. Comments may deal with grammatical or lexical problems in the text. An attempt is made to provide the gist of the author’s thought or motivation, and perhaps to deal with sociocultural influences at work in the text or philological nuances. A commentary usually

⁹Funk & Wagnalls *New “Standard” Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1947).

takes a section of a classical text and seeks to make its meaning clear to readers today, or proximately clearer, in line with the intent of the author.

The Western literary genre of commentary is definitively shaped by the history of early Christian commentaries on Scripture, from Origen and Hilary through John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria to Thomas Aquinas and Nicolas of Lyra. It leaves too much unsaid simply to assume that the Christian biblical commentary took a previously extant literary genre and reshaped it for Christian texts. Rather it is more accurate to say that the Western literary genre of the commentary (and especially the biblical commentary) has patristic commentaries as its decisive pattern and prototype, and those commentaries have strongly influenced the whole Western conception of the genre of commentary. Only in the last two centuries, since the development of modern historicist methods of criticism, have some scholars sought to delimit the definition of a commentary more strictly so as to include only historicist interests—philological and grammatical insights, inquiries into author, date and setting, or into sociopolitical or economic circumstances, or literary analyses of genre, structure and function of the text, or questions of textual criticism and reliability. The ACCS editors do not feel apologetic about calling this work a commentary in its classic sense.

Many astute readers of modern commentaries are acutely aware of one of their most persistent habits of mind: control of the text by the interpreter, whereby the ancient text comes under the power (values, assumptions, predispositions, ideological biases) of the modern interpreter. This habit is based upon a larger pattern of modern chauvinism that views later critical sources as more worthy than earlier. This prejudice tends to view the biblical text primarily or sometimes exclusively through historical-critical lenses accommodative to modernity.

Although we respect these views and our volume editors are thoroughly familiar with contemporary biblical criticism, the ACCS editors freely take the assumption that the Christian canon is to be respected as the church's sacred text. The text's assumptions about itself cannot be made less important than modern assumptions about it. The reading and preaching of Scripture are vital to the church's life. The central hope of the ACCS endeavor is that it might contribute in some small way to the revitalization of that life through a renewed discovery of the earliest readings of the church's Scriptures.

A Gentle Caveat for Those Who Expect Ancient Writers to Conform to Modern Assumptions

If one begins by assuming as normative for a commentary the typical modern expression of what a commentary is and the preemptive truthfulness of modern critical methods, the classic Christian exegetes are by definition always going to appear as dated, quaint, premodern, hence inadequate, and in some instances comic or even mean-spirited, prejudiced, unjust and oppressive. So in the interest of hermeneutic fairness, it is recommended that the modern reader not impose on ancient

Christian exegetes lately achieved modern assumptions about the valid reading of Scripture. The ancient Christian writers constantly challenge what were later to become these unspoken, hidden and often indeed camouflaged modern assumptions.

This series does not seek to resolve the debate between the merits of ancient and modern exegesis in each text examined. Rather it seeks merely to present the excerpted comments of the ancient interpreters with as few distractions as possible. We will leave it to others to discuss the merits of ancient versus modern methods of exegesis. But even this cannot be done adequately without extensively examining the texts of ancient exegesis. And until now biblical scholars have not had easy access to many of these texts. This is what this series is for.

The purpose of exegesis in the patristic period was humbly to seek the revealed truth the Scriptures convey. Often it was not even offered to those who were as yet unready to put it into practice. In these respects much modern exegesis is entirely different: It does not assume the truth of Scripture as revelation, nor does it submit personally to the categorical moral requirement of the revealed text: that it be taken seriously as divine address. Yet we are here dealing with patristic writers who assumed that readers would not even approach an elementary discernment of the meaning of the text if they were not ready to live in terms of its revelation, i.e., to practice it in order to hear it, as was recommended so often in the classic tradition.

The patristic models of exegesis often do not conform to modern commentary assumptions that tend to resist or rule out chains of scriptural reference. These are often demeaned as deplorable proof-texting. But among the ancient Christian writers such chains of biblical reference were very important in thinking about the text in relation to the whole testimony of sacred Scripture by the analogy of faith, comparing text with text, on the premise that *scripturam ex scriptura explicandam esse* ("Scripture is best explained from Scripture").

We beg readers not to force the assumptions of twentieth-century fundamentalism on the ancient Christian writers, who themselves knew nothing of what we now call fundamentalism. It is uncritical to conclude that they were simple fundamentalists in the modern sense. Patristic exegesis was not fundamentalist, because the Fathers were not reacting against modern naturalistic reductionism. They were constantly protesting a merely literal or plain-sense view of the text, always looking for its spiritual and moral and typological nuances. Modern fundamentalism oppositely is a defensive response branching out and away from modern historicism, which looks far more like modern historicism than ancient typological reasoning. Ironically, this makes both liberal and fundamentalist exegesis much more like each other than either are like the ancient Christian exegesis, because they both tend to appeal to rationalistic and historicist assumptions raised to the forefront by the Enlightenment.

Since the principle prevails in ancient Christian exegesis that each text is illumined by other texts and by the whole of the history of revelation, we find in patristic comments on a given text

many other subtexts interwoven in order to illumine that text. When ancient exegesis weaves many Scriptures together, it does not limit its focus to a single text as much modern exegesis prefers, but constantly relates it to other texts by analogy, intensively using typological reasoning as did the rabbinic tradition.

The attempt to read the New Testament while ruling out all theological and moral, to say nothing of ecclesiastical, sacramental and dogmatic assumptions that have prevailed generally in the community of faith that wrote it, seems to many who participate in that community today a very thin enterprise indeed. When we try to make sense of the New Testament while ruling out the plausibility of the incarnation and resurrection, the effort appears arrogant and distorted. One who tentatively reads one page of patristic exegesis, gasps and tosses it away because it does not conform adequately to the canons of modern exegesis and historicist commentary is surely no model of critical effort.

On Misogyny and Anti-Semitism

The questions of anti-Semitism and misogyny require circumspect comment. The patristic writers are perceived by some to be incurably anti-Semitic or misogynous or both. I would like to briefly attempt a cautious apologia for the ancient Christian writers, leaving details to others more deliberate efforts. I know how hazardous this is, especially when done briefly. But it has become such a stumbling block to some of our readers that it prevents them even from listening to the ancient ecumenical teachers. The issue deserves some reframing and careful argumentation.

Although these are challengeable assumptions and highly controverted, it is my view that modern racial anti-Semitism was not in the minds of the ancient Christian writers. Their arguments were not framed in regard to the hatred of a race, but rather the place of the elect people of God, the Jews, in the history of the divine-human covenant that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Patristic arguments may have had the unintended effect of being unfair to women according to modern standards, but their intention was to understand the role of women according to apostolic teaching.

This does not solve all of the tangled moral questions regarding the roles of Christians in the histories of anti-Semitism and misogyny, which require continuing fair-minded study and clarification. Whether John Chrysostom or Justin Martyr were anti-Semitic depends on whether the term *anti-Semitic* has a racial or religious-typological definition. In my view, the patristic texts that appear to modern readers to be anti-Semitic in most cases have a typological reference and are based on a specific approach to the interpretation of Scripture—the analogy of faith—which assesses each particular text in relation to the whole trend of the history of revelation and which views the difference between Jew and Gentile under christological assumptions and not merely as a matter of genetics or race.

Even in their harshest strictures against Judaizing threats to the gospel, they did not consider

Jews as racially or genetically inferior people, as modern anti-Semites are prone to do. Even in their comments on Paul's strictures against women teaching, they showed little or no animus against the female gender as such, but rather exalted women as "the glory of man."

Compare the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether and David C. Ford¹⁰ on these perplexing issues. Ruether steadily applies modern criteria of justice to judge the inadequacies of the ancient Christian writers. Ford seeks to understand the ancient Christian writers empathically from within their own historical assumptions, limitations, scriptural interpretations and deeper intentions. While both treatments are illuminating, Ford's treatment comes closer to a fair-minded assessment of patristic intent.

A Note on Pelagius

The selection criteria do not rule out passages from Pelagius's commentaries at those points at which they provide good exegesis. This requires special explanation, if we are to hold fast to our criterion of consensuality.

The literary corpus of Pelagius remains highly controverted. Though Pelagius was by general consent the arch-heretic of the early fifth century, Pelagius's edited commentaries, as we now have them highly worked over by later orthodox writers, were widely read and preserved for future generations under other names. So Pelagius presents us with a textual dilemma.

Until 1934 all we had was a corrupted text of his Pauline commentary and fragments quoted by Augustine. Since then his works have been much studied and debated, and we now know that the Pelagian corpus has been so warped by a history of later redactors that we might be tempted not to quote it at all. But it does remain a significant source of fifth-century comment on Paul. So we cannot simply ignore it. My suggestion is that the reader is well advised not to equate the fifth-century Pelagius too easily with later standard stereotypes of the arch-heresy of Pelagianism.¹¹

It has to be remembered that the text of Pelagius on Paul as we now have it was preserved in the corpus of Jerome and probably reworked in the sixth century by either Primasius or Cassiodorus or both. These commentaries were repeatedly recycled and redacted, so what we have today may be regarded as consonant with much standard later patristic thought and exegesis, excluding, of course, that which is ecumenically censured as "Pelagianism."

Pelagius's original text was in specific ways presumably explicitly heretical, but what we have now is largely unexceptional, even if it is still possible to detect points of disagreement with Augustine.

¹⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); David C. Ford, "Men and Women in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom" (So. Canaan, Penn.: St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1995). Cf. related works by John Meyendorff, Stephen B. Clark and Paul K. Jewett.

¹¹Cf. Adalbert Hamman, *Supplementum to PL 1:1959*, cols. 1101-1570.

We may have been ill-advised to quote this material as “Pelagius” and perhaps might have quoted it as “Pseudo-Pelagius” or “Anonymous,” but here we follow contemporary reference practice.

What to Expect from the Introductions, Overviews and the Design of the Commentary

In writing the introduction for a particular volume, the volume editor typically discusses the opinion of the Fathers regarding authorship of the text, the importance of the biblical book for patristic interpreters, the availability or paucity of patristic comment, any salient points of debate between the Fathers, and any particular challenges involved in editing that particular volume. The introduction affords the opportunity to frame the entire commentary in a manner that will help the general reader understand the nature and significance of patristic comment on the biblical texts under consideration, and to help readers find their bearings and use the commentary in an informed way.

The purpose of the *overview* is to give readers a brief glimpse into the cumulative argument of the pericope, identifying its major patristic contributors. This is a task of summarizing. We here seek to render a service to readers by stating the gist of patristic argument on a series of verses. Ideally the overview should track a reasonably cohesive thread of argument among patristic comments on the pericope, even though they are derived from diverse sources and times. The design of the overview may vary somewhat from volume to volume of this series, depending on the requirements of the specific book of Scripture.

The purpose of the selection *heading* is to introduce readers quickly into the subject matter of that selection. In this way readers can quickly grasp what is coming by glancing over the headings and overview. Usually it is evident upon examination that some phrase in the selection naturally defines the subject of the heading. Several verses may be linked together for comment.

Since biographical information on each ancient Christian writer is in abundant supply in various general reference works, dictionaries and encyclopedias, the ACCS has no reason to duplicate these efforts. But we have provided in each volume a simple chronological list of those quoted in that volume, and an alphabetical set of biographical sketches with minimal ecclesiastical, jurisdictional and place identifications.

Each passage of Scripture presents its own distinct set of problems concerning both selection and translation. The sheer quantity of textual materials that has been searched out, assessed and reviewed varies widely from book to book. There are also wide variations in the depth of patristic insight into texts, the complexity of culturally shaped allusions and the modern relevance of the materials examined. It has been a challenge to each volume editor to draw together and develop a reasonably cohesive sequence of textual interpretations from all of this diversity.

The footnotes intend to assist readers with obscurities and potential confusions. In the annotations we have identified many of the Scripture allusions and historical references embedded within the texts.

The aim of our editing is to help readers move easily from text to text through a deliberate editorial linking process that is seen in the overviews, headings and annotations. We have limited the footnotes to roughly less than a one in ten ratio to the patristic texts themselves. Abbreviations are used in the footnotes, and a list of abbreviations is included in each volume. We found that the task of editorial linkage need not be forced into a single pattern for all biblical books but must be molded by that particular book.

The Complementarity of Interdisciplinary Research Methods in This Investigation

The ACCS is intrinsically an interdisciplinary research endeavor. It conjointly employs several diverse but interrelated methods of research, each of which is a distinct field of inquiry in its own right. Principal among these methods are the following:

Textual criticism. No literature is ever transmitted by handwritten manuscripts without the risk of some variations in the text creeping in. Because we are working with ancient texts, frequently recopied, we are obliged to employ all methods of inquiry appropriate to the study of ancient texts. To that end, we have depended heavily on the most reliable text-critical scholarship employed in both biblical and patristic studies. The work of textual critics in these fields has been invaluable in providing us with the most authoritative and reliable versions of ancient texts currently available. We have gratefully employed the extensive critical analyses used in creating the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae and Cetedoc databases.

In respect to the biblical texts, our database researchers and volume editors have often been faced with the challenge of considering which variants within the biblical text itself are assumed in a particular selection. It is not always self-evident which translation or stemma of the biblical text is being employed by the ancient commentator. We have supplied explanatory footnotes in some cases where these various textual challenges may raise potential concerns for readers.

Social-historical contextualization. Our volume editors have sought to understand the historical, social, economic and political contexts of the selections taken from these ancient texts. This understanding is often vital to the process of discerning what a given comment means or intends and which comments are most appropriate to the biblical passage at hand. However, our mission is not primarily to discuss these contexts extensively or to display them in the references. We are not primarily interested in the social location of the text or the philological history of particular words or in the societal consequences of the text, however interesting or evocative these may be. Some of these questions, however, can be treated briefly in the footnotes wherever the volume editors deem necessary.

Though some modest contextualization of patristic texts is at times useful and required, our purpose is not to provide a detailed social-historical placement of each patristic text. That would require volumes ten times this size. We know there are certain texts that need only slight contextualization, others that require a great deal more. Meanwhile, other texts stand on their own easily

and brilliantly, in some cases aphoristically, without the need of extensive contextualization. These are the texts we have most sought to identify and include. We are least interested in those texts that obviously require a lot of convoluted explanation for a modern audience. We are particularly inclined to rule out those blatantly offensive texts (apparently anti-Semitic, morally repugnant, glaringly chauvinistic) and those that are intrinsically ambiguous or those that would simply be self-evidently alienating to the modern audience.

Exegesis. If the practice of social-historical contextualization is secondary to the purpose of the ACCS, the emphasis on thoughtful patristic exegesis of the biblical text is primary. The intention of our volume editors is to search for selections that define, discuss and explain the meanings that patristic commentators have discovered in the biblical text. Our purpose is not to provide an inoffensive or extensively demythologized, aseptic modern interpretation of the ancient commentators on each Scripture text but to allow their comments to speak for themselves from within their own worldview.

In this series the term *exegesis* is used more often in its classic than in its modern sense. In its classic sense, *exegesis* includes efforts to explain, interpret and comment on a text, its meaning, its sources, its connections with other texts. It implies a close reading of the text, using whatever linguistic, historical, literary or theological resources are available to explain the text. It is contrasted with *eisegesis*, which implies that the interpreter has imposed his or her own personal opinions or assumptions on the text.

The patristic writers actively practiced *intratextual* exegesis, which seeks to define and identify the exact wording of the text, its grammatical structure and the interconnectedness of its parts. They also practiced *extratextual* exegesis, seeking to discern the geographical, historical or cultural context in which the text was written. Most important, they were also very well-practiced in *intertextual* exegesis, seeking to discern the meaning of a text by comparing it with other texts.

Hermeneutics. We are especially attentive to the ways in which the ancient Christian writers described their own interpreting processes. This hermeneutic self-analysis is especially rich in the reflections of Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine and Vincent of Lérins.¹² Although most of our volume editors are thoroughly familiar with contemporary critical discussions of hermeneutical and literary methods, it is not the purpose of ACCS to engage these issues directly. Instead, we are concerned to display and reveal the various hermeneutic assumptions that inform the patristic reading of Scripture, chiefly by letting the writers speak in their own terms.

Homiletics. One of the practical goals of the ACCS is the renewal of contemporary preaching in the light of the wisdom of ancient Christian preaching. With this goal in mind, many of the most trenchant and illuminating comments included are selected not from formal commentaries but

¹²Our concern for this aspect of the project has resulted in the production of a companion volume to the ACCS written by the ACCS Associate Editor, Prof. Christopher Hall of Eastern College, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

from the homilies of the ancient Christian writers. It comes as no surprise that the most renowned among these early preachers were also those most actively engaged in the task of preaching. The prototypical Fathers who are most astute at describing their own homiletic assumptions and methods are Gregory the Great, Leo the Great, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Peter Chrysologus and Caesarius of Arles.

Pastoral care. Another intensely practical goal of the ACCS is to renew our readers' awareness of the ancient tradition of pastoral care and ministry to persons. Among the leading Fathers who excel in pastoral wisdom and in application of the Bible to the work of ministry are Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. Our editors have presented this monumental pastoral wisdom in a guileless way that is not inundated by the premises of contemporary psychotherapy, sociology and naturalistic reductionism.

Translation theory. Each volume is composed of direct quotations in dynamic equivalent English translation of ancient Christian writers, translated from the original language in its best received text. The adequacy of a given attempt at translation is always challengeable. The task of translation is intrinsically debarable. We have sought dynamic equivalency¹³ without lapsing into paraphrase, and a literary translation without lapsing into wooden literalism. We have tried consistently to make accessible to contemporary readers the vital nuances and energies of the languages of antiquity. Whenever possible we have opted for metaphors and terms that are normally used by communicators today.

What Have We Achieved?

We have designed the first full-scale early Christian commentary on Scripture in the last five hundred years. Any future attempts at a Christian Talmud or patristic commentary on Scripture will either follow much of our design or stand in some significant response to it.

We have successfully brought together a distinguished international network of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox scholars, editors and translators of the highest quality and reputation to accomplish this design.

¹³The theory of dynamic equivalency has been most thoroughly worked out by Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), and Eugene A. Nida and Jan de Waard, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1986). Its purpose is "to state clearly and accurately the meaning of the original texts in words and forms that are widely accepted by people who use English as a means of communication." It attempts to set forth the writer's "content and message in a standard, everyday, natural form of English." Its aim is "to give today's readers maximum understanding of the content of the original texts." "Every effort has been made to use language that is natural, clear, simple, and unambiguous. Consequently there has been no attempt to reproduce in English the parts of speech, sentence structure, word order and grammatical devices of the original languages. Faithfulness in translation also includes a faithful representation of the cultural and historical features of the original, without any attempt to modernize the text." [Preface, *Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version* (New York: American Bible Society, 1976)]. This does not imply a preference for paraphrase, but a middle ground between literary and literal theories of translation. Not all of our volume editors have viewed the translation task precisely in the same way, but the hope of the series has been generally guided by the theory of dynamic equivalency.

This brilliant network of scholars, editors, publishers, technicians and translators, which constitutes an amazing *novum* and a distinct new ecumenical reality in itself, has jointly brought into formulation the basic pattern and direction of the project, gradually amending and correcting it as needed. We have provided an interdisciplinary experimental research model for the integration of digital search techniques with the study of the history of exegesis.

At this time of writing, we are approximately halfway through the actual production of the series and about halfway through the time frame of the project, having developed the design to a point where it is not likely to change significantly. We have made time-dated contracts with all volume editors for the remainder of the volumes. We are thus well on our way toward bringing the English ACCS to completion. We have extended and enhanced our international network to a point where we are now poised to proceed into modern non-English language versions of ACCS. We already have inaugurated editions in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Italian, and are preparing for editions in Arabic and German, with several more languages under consideration.

We have received the full cooperation and support of Drew University as academic sponsor of the project—a distinguished university that has a remarkable record of supporting major international publication projects that have remained in print for long periods of time, in many cases over one-hundred years. The most widely used Bible concordance and biblical word-reference system in the world today was composed by Drew professor James Strong. It was the very room once occupied by Professor Strong, where the concordance research was done in the 1880s, that for many years was my office at Drew and coincidentally the place where this series was conceived. Today *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* rests on the shelves of most pastoral libraries in the English-speaking world over a hundred years after its first publication. Similarly the *New York Times's* Arno Press has kept in print the major multivolume Drew University work of John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Theological and Exegetical Encyclopedia*. The major edition of Christian classics in Chinese was done at Drew University fifty years ago and is still in print. Drew University has supplied much of the leadership, space, library, work-study assistance and services that have enabled these durable international scholarly projects to be undertaken.

Our selfless benefactors have preferred to remain anonymous. They have been well-informed, active partners in its conceptualization and development, and unflinching advocates and counselors in the support of this lengthy and costly effort. The series has been blessed by steady and generous support, and accompanied by innumerable gifts of providence.

Thomas C. Oden
Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology, Drew University
General Editor, ACCS

A GUIDE TO USING THIS COMMENTARY

Several features have been incorporated into the design of this commentary. The following comments are intended to assist readers in making full use of this volume.

Pericopes of Scripture

The scriptural text has been divided into pericopes, or passages, usually several verses in length. Each of these pericopes is given a heading, which appears at the beginning of the pericope. For example, the first pericope in the commentary on Jeremiah is “Jeremiah’s Call from the Womb Jeremiah 1:1-5.”

Overviews

Following each pericope of text is an overview of the patristic comments on that pericope. The format of this overview varies within the volumes of this series, depending on the requirements of the specific book of Scripture. The function of the overview is to provide a brief summary of all the comments to follow. It tracks a reasonably cohesive thread of argument among patristic comments, even though they are derived from diverse sources and generations. Thus the summaries do not proceed chronologically or by verse sequence. Rather they seek to rehearse the overall course of the patristic comment on that pericope.

We do not assume that the commentators themselves anticipated or expressed a formally received cohesive argument but rather that the various arguments tend to flow in a plausible, recognizable pattern. Modern readers can thus glimpse aspects of continuity in the flow of diverse exegetical traditions representing various generations and geographical locations.

Topical Headings

An abundance of varied patristic comment is available for each pericope of these letters. For this reason we have broken the pericopes into two levels. First is the verse with its topical heading. The patristic comments are then focused on aspects of each verse, with topical headings summarizing the essence of the patristic comment by evoking a key phrase, metaphor or idea.

This feature provides a bridge by which modern readers can enter into the heart of the patristic comment.

Identifying the Patristic Texts

Following the topical heading of each section of comment, the name of the patristic commentator is given. An English translation of the patristic comment is then provided. This is immediately followed by the title of the patristic work and the textual reference—either by book, section and subsection or by book and verse references. If the notation differs significantly between the English-language source footnoted and other sources, alternate references appear in parentheses. Some differences may also be due to variant biblical versification or chapter and verse numbering.

The Footnotes

Readers who wish to pursue a deeper investigation of the patristic works cited in this commentary will find the footnotes especially valuable. A footnote number directs the reader to the notes at the bottom of the right-hand column, where in addition to other notations (clarifications or biblical cross references) one will find information on English translations (where available) and standard original language editions of the work cited. An abbreviated citation (normally citing the book, volume and page number) of the work is provided. A key to the abbreviations is provided on page xv. Where there is any serious ambiguity or textual problem in the selection, we have tried to reflect the best available textual tradition.

Where original language texts have remained untranslated into English, we provide new translations. Wherever current English translations are already well rendered, they are utilized, but where necessary they are stylistically updated. A single asterisk (*) indicates that a previous English translation has been updated to modern English or amended for easier reading. The double asterisk (**) indicates either that a new translation has been provided or that some extant translation has been significantly amended. We have standardized spellings and made grammatical variables uniform so that our English references will not reflect the odd spelling variables of the older English translations. For ease of reading we have in some cases edited out superfluous conjunctions.

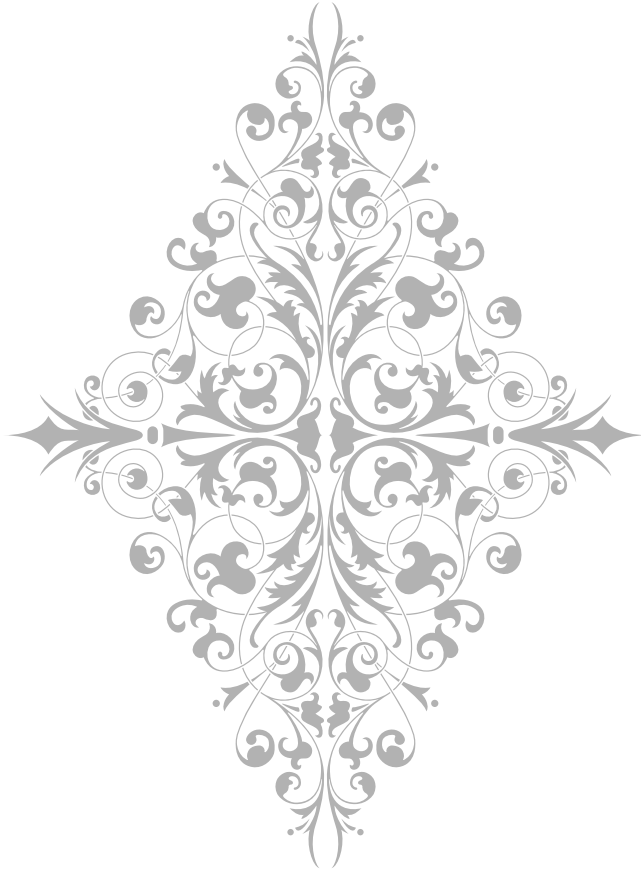
For the convenience of computer database users the digital database references are provided to either the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (Greek texts) or to the Cetedoc (Latin texts) in the appendix found on pages 305-312 and in the bibliography found on pages 337-46.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ACW Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1946-.
- AF J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, trans. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Edited by M. W. Holmes. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1989.
- AHSIS Dana Miller, ed. *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*. Boston, Mass.: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984.
- ANF A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 10 vols. Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature, 1885-1896. Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1951-1956; Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
- CCL Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1953-.
- Cetedoc Centre de Traitement Electronique des Documents.
- CGSL Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*. Translated by R. Payne Smith. Long Island, N.Y.: Studion Publishers, 1983.
- CS Cistercian Studies. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1973-.
- CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna, Austria, 1866-.
- DA *Didascalia Apostolorum*. The Syriac version translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin fragments. With an Introduction and Notes by R. Hugh Connoly. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929.
- ECTD C. McCarthy, trans. and ed. *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709*. *Journal of Semitic Studies* Supplement 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the University of Manchester, 1993.

- ESOO J. A. Assemani, ed. *Sancti Patris Nostri Ephraem Syri Opera Omnia*. 6 vols. Rome, 1737.
- FC Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-.
- LCC J. Baillie et al., eds. *The Library of Christian Classics*. 26 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953-1966.
- NHMS J. M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit, eds. *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* (formerly *Nag Hammadi Studies*). 62 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971-.
- NPNF P. Schaff et al., eds. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. 2 series (14 vols. each). Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature, 1887-1894; Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952-1956; Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
- OAP *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching*. Popular Patristics Series. Translated and introduced by John Behr. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.
- OGAC *Gregory of Nazianzus: On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Popular Patristics Series. Translated by Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- OSW *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Writings*. Translated by Rowan A. Greer with Preface by Hans Urs von Balthasar. *The Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
- PFGE Eusebius. *Preparation for the Gospel*. Translated by Edwin Hamilton Gifford. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981
- PG J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia Graeca*. 166 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857-1886.
- PL J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia Latina*. 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1844-1864.
- SC H. de Lubac, J. Daniélou et al., eds. *Sources Chrétiennes*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941-.
- TAM Ernest Evans, ed. and trans. *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem*. 2 vols. *Oxford Early Christian Texts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

- TTH G. Clark, M. Gibson and M. Whitby, eds. *Translated Texts for Historians*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1985-.
- WSA J. E. Rotelle, ed. *Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century*. Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1995.



INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS

When one enters the world of the church fathers, it is a horizon defined by the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. From creation to consummation, from the beginning of time to its ending, the Fathers defined reality with the vocabulary and claims of these sacred texts. They received the canon as a coherent and accurate description of God's actions and of humanity's place in the world. More precisely, they viewed these texts through an authoritative lens, namely, the apostolic portrayal of Christ and his meaning for all of history.

The Fathers were continually challenged in their interpretation and use of sacred Scripture. From the Judaizers (Galatians) to the early Gnostics to Marcion, each generation was called to articulate the faith by interpreting the sacred Scriptures in the face of those who were misappropriating texts through novelty or falsehood. For example, Athanasius's dispute with Arius was permeated by exegetical differences on which questions rested the very nature of Christ.

To be faithful to the apostolic witness was central to the vocation of the Fathers.¹ Moreover, it was their conviction that the apostolic hermeneutic was itself the gift of the earthly and now risen Christ: "I have said these things while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."² The Fathers would concur with a classic study on the apostles' use of the Old Testament that concludes:

The Christian church was founded on this distinctive and revolutionary use of the Old Testament. With regard to those passages of the Old Testament whose use we have specifically studied in this chapter, we have found, despite a considerable difference of emphasis, an almost unbroken agreement with both the exegesis and the application of Jesus. . . . Apart from the book of Revelation, moreover, there is no significant dependence on current Jewish use of the Old Testament. The school in which the writers of the early church learned to use the Old Testament was that of Jesus.³

It should also be noted that for all their imaginative and intellectual capacities, the Fathers remained pastors. Their use of the sacred Scriptures was not the abstract debate of the academy but the concrete pastoral care and nurture of the church. Hence, their use of the Old and

¹An insightful overview of apostolic exegesis is Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²Jn 14:25-26.

³R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971), 225.

New Testaments is shaped by churchly needs. Homilies, catechesis, apologetic and liturgy are prominent. Even the few commentaries are deeply pastoral in that their exposition addresses the church's life.⁴

If modern readers find it difficult to enter the biblical world and to think in its categories, the church fathers provide a helpful entry point. The obfuscating veils of the Enlightenment, modernity and postmodernism did not cloud their vision.

As products of the Enlightenment modernity, contemporary readers are often limited by late twentieth century interpretations of Scripture. Yet this has not always been so. Long before the rise of historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation the church unabashedly read the Bible through the eye of faith, with uncommon spiritual and devotional insight.⁵

This hermeneutical clarity and openness to scriptural categories are great gifts that the church fathers offer us. Our capacity to think biblically will be enhanced by time spent in their company. Far from being ancient esoterica, these texts can enrich the thought and lives of Christians today.

The Christian Bible (the Greek Old Testament and the apostolic writings) create a distinctive universe of meaning. As its words took up residence in the minds and hearts of Christian thinkers, it gave them a vocabulary that subtly shaped their patterns of thought. . . . For early Christian thinkers the Bible, finally, was a book about how to live. God's word is not something to be looked at but acted on.⁶

In their use of Scripture in preaching and in pastoral care the church fathers were following the biblical witness in Moses' preaching and instruction as well as the voice of the prophets in admonition and encouragement for the faithful in Israel.⁷

History of Jeremiah and Lamentations

Jeremiah occupies a distinctive place among the prophets of Israel. The prophetic corpus credited to him is not only the largest in the Old Testament canon but also provides detailed accounts of his life and experiences at a key moment in Israel's history. The French scholar André Ridouard has written: "Prophetism taken as a whole constitutes a sort of backbone of the Old Testament. . . . Now the prophet par excellence, the one who can allow us to surmise to some degree the experience lived by those men and their role in history, is indisputably Jeremiah."⁸

Jeremiah's signature was a call to repentance. God's definition of his mission was clear.

⁴William Horbury, "Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 727-89.

⁵Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, promotional materials. "Inspiration. No theory of this was worked out, nor was it reflected on: the Bible's authority was an undisputed fact." J. Gribmont, "Scripture, Holy," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo DiBerardino (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 763.

⁶Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 76-77.

⁷Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume I* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 19-83.

⁸Cited in William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 1.

And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.⁹

This call to prophecy came in 627 B.C. and launched Jeremiah into the challenges of Israel's critical religious and historical context. His message was a call to return to Yahweh, to the Torah and to covenant stipulations.¹⁰

Jeremiah's ministry covered the tumultuous decades that offered brief hope in the reform of Josiah (622 B.C.) but tragically ended in widespread apostasy and the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. His life as well as his message displayed God's word to a wayward people. God constrained him to remain single¹¹ and to engage in a number of symbolic actions to exhibit the call to repentance. On several occasions his life was endangered by offended parties from King Jehoiakim to his fellow townspeople in Anathoth. Our last word about him places him reluctantly in Egypt as a group had taken him there to escape further Babylonian reprisals.

Jeremiah's influence and role in the pseudepigrapha of the Second Temple period as well as the Qumran scrolls are interesting.¹² While the Qumran community cites Jeremiah sparingly (Hodayoth—1HQ), textual readings are extant (see "the text"). Noteworthy, however, are the number of early Jewish works associated with Jeremiah. The *Paralipomena of Jeremiah* and the *Vita of Jeremiah* (second or third century A.D.) as well as material in Eupolemos, Philo and the Talmud exhibit the influence of Jeremiah on Jewish tradition.¹³

In the New Testament, Jeremiah is mentioned three times by name. Of special interest is Matthew 16:13-14: "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' They said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'" Scholars have speculated about this linkage of Jeremiah to Jesus' ministry. Jesus' teaching concerning the coming judgment of Jerusalem may have recalled Jeremiah's words.¹⁴ Jeremiah was perceived as a prophet to the nations, as was Jesus.¹⁵

Jeremiah is also mentioned by name at Matthew 2:17 and Matthew 27:9 in conjunction with the prophecies of the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem¹⁶ and Judas's betrayal of Jesus.¹⁷

⁹Jer 1:18-19.

¹⁰Jer 21:11-23:8. In forty-eight instances, "return" (*shûv*) is used with respect to the covenant, far more than any other Old Testament prophet.

¹¹Jer 16:1-4.

¹²Christian Wolff, *Jeremia in Fruehjudentum und Urchristentum* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976).

¹³See A. Siedlecki, "Jeremiah, Book of, Interpretation Through the Nineteenth Century," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation A-J*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 565.

¹⁴Jer 25-29; Mt 23:37.

¹⁵Jer 1:10; Mt 28:19.

¹⁶Jer 31:15; Mt 2:17.

¹⁷Jer 32:6-9; Mt 27:9.

Apart from the explicit mention of Jeremiah's name, however, his message of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) provides a rich source of exposition for the New Testament authors: Hebrews 8:8-12, Hebrews 10:16-17 and 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.

The earliest Jewish witnesses to the canon unanimously include Jeremiah.¹⁸ Further, the congruence of the Old Testament canon and the Hebrew Scriptures in the Jewish and Christian communities of the first century A.D. was very close: "Christian evidence from the New Testament period endorses various Jewish titles for the canon, the three-fold Jewish structure, the traditional Jewish order for the books, and possibly one of the two standard Jewish numerations of the books."¹⁹ Lamentations, closely associated with the prophet, enjoyed the same canonical history and status.

The Fathers' Use of Jeremiah

If one surveys the use of Jeremiah in the patristic period, it is noteworthy that the earliest, the Apostolic Fathers, rarely cite Jeremiah.

The apostolic fathers showed remarkably little interest in Jeremiah. Unlike their early Jewish counterparts they did not develop the themes of judgment and restoration central to the book, since the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E. had less direct impact on the gentile Christian community. If a particular motif in Jeremiah was used, it was the critique of Israel's sacrificial cult in 7:21-23, cited along with other biblical passages in *The Epistle of Barnabas* 2.5-8 to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian faith over the Jewish religion.²⁰

At the same time, several later authors are prominent for the extent of their commentary and appropriation of Jeremiah:

- Origen (185-254). Twenty homilies in Greek are available and fourteen extant in Latin that were delivered by Origen when he was in his fifties. They provide another side of Origen, of one who was not only an academic and an exegete but also responding to crises within his own community and trying to provide a context for dealing with some of his own theological struggles. They nonetheless also provide us with a virtual catechism of his views on Christian doctrine and philosophy. Jeremiah had arrived on the scene in Israel at a crucial time in its history, the time of its captivity by Babylon. Origen too was writing at a critical time in the life of the Christian church, during its persecution by Rome. Thus, we see themes of conversion, repentance, judgment, spiritual progress, the power of evil, the meaning of salvation and the role of Christ as recurrent themes in his homilies.²¹

¹⁸ Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 63-434. See also S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 47 (Hamden, Conn.: Archer Books, 1976).

¹⁹ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 437.

²⁰ Siedlecki, "Jeremiah," 566.

²¹ An English translation of Origen's homilies on Jeremiah can be found in FC 97. For these comments, see Smith's introduction in FC 97:xv-xvii.

- Theodoret of Cyr (393-460). His commentary on Jeremiah, Baruch and Lamentations²² is considered as one literary unit. Comments on Jeremiah comprise the first ten books of commentary, grouped together with his commentary on Baruch, which is book eleven, and his commentary on Lamentations, which is book twelve. These commentaries are by and large focused on a literal and typological interpretation. Often his comments seem simply to repeat the text, but they often provide helpful exegetical and hermeneutical material that aids the interpreter in explicating the text. When he does engage in typological interpretations, the poignancy of his observations cannot be ignored.
- Jerome (345-420). His commentary on Jeremiah was written near the end of his life. He had wanted to write a commentary on the entire book but was only able to complete six books on the first thirty-two chapters. Although the commentary covers only thirty-two of Jeremiah's fifty-two chapters, it contains several interesting features. There is an increasing emphasis by Jerome on the Hebrew text, arguing that the Septuagint text is sporadically unreliable, having been corrupted by copyists (*Commentary on Jeremiah* 17.1-4). Also interesting is the fact that Jerome criticizes his former hero, Origen, severely. This is probably because of the Pelagians (who considered themselves to be the disciples of Origen) against whose beliefs Jerome wrote a treatise at this time entitled *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*.²³ A third point of interest in this commentary is Jerome's concentration on a straightforward, literal interpretation of the text rather than on allegorical exegesis. This may be in part because he was writing for his friend Eusebius of Cremona, who preferred the literal sense.²⁴
- Authors who provide *catenae* from Jeremiah include Cyril of Alexandria (375-444)²⁵ and Ephrem (303-373). In Ephrem's case we have chosen to use his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, which is extant only in a Syriac translation.²⁶
- A pseudonymous commentary, credited to Chrysostom (347-407), is extant, but we have not made any selections from this commentary.

In addition to these longer expositions, Jeremiah provides a dense resource of motifs and texts for the pastoral and theological challenges that the fathers of the early church faced. Justin and Irenaeus appeal to Jeremiah 2:12-13 to define Christians over against Jews and heretics. Athanasius used Jeremiah 2:13 in the trinitarian debates. In the trinitarian controversy, Athanasius

²²There is currently no English translation of Theodoret's commentary on these books. The translations in this volume have been done by James Kellerman and Robert Hill, which they graciously provided to us. The Greek text used for the translation is found in PG 81:495-806.

²³PL 23; NPNF 2 6:447-83.

²⁴Jerome's commentary on Jeremiah has not previously been translated into English. The Latin text used for our translation, done by James Kellerman, can be found in CCL 74.

²⁵PG 70:1452-57.

²⁶ESOO Vol. 2.

would cite Jeremiah 2:13 of the Father: “the fountain of living water.” Since the Son is life,²⁷ it is absurd for the Arians to suppose that “there was when he was not.” This would make the Father a dry fountain, void of life.²⁸

Jerome viewed Jeremiah’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the return as preliminary and typical:

Jerome repeatedly stressed the dual and even triple significance of the way in which the prophets describe Israel’s restoration. Looking, in an initial and perfect way, at the Jewish people’s return to the Holy Land after the Babylonian exile, the prophets had mainly in mind, through this return, both Christ’s first coming, with the time of the Church, and also his second coming. The prophecy in Jeremiah 31:8 (“See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth . . .”) is presented as having been fulfilled only in typical fashion, and not in truth, at the time of the return from Babylon to Jerusalem under Ezra, “for it was not then that everything we read was accomplished,” and the Jews cannot prove that the prophecies were truly fulfilled at that time. These prophecies, “though accomplished literally and typically after the return from Chaldea, when the people came back to Judea under the orders of King Cyrus, were accomplished spiritually in Christ and the Apostles, more truly and more fully.”²⁹

A number of Fathers denounce immorality by referring to Jeremiah 5:8 with its description of lustful stallions (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 9.13; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.8.3). Positive appeals for appropriate behavior draw on Jeremiah 9:23-24 (Cyprian *Treatise* 12.3.10).³⁰

In a rich passage, Origen reflects on Jeremiah 20:7. He suggests that like a good father, God guides a child toward ultimate welfare though the immediate events may not indicate such (*Homilies on Jeremiah* 19, 20). Jeremiah 23:24 stimulates Gregory of Nazianzus to explain the incomprehensible aspects of God’s character (*Theological Oration* 2.8-11).

Like the New Testament authors, Jeremiah 31:31-34, with its prophecy of a “new covenant,” provides a key resource for theological engagement. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 4.9.1; 4.33.14), Cyprian (*Treatise* 12.1.11) and Augustine (*The Spirit and the Letter* 32-42) all draw on the theme of a new covenant to make decisive theological points.

Basil the Great and Clement of Alexandria viewed Jeremiah as a resource for ethical exhortation. Basil, especially, focused on the book’s moral and ethical aspects. He includes more than a passing reference in his homilies to the lusty stallions in Jeremiah 5:8, a phrase that was viewed

²⁷Jn 14:6.

²⁸*Defense of the Nicene Definition* 3.12; *Against the Arians* 1.19. Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 314. Jerome’s final commentary on the Old Testament was his unfinished work on Jeremiah. This was begun in 414 or 415 and was interrupted by Jerome’s involvement in the Pelagian controversy. See also Dennis Brown, “Jerome and the Vulgate,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 367.

²⁹Bertrand de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, vol. 2, *The Latin Fathers* (Petersham, Mass.: Saint Bede’s Publications, 1995), 138.

³⁰Cyprian’s *Treatise* 12 is entitled *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*.

by him and other writers as an allegorical image for unfaithful Israel³¹ and was invoked in condemnation of sexual excesses. Similarly, the mention of God's nearness in Jeremiah 23:23 was read as an exhortation to base one's behavior on the awareness that all actions are carried out in the presence of God (Basil *The Long Rules* 5).³²

Lastly, Ambrose understood Jeremiah as a noble and righteous intercessor on behalf of the people.

Jeremiah the prophet whom the Lord our God has told, "Do not pray for this people" (Jer 7:16), prayed despite that and gained forgiveness. Thus the urgent prayer of so great a seer, interceding in the capacity of a prophet, softened the Lord.³³

The Fathers' Use of Lamentations

As might be expected, Lamentations became associated with losses and death (Gregory of Nyssa *Funeral Oration on Meletius*). Lamentations also served the Fathers well as a description of the challenges that face the Christian in a fallen world (Lam 3:27-31).

Particularly prominent in the Fathers' usage is Lamentations 4:20: "The Lord's anointed, the breath of our life, was taken in their pits—the one of whom was said, 'Under his shadow shall we live among the nations.'"

Lam 4:20 was an important text to early Christians. In addition to reading the text as referring to Christ as the believer's spiritual food, early Christians would see the incarnation, cross, and passion prophesied in Lam 4:20. Since the nose, the organ of breathing, stands out from the face, Justin believed a cross was traced in the center of the human visage. Thus Lam 4:20, "the breath of our nostrils is the Lord's anointed," anticipated Christ's crucifixion for Justin (*1 Apology* 55.1-6). Irenaeus, too, would see the Lord's passion in Lam 4:20, but he would emphasize both the reference to "breath" in 4:20a, which he translates "Spirit," and the reference to "his shadow" in 4:20c. This combination of terms prophesied the bitter, veiling incarnation (shadow) of the Spirit Christ (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 71). For Origen as well the passage spoke of the first advent of the Lord Christ, that humble incarnation (*Homily on Joshua* 8.6 [sic 8.4]). But the "shadow in which we live" could also refer to the mortality of the present age that clouded even the believer's partial experience of immortality in this life (*Commentary on Matthew* 15.2). Again the Alexandrian would read it in a positive, yet guarded manner of the Christian's present experience. "His shadow in which we live among the nations" is

³¹See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria *Christ the Educator* 1.15.1.77.1; 2.89.2, as referenced by Siedlecki, "Jeremiah," p. 567. See also Basil *De Jejunio Homilia* (Homily on Fasting) 1.9; PG 31 [1885]:181.

³²See also quotes by Chrysostom, Jerome, Cyprian and others at Jer 23:23.

³³SC 179:91 as quoted in de Margerie, *Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, 139. This typology of office is applied by Jerome to all of Israel. In Jerome's view, the carnal Israel is therefore a type and forerunner of the church, which is God's Israel, and even of the celestial, eschatological Jerusalem. Jerome repeatedly emphasized the point: "Everything we say about Jerusalem we relate to the church, but we do not repeat it each time, so as to avoid wearying the reader through a tedious verbosity. Since, according to the apostle, Jerusalem is our mother, and since the church is also our mother, it follows that Jerusalem is the church."

contrasted to the shadow of the Law in which the unredeemed live. In the shadow the believer has a share in Christ as the way, truth, and life, but it is dim. The believer still awaits a perfect, future redemption (*Commentary on the Canticles* 3).³⁴

The Text, Hebrew and Greek

Jeremiah exhibits an interesting textual richness in the Hebrew and Greek traditions. There are approximately twenty-seven hundred words in the longer Hebrew/Masoretic text than in the Greek. This means that the Greek text is about one-eighth shorter than the Hebrew text. Scholars have suggested that this is equivalent to six or seven chapters that are absent from the Greek edition.³⁵

Further, there are several significant differences in the ordering of the text. The oracles against the nations are in a different order in the respective traditions. In the Hebrew tradition, the oracles are at the end; in the Greek tradition, they are in the middle. It is noteworthy that the Hebrew and Greek texts are quite close in the poetic sections, with the longer Hebrew texts appearing mostly in prose. Table 1 displays the different arrangement of material in the Hebrew (MT) and Greek (LXX) texts.³⁶

There are a variety of scholarly views, but a recent study suggests that the Greek text preserves the more ancient reading.³⁷ A significant development in the analysis of the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts is new evidence from the Qumran scrolls. "It now seems clear from Qumran that both the longer and the shorter forms of the text were available in the Qumran community and that the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint are based on different recensions of the Hebrew text of the book."³⁸

An important aspect of Jeremiah's textual history is that the book itself records the need for a second edition.

It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment with a fire burning in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. (Jer 36:22-25)

Whatever historical buffeting the text of Jeremiah experienced, two constants remain clear. First, the contents of the material in Hebrew and Greek, for all of the textual history, remain re-

³⁴Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 316.

³⁵A. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 817.

³⁶Jack B. Luadbom, "Jeremiah, Book of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:708.

³⁷Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 6 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). A fine introduction to the Septuagint is Karen H. Jobes and Moses Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

³⁸J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 119. For a thorough analysis, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 319-26; and *The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 8 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976).

markably congruent, i.e., there is no evidence of any theological division or differences. Second, in accord with the harmonious content of both texts, no matter of doctrine or life is altered by any of the variants or placements.

Table 1

MT	LXX
1-25:13a	1-25:13a
25:13b-38	32:13b-38*
26	33
27	34*
28	35
29	36*
30	37*
31	38
32	39
33	40*
34	41
35	42
36	43
37	44
38	45
39	46*
40	47
41	48
42	49
43	50
44	51:1-3
45	51:31-35
46:1-26 Egypt	26:2-25
46:27-28	26:27-28
47 Philistines	29
48 Moab	31*
49:1-6 Ammon	30:17-21/22
49:7-22 Edom	30:1-16
49:23-27 Damascus	30:29-33
49:28-33 Kedar	30:23-28
49:34-39 Elam	25:14-20**
50-51 Babylon	27-28**
*verses lacking	
**variation in order	

Use of the Old Testament

In many respects, the use of the Old Testament in the church faces the same challenges that

John Bright described in 1967.³⁹ If the Old Testament is viewed almost exclusively in the category of prediction, the fulfillment renders its purpose complete. Even more problematic is the assumption that the God of the Old Testament is discrete and distant from the “kingdom of God” announced and inaugurated by Jesus. Adolf von Harnack’s statement starkly captures the unease that many people experience with the Old Testament: “To have cast aside the Old Testament in the second century was an error which the church rightly rejected; to have retained it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the Reformation was not yet able to avoid; but still to keep it after the nineteenth century as a canonical document within Protestantism results from a religious and ecclesial paralysis.”⁴⁰ While this quote seems harsh, it captures the underlying problem in the use of the Old Testament that has marked post-Enlightenment scholarship and too often the church’s life.

The Old Testament provided the vocabulary, conceptual world, grammar and syntax for New Testament Christology. As the semantic field in which Jesus of Nazareth was perceived and understood, it remains foundational for the church’s confession of Jesus as the Christ.⁴¹ The Fathers exhibit the exegetical riches that flow from viewing the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as a beautiful tapestry that, for all of its diversity, displays the one blessed and holy Trinity with inspired clarity.

This series provides that consensual exegetical tradition that regarded the triune God as the center of both the Old and New Testaments. An observation by John L. Thompson underscores the benefits of following these early exegetical trajectories:

Without a doubt, there is something counterintuitive in suggesting that we don’t fully know what the Bible *means* until we know something about what the Bible *has meant*. Particularly for Protestants, it may seem rather curious, if not risky, to suggest that a correct understanding of the preeminent authority of the Bible will actually drive us *toward* a deeper knowledge of Christian tradition and the history of interpretation, not *away* from it.⁴²

Thomas Oden has done the church a vast service in retrieving the church’s consensual appropriation and application of biblical texts.

I wish to thank the Reverend Joshua Haugen and seminarian Seth Mierow for their assistance in gathering material from the Fathers. Special thanks is owed to the Reverend Robert Smith, Electronic Resources Librarian at Concordia Theological Seminary, for his expertise and significant contribution to the headings; to Joel Elowsky for patience, encouragement and expert editing; and to Thomas Oden for the invitation to participate in such a noble and theologically rich project.

³⁹John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon, 1967).

⁴⁰Quoted in *ibid.*, 65.

⁴¹Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁴²John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 11.

J E R E M I A H

JEREMIAH'S CALL FROM THE WOMB JEREMIAH 1:1-5



OVERVIEW: Jeremiah is considered to be one of the major prophets (AUGUSTINE). The call to Jeremiah first came during the days of the godly king Josiah, whose godliness lay in stark contrast to those kings who came before him or those who followed him (THEODORET). God's choice of Jeremiah was based on his foreknowledge concerning Jeremiah (AUGUSTINE), and thus God consecrated Jeremiah to be a prophet even before he was born (THEODORET). Thus, God demonstrated his care and concern especially for the weak and helpless (ORIGEN), for the unborn who are formed by the Word of God and given life by him as full human beings even in the womb (METHODIUS, TERTULLIAN, IRENAEUS, CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). The child in the womb is capable of faith, as is seen by God's Word to Jeremiah

as well as the actions of John the Baptist in the womb (MAXIMUS, JEROME). One is made a child of faith not in the mother's womb, however, but in the power of baptism (LEO).

These opening words in Jeremiah were also used by the ancient Christian writers to demonstrate a twofold nature in Christ, the divine and fleshly: the former from the Father, the latter from a virgin (LACTANTIUS, AMBROSE). The Son is not created or formed but is the Father's image and Word begotten from eternity (ATHANASIUS, AMBROSE).

1:2 In the Days of Josiah

JEREMIAH IS ONE OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS.
AUGUSTINE: Jeremiah, like Isaiah, is one of the

major prophets, not of the minor, like the others from whose writings I have just given extracts. He prophesied when Josiah reigned in Jerusalem and Ancus Martius at Rome, when the captivity of the Jews was already at hand; and he continued to prophesy down to the fifth month of the captivity, as we find from his writings. Zephaniah, one of the minor prophets, is put along with him, because he himself says that he prophesied in the days of Josiah; but he does not say till when. Jeremiah thus prophesied not only in the times of Ancus Martius but also in those of Tarquinius Priscus, whom the Romans had for their fifth king. For he had already begun to reign when that captivity took place. CITY OF GOD 18.33.¹

KING JOSIAH'S FAMILY. THEODORET OF CYR: King Josiah's father was Amon, an impious man. His grandfather was Manasseh, who had instructed Josiah's father in his impiety. Josiah, on the contrary, went the exact opposite of them, siding with the party of the godly. His children, however, showed no interest in their father's virtue and imitated their forefathers' godlessness. Knowing this in advance, therefore, the God of all elected the prophet in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign and commanded him to foretell the calamities that would befall both city and people. ON JEREMIAH I. ARGUMENT.²

1:5 Called and Consecrated in the Womb

THE CALLING. AUGUSTINE: Moreover, this calling, which works through the opportune circumstances of history, whether this calling is in individuals or in peoples or in humankind itself, comes from a decree both lofty and profound. To this relates the following passage: "In the womb have I sanctified you." ON EIGHTY-THREE VARIED QUESTIONS 68.6.³

CONSECRATED FROM THE WOMB. THEODORET OF CYR: God's choice of Jeremiah was not without basis: knowledge preceded it. Notice it says that

God had knowledge and then he consecrated, for he knows everything before it happens. Now, he employed the word *consecrated*, meaning "he appointed." Then God also mentions the task for which he selected him: "I appointed you as prophet to the nations." Thus, he prophesies not only concerning the fortunes of the Jews but also the other nations. "I replied, O Lord and Master that you are, see, I do not know how to speak, because I am a child." The prophet recognized the one addressing him. This is why he called him by a title having to do with lordship. When the mighty Moses was once speaking, remember, and wanted to learn the divine name, the Lord said, "I am the one who is."⁴ He imitates Moses' timidity by saying youth is not up to prophesying. The Lord, however, urges him not to put forward the excuse of youthfulness but to do as he is told. ON JEREMIAH 1.1.4-6.⁵

GOD CARES FOR THE WEAK AND FRAIL.

ORIGEN: We forget that the words "Let us make man according to our image and according to our likeness"⁶ apply to each person. When we fail to remember the one who formed a person in the womb, and formed all people's hearts individually and understands all their works,⁷ we do not perceive that God is a helper of those who are lowly and inferior, a protector of the weak, a provider of shelter of those who have been given up in despair and Savior of those who have been given up as hopeless.⁸ COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 13.167-68.⁹

GOD'S GIFT OF CHILDREN. METHODIUS: So, if God still forms human beings, shall we not be guilty of audacity if we think of the generation of children as something offensive when even the Almighty is not ashamed to make use of them in working with his undefiled hands. BANQUET OF THE TEN VIRGINS 2.2.¹⁰

¹NPNF 1 2:379. ²PG 81:496. ³FC 70:165. ⁴Ex 3:14. ⁵PG 81:497-500. ⁶Gen 1:26. ⁷Ps 33:15 (32:15 LXX). ⁸Jdt 9:11. ⁹FC 89:104. ¹⁰ANF 6:314.

GOD CREATES SOUL AND BODY IN THE

WOMB. TERTULLIAN: Read the word of God that was spoken to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." God not only forms us in the womb; he also breathes on us as he did at the first creation, when "the Lord God formed man and breathed into him the breath of life."¹¹ And God could not have known a person in the womb, except in his entire nature: "And before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you." Well, was it then a dead body at that early stage? Certainly not. For "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." ON THE SOUL 26.¹²

LIFE AT THE EMBRYONIC STAGE.

TERTULLIAN: The embryo therefore becomes a human being in the womb from the moment that its form is completed. The law of Moses,¹³ indeed, punishes with due penalties the one who shall cause an abortion, inasmuch as there exists already the rudiment of a human being that has imputed to it even now the condition of life and death, since it is already liable to the issues of both, although, by living still in the mother, it for the most part shares its own state with the mother. ON THE SOUL 37.¹⁴

THE WORD OF GOD FORMS US IN THE WOMB.

IRENAEUS: The Word of God is the one who forms us in the womb, as he says to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you came forth from the belly, I sanctified you and appointed you to be a prophet among the nations." And Paul, too, says this in the same way, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, that I might declare him among the nations."¹⁵ AGAINST HERESIES 5.15.3.¹⁶

GOD GIVES AND FORMS THE FLESH OF

HUMANITY. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: He is not ashamed to assume flesh, who is the creator of those very parts. Who tells us this? The Lord said to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the

belly, I knew you. Before you came forth out of the womb, I made you holy." If, then, in making humanity he was not ashamed of the contact, was he ashamed in making for his own sake the holy flesh, the veil of his Godhead? It is God who even now creates children in the womb, as it is written in Job, "Didn't you pour me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? You have clothed me with skin and flesh and have knit me together with bones and sinews."¹⁷ There is nothing polluted in the human frame unless a person defiles it with fornication and adultery. God, who made Adam, also made Eve. Both male and female were formed by God's hands. None of the parts of the body as formed from the beginning are polluted. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 12.26.¹⁸

JEREMIAH AND JOHN IN THE WOMB.

MAXIMUS OF TURIN: This, too, seems unworthy to pass over in silence in praise of John. Although he was not yet born, yet already he prophesies and, while still in the enclosure of his mother's womb, confesses the coming of Christ with movements of joy since he could not do so with his voice. . . . In this regard I think that the prophetic phrase is appropriate that says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." We ought not to marvel that after he was put in prison by Herod, from his confinement he continued to announce Christ to his disciples, when even confined in the womb he preached the same Lord by his movements. SERMON 5.4.¹⁹

CONSECRATED IN THE WOMB. JEROME: It was not that Jeremiah existed before he was conceived, as some heretics suppose, but that the Lord foreknew Jeremiah to be coming, the Lord to whom what does not yet exist is already present, in accordance with what the apostle said

¹¹Gen 2:7. ¹²ANF 3:207. ¹³See Ex 21:22-25. ¹⁴ANF 3:217-18.

¹⁵Gal 1:15. ¹⁶ANF 1:543. ¹⁷Job 10:10-11. ¹⁸NPNF 2 7:79**.

¹⁹ACW 50:24**.

of him: "who calls that which is not as though it were."²⁰ But we also ought to understand Jeremiah's consecration in the womb according to the apostle's word: "When it pleased him, he set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might proclaim him to the nations."²¹ John the Baptist similarly was consecrated in the womb, where he received the Holy Spirit and leaped and spoke through his mother's mouth.²² Furthermore, when the Lord says, "I appointed you a prophet to the nations," he wants it to be understood that we will eventually read in him the prophet who will prophesy not only to Jerusalem but also to a multitude in the entire company of nations. Some understand this as referring to the Savior, who was himself a prophet to the nations and called all peoples through the apostles. For it is certainly true of him that before he was formed in the virginal womb of his mother and before he came forth from her, he was consecrated in the womb and was known to the Father, he, indeed, who is always in the Father and the Father always in him.²³ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 1.2.1-3.²⁴

POWER OF BAPTISM. LEO THE GREAT: Through the Holy Spirit we are reborn the children of promise, not in the mother's womb but in the power of baptism. For this reason David, who certainly was a son of promise, says to God, "Your hands have made and fashioned me."²⁵ And to Jeremiah the Lord says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." LETTER 15.10.²⁶

THE TWOFOLD BIRTH OF CHRIST. LACTANTIUS: In the first place we testify that he was born twice: first, in the spirit, later in the flesh. It is said in Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." And again, "who was blessed before he was born,"²⁷ which happened to no other besides Christ. DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.8.²⁸

INCARNATION AND THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST. AMBROSE: "The bosom of the Father"²⁹

is to be understood in a spiritual sense, as a kind of innermost dwelling of the Father's love and of his nature, in which the Son always dwells. Even so, the Father's womb is the spiritual womb of an inner sanctuary, from which the Son has proceeded just as from a generative womb. . . . The Father speaks of that womb through the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." Therefore, the prophet showed that there was a twofold nature in Christ, the divine and the fleshly, the former from the Father, the latter from a virgin, but in such a way that Christ was not deprived of his divinity when he was born from a virgin and was in the body. ON THE PATRIARCHS 11.51.³⁰

AGAINST THE ARIANS. ATHANASIUS: Concerning Jeremiah, God says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." . . . If such terms are used in Scripture of things created, but the term *ever* is used of the Word, then it follows, O enemies of God, that the Son did not come out of nothing, nor is he to be numbered at all among created things, but he is the Father's image and eternal word, never having not existed, but never existing as the eternal radiance. DISCOURSES AGAINST THE ARIANS 1.4.13.³¹

CHRIST'S PREEXISTENCE. AMBROSE: To show them, however, the weakness and transparency of their objection, though it has no real relation to any truth, divine or human, I will prove to them that people have existed before they were born. Let them show that Jacob had not been appointed and ordained, even before he was born. While yet hidden in the secret chamber of his mother's womb, he supplanted his brother. Let them show that Jeremiah had not likewise been so, before his birth, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you; and before

²⁰Rom 4:17. ²¹Gal 1:15-16. ²²Lk 1:41-42. ²³Jn 10:38; 14:10-11.

²⁴CCL 74:4-5. ²⁵Ps 119:73 (118:73 LXX). ²⁶NPNF 2 12:23.

²⁷Cf. Jer 1:5, possibly from Old Latin or even a Greek copy. ²⁸FC 49:258-59*. ²⁹Jn 1:18. ³⁰FC 65:269. ³¹NPNF 2 4:314*.

you came forth from the belly, I sanctified you, and appointed you for a prophet amongst the nations." . . . What do you [Arians] mean by your principle that "before he was begotten he did not exist"? Was the Father engaged for some time in

conception, so that certain epochs passed away before the Son was begotten? ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 4.9.113, 116.³²

³²NPNF 2 10:277.



YOUNG JEREMIAH'S CALL TO THE NATIONS JEREMIAH 1:6-10

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah attempted to humbly decline his position from God (EUSEBIUS, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS), as Moses did, but modesty is no reason to decline the grace of a divine call (AMBROSE). Jeremiah was able to excuse himself from ministry because God does not force anyone to accept his call (CHRYSOSTOM). But before accepting, a minister should realize that the yoke of the Word of preaching is heavy, as Jeremiah said (AMBROSE). Jeremiah had a specific, special calling from God (ORIGEN). The Lord liberates one who suffers in order to overcome tribulations (JEROME).

Jeremiah received the word of God, which was shown to be hot and fiery (ORIGEN). He

uttered the word put into his mouth by God (TERTULLIAN). Jeremiah and the prophets spoke by prophetic inspiration (CHRYSOSTOM). The grace bestowed on Jeremiah is in every age bestowed on the church to prevail over heresy (THEOPHILUS). We may pray for the word to be given to us as it was to Jeremiah (ORIGEN). The word given to him was a word of judgment, which must work much harder at destroying sin in the body by uprooting, pulling down, wasting and destroying than building and planting virtue (JOHN CASSIAN). That the Lord destroys in order to rebuild is figurative of his people (AUGUSTINE). Jeremiah proclaimed the judgment of the Lord against unbelief in order that the church

of God may be planted and built for those who were destroyed, dragged down and lost (JEROME). Those chosen by God to proclaim his word were set apart by special revelation (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS).

1:6 Only a Youth

JEREMIAH DID NOT ACT PRIDEFULLY. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: The Hebrew Scripture introduces Moses at first as declining the leadership of the people by what he said to God who conversed with him: “I beg you, O Lord, appoint someone else who is able, whom you will send.”¹ Afterwards it portrays Saul as hiding himself to avoid assuming the kingdom and the prophet Jeremiah as humbly declining his mission.² PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL 12.9.³

JEREMIAH, LIKE MOSES, RESISTED THE CALL. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: I resort once again to history. When I consider the men of best repute in ancient days, who were ever preferred by grace to the office of ruler or prophet, I discover that some readily complied with the call while others deprecated the gift. I also learn that those who drew back were not blamed for their timidity, nor were those who came forward accused of being too eager. The former stood in awe of the greatness of the ministry; the latter trustfully obeyed him who called them. Aaron was eager, but Moses resisted;⁴ Isaiah readily submitted,⁵ but Jeremiah was afraid of his youth and did not venture to prophesy until he had received from God a promise and a power beyond his years. IN DEFENSE OF HIS FLIGHT TO PONTUS, ORATION 2.114.⁶

MODEST ABOUT HIS CALL. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: It is a good thing even to hold back from God for a little while—as did the great Moses in ancient times,⁷ and Jeremiah later on—and then to run readily to him when he calls. This is what Aaron⁸ and Isaiah⁹ did—as long as both are done with a respectful spirit. Do the former because you lack strength. Do the latter because

of the power of God who calls you. ON EASTER AND HIS RELUCTANCE, ORATION I.I.¹⁰

MODESTY OR AVOIDANCE? AMBROSE: Both Moses and Jeremiah, chosen by the Lord to declare the words of God to the people, avoided through modesty that which through grace they could do. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 1.17.66.¹¹

THE PRIVILEGE AND FREEDOM OF OUR CALLING. CHRYSOSTOM: Prophets had power either to speak or to refrain from speaking. They were not bound by necessity but were honored with a privilege. For this reason Jonah fled, for this reason Ezekiel delayed and for this reason Jeremiah excused himself. And God drives them not only by compulsion but also by advising, exhorting, threatening. He does not darken their mind, because to cause distraction, madness and great darkness is the proper work of a demon. It is God’s work to illuminate and with consideration to teach what is necessary. HOMILIES ON 1 CORINTHIANS 29.2.¹²

THE BURDEN OF THE GOSPEL. AMBROSE: But perhaps you may say, How does Jeremiah call the yoke heavy, when the Lord in the Gospel has said, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”?¹³ Now, first understand that the Greek has “yoke” only, and has not added “heavy.” Notice this, also, that although it was so in Lamentations, in the Gospel he said “easy yoke” and “light burden,” not “light yoke.” For the yoke of the Word can be heavy, yet easy. Heavy to the youth, heavy to the young man whose age is in fuller flower, so that he is unwilling to offer the neck of his mind in subjection to the yoke of the Word. The yoke of the Word can seem heavy because of the burdens of discipline, the rigor of improvement, the weight of abstinence and the curbing of lust. Yet it is easy because of the

¹Ex 4:13. ²Jer 1:5. ³PFG 629-30*. ⁴Ex 4:10, 13, 27. ⁵Is 6:8.

⁶NPNF 2 7:227. ⁷Ex 4:10. ⁸Ex 4:27. ⁹Is 1:6. ¹⁰NPNF 2 7:203**.

¹¹NPNF 2 10:12. ¹²NPNF 1 12:170**. ¹³Mt 11:30.

fruitfulness of grace, the hope of eternal reward and the sweetness of a purer conscience. Still, he called the yoke of the Word “easy” and the burden of conscience “light,” because for him who has taken up the yoke of the Word with a patient neck the burden of discipline cannot be heavy. CONSOLATION ON THE DEATH OF EMPEROR VALENTINIAN II.¹⁴

1:7-8 Do Not Be Afraid to Be Sent

A SPECIAL CALL. ORIGEN: We do not find, therefore, that the expression “to be sent from God” is used of anyone other than the saints. It occurs in the case of Isaiah . . . and in the case of Jeremiah, “You shall go to all that I shall send you”; and in the case of Ezekiel, “I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me.”¹⁵ COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 2.184.¹⁶

FREED TO OVERCOME TRIBULATIONS. JEROME: You should not consider the matter of age, he said, for you have learned through another prophet’s words that “a man’s gray hair is his wisdom.”¹⁷ May you only be willing to continue, for you will have me as a companion by whose assistance you will accomplish everything: “Open your mouth, and I will fill it.”¹⁸ Neither should you consider the number of those against whom you are about to speak, but consider me only, who is with you to deliver you, says the Lord. The Lord delivers, however, not so that the prophet will be free of persecutions and difficulties, for we read that he was severely afflicted. Instead, the Lord liberates one who suffers everything to overcome these tribulations rather than yielding to them. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH I.4.I-2.¹⁹

1:9 The Touch of God’s Word

THE WORD OF GOD IS AS FIRE. ORIGEN: In sacred language God is called a fire. For instance, Scripture says, “Our God is a consuming

fire.”²⁰ It also speaks as follows concerning the substance of the angels when it says, “He makes his angels spirits and his ministers a burning fire.”²¹ In another place, “The angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire in the bush.”²² We have, moreover, received a commandment to be “fervent in spirit,”²³ which undoubtedly means that the Word of God is hot and fiery. The prophet Jeremiah also hears from him who gave him his answer, “Behold, I have put my words into your mouth like a fire.”²⁴ Since God, then, is a fire, and the angels a flame of fire and all the saints are fervent in spirit, so, on the contrary, those who have fallen away from the love of God are undoubtedly said to have cooled in their affection for him and to have become cold. For the Lord also says that “because iniquity has grown, the love of many will grow cold.”²⁵ ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 2.8.3.²⁶

GOD’S WORDS ENTER THE PROPHET’S

MOUTh. TERTULLIAN: The Scripture narrative goes on to explain in a popular manner that “they did not understand that he spoke to them about the Father,”²⁷ although they ought certainly to have known that the Father’s words were uttered in the Son because they read in Jeremiah, “And the Lord said to me, ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.’” AGAINST PRAXEAS 22.²⁸

INSPIRATION. CHRYSOSTOM: I say this, for Isaiah said, “The Lord has given me a learned tongue that I should know when I ought to speak a word.”²⁹ Furthermore, what of Jeremiah? When he was sent, he then was inspired by God. And what of Ezekiel? For, when he had eaten the chapter of the book, he then spoke prophetically. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 69.³⁰

¹⁴FC 22:271**. ¹⁵Ezek 2:3. ¹⁶FC 80:144. ¹⁷Wis 4:9. ¹⁸Ps 81:10 (80:11 LXX). ¹⁹CCL 74:5. ²⁰Deut 4:24. ²¹Ps 104:4 (103:4 LXX); cf. Heb 1:7. ²²Ex 3:2. ²³Rom 12:11. ²⁴The word *fire* is found neither in the Hebrew nor in the Septuagint. ²⁵Mt 24:12. ²⁶ANF 4:287-88*. ²⁷Jn 8:27. ²⁸ANF 3:617**. ²⁹Is 50:4. ³⁰FC 41:245.

PROPHETS SERVE THE CHURCH. THEOPHILUS OF ALEXANDRIA: The Lord has said to his prophet, “See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down and to destroy and . . . to build and to plant.” In every age he bestows the same grace on his church, that his body may be preserved intact and that the poison of heretical opinions may nowhere prevail over it. And now also do we see the words fulfilled. LETTER 90, TO EPIPHANIUS.³¹

THE LORD PROVIDES THE WORDS. ORIGEN: We pray that words may be given us, as it is written in the book of Jeremiah that the Lord said to the prophet: “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth as fire. See, I have set you this day over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build and to plant.” AGAINST CELSUS 4.1.³²

1:10 *Destroying and Rebuilding*

THE CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE. JOHN CASSIAN: But you should know that we must work twice as hard to drive out vice as we do to acquire virtue. And this is not simply our own opinion, but we were instructed by the opinion of the One who alone knows the strength and the method of his work: “See,” he says, “I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” He points out that four things are required for getting rid of poisonous elements: to root up, to pull down, to waste and to destroy. But in order to do good and acquire righteousness, all that is required is to build and to plant. It is perfectly evident that it is a harder thing to tear up and eradicate the ingrained passions of body and soul than to introduce and plant spiritual virtues. CONFERENCE 2.14.3.³³

LAW-GOSPEL PREACHING. AUGUSTINE: For unless there were some who were destroyed to be rebuilt, Jeremiah would not have written, “See,

I have this day set you to throw down and to build.” EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 89.3.³⁴

JEREMIAH ANNOUNCES GOD’S JUDGMENT ON ALL UNBELIEF. JEROME: It is important to observe here that two joys succeed four sorrows. The good cannot be built up unless the evil is destroyed, nor can the best be planted unless the worst is eradicated. For “every plant that the heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted,”³⁵ and every building that does not have its foundation on rock but was built on sand is undermined and destroyed by the word of God.³⁶ But that which Jesus will consume by the breath of his mouth and destroy by the coming of his presence,³⁷ indeed, all sacrilege and perverse doctrine, he will annihilate forever. Furthermore, he will depose and scatter all who elevate themselves against the knowledge of God, trusting instead in their own wisdom, which is foolishness to God,³⁸ so that the lower dwellings may be prepared for them and that those who are conformed to the truth of the church, having previously been destroyed and plucked up, might be planted and established in the higher places, such that what the apostle said will be fulfilled: “You are God’s edifice, God’s field.”³⁹ Many people understand this passage to refer to the person of Christ. For the name Jeremiah means “the heights of the Lord,” the Lord who destroyed the kingdoms of the devil, who had shown them to him on a high mountain,⁴⁰ and destroyed the adversarial powers as well, canceling the bond of errors on the cross.⁴¹ It is also said in the Psalms concerning these things, after the figurative truth of history: “Why do nations murmur and the people meditate in vain? The kings of the earth stand by and the princes convene as one.”⁴² The church of God is planted and built for those who were plucked up, destroyed, dragged down and lost. But about the person of

³¹NPWF 2 6:184. ³²ANF 4:497. ³³NPWF 2 11:436**. ³⁴NPWF 1 8:429. ³⁵Mt 15:13. ³⁶Mt 7:25-26. ³⁷2 Thess 2:8. ³⁸1 Cor 3:19. ³⁹1 Cor 3:9. ⁴⁰Mt 4:8. ⁴¹Col 2:14. ⁴²Ps 2:1-2.

Jeremiah, there is no doubt, for we read subsequently that he took a chalice full of wine and all the nations were commanded to drink.⁴³ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH I.6.1-5.⁴⁴

GOD'S SPOKESMEN ARE SANCTIFIED. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Isaiah, again, beheld the glory of the seraphim, and after him Jeremiah, who was entrusted with great power against nations and kings. The one heard the divine voice and was cleansed by a live coal for his prophetic office, and the other was known before his

formation and sanctified before his birth. Paul, also, while yet a persecutor, who became the great herald of the truth and teacher of the Gentiles in faith,⁴⁵ was surrounded by a light⁴⁶ and acknowledged him whom he was persecuting, and was entrusted with his great ministry and filled every ear and mind with the gospel. ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, ORATION 18.14.⁴⁷

⁴³Jer 25:15 (32:15 LXX); 1:10. ⁴⁴CCL 74:6-7. ⁴⁵1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:2. ⁴⁶Acts 9:3. ⁴⁷NPNF 2 7:259.*



PROPHECIES OF ISRAEL'S APOSTASY JEREMIAH 1:11-19

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah saw the Word of God, that is, Jesus Christ, as an almond rod (DIDASCALIA) that would endure as a blessing, just as the rod of Aaron had done (AMBROSE). But this word of promise was contrasted with the Lord's judgment shown to Jeremiah in the form of a tilted, boiling pot (THEODORET). The judgment

the pot represents would come from the north, invading at any moment; Israel and we must thus remain vigilant in the face of those, including the devil, who may invade at any time (ORIGEN). God's judgment is shown to be just (THEODORET) because Israel had foolishly forsaken its God (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). Saints should

understand—as Israel did not—that they will experience struggles and conflicts, but they can do so only with patient endurance from the Lord, who is with them to deliver them (JOHN CASSIAN).

1:11-12 *The Almond Rod*

JEREMIAH SAW JESUS AS AN ALMOND ROD.

DIDASCALIA: Now our rod is the Word of God, Jesus Christ, as Jeremiah saw him as an almond rod. So everyone that spares his son a word of rebuke hates his son. Therefore teach your sons the word of the Lord. Punish them with lashes. Subdue them by your word of religion from their youth. **DIDASCALIA 22.[4.II].**¹

THE ENDURING ALMOND TREE. **AMBROSE:** It is written in the book of the prophet, “Take a branch from a nut tree.”² So we must consider why the Lord said this to the prophet, for it is not written without a purpose, since we also read in the Pentateuch that the nut tree of Aaron, the priest, blossomed after it had been laid away for a long while. **LETTER 62.**³

1:13-19 *The Boiling Pot of Judgment*

JUDGMENT. **THEODORET OF CYR:** The blessed Jeremiah also saw a boiling pot tilted away from the north. So he means that Manasseh will recover its own land, Ephraim regain its former power and Judah be renamed king of all, whereas the Moabites will be subject to them, observing their invincible strength—and not only they but also Edomites and foreigners. **COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS 60.6.**⁴

WATCH OUT FOR TEMPTATION. **ORIGEN:** Place that candlestick in the south that it may look to the north. For when the light has been lit, that is, when the heart is watchful, it ought always to look to the north and watch for “him who is from the north,”⁵ as also the prophet says he saw “a kettle or pot kindled and its face was from the

face of the north,” for “evils are kindled from the north for the whole earth.” Be watchful, therefore, apprehensive and zealous. Always contemplate the slyness of the devil and always watch the place from which temptation may come, from which the foe may invade, from which the enemy may creep up. For the apostle Peter also says, “Your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.”⁶ **HOMILIES ON EXODUS 9.4.**⁷

GOD’S JUST JUDGMENT. **THEODORET OF CYR:** He emphasizes the justice of what has been done by adding, “I shall pronounce my judgment against them because of all their wickedness in forsaking me. They sacrificed to foreign gods and worshiped the works of their hands.” What could be more foolish than this kind of godlessness? What could be more righteous than retribution? Consider that they, for their part, forsook their own maker and turned things of their own making into gods. He, by contrast, after demonstrating his patient mercy for such a long time, finally deprived them of his characteristic grace. Once deprived of it, they became enslaved to unholy people. **ON JEREMIAH 1.1.16.**⁸

ISRAEL DEPARTED FROM GOD. **CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA:** For how shall we not regard it fearful, if one who knows God shall not recognize the Lord? While the ox and the donkey, stupid and foolish animals, will know one who feeds them, Israel is found to be more irrational than these? And having, by Jeremiah, complained against the people on many grounds, God adds, “They have forsaken me, says the Lord.”⁹ **CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.9.**¹⁰

RESISTANCE IN THE FACE OF TRIALS. **JOHN CASSIAN:** A saint is different from a sinner, not because he or she is not tempted in the same

¹DA 193*. ²Jer 1:11 (LXX). ³FC 26:385**. ⁴FC 101:347. ⁵Joel 2:20. ⁶1 Pet 5:8. ⁷FC 71:342. ⁸PG 81:501. ⁹Jer 1:16; 2:13, 29. ¹⁰ANF 2:229.

way but because he or she is not defeated even by a great assault, while the other is overcome even by a slight temptation. The strength of any good person would not, as we said, be worthy of praise, if the victory was gained without being tempted. Most certainly there is no room for victory where there is no struggle and conflict. "Blessed is the one who endures trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."¹¹ According to the apostle Paul also,

"power is made perfect" not in ease and delights but "in weakness." "And behold," says he, "I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you."¹² CONFERENCE 3.18.13.¹³

¹¹Jas 1:12. ¹²2 Cor 12:9; Jer 1:18-19. ¹³NPNF 2 11:485**.



JEREMIAH'S INSPIRATION
AND ISRAEL'S APOSTASY
JEREMIAH 2:1-8

OVERVIEW: The Word of the Lord coming to the prophets defends the eternity of Christ (ATHANASIUS). Holy Scripture urges recitation that we may possess by faith the confession made orally (HORSIESI). God places his reputation before human eyes, and though his chosen ones abandoned him, he is found righteous (CHRYSOSTOM). The Lord called the prophet Jeremiah from the womb to speak against the evils the priests have incurred as shepherds over the flock of Israel (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). Those who follow the contemplative way of life seek defense against the chastisement of God toward his shepherds (HORSIESI).

2:1-4 *Israel Faithful in Its Youth*

PROPHETIC INSPIRATION. ATHANASIUS: The prophets say, “And the Word of the Lord came to me.” . . . All these messages proscribe in every light the Arian heresy and signify the eternity of the Word, and that he is not foreign but proper to the Father’s essence. DISCOURSES AGAINST THE ARIANS 2.18.32.¹

ON RECITING HOLY SCRIPTURE. HORSIESI: Consider by how many testimonies the Word of the Lord urges us to recite the Holy Scriptures in order that we may possess through faith what we have repeated with our mouth. . . . And elsewhere it is written, I remembered the mercy of your youth. THE TESTAMENT OF HORSIESI 52.²

2:5-7 *Israel Unfaithful to a Faithful God*

GOD’S WAYS ARE JUST. CHRYSOSTOM: Again, elsewhere he says, “What fault have your fathers found in me?” That which is said is great and marvelous, because what he says means, “What wrong have I done?” God tells human beings, “What sin have I committed?”—something that not even slaves tolerate that their master utter. HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING. 4.5.23.³

GOD’S JUSTICE IN CONDEMNING HUMAN-KIND. CHRYSOSTOM: “What transgression have your fathers found in me?” . . . showing their thankless disposition, and that when in the enjoyment of all things, they required it by the contraries; but here God expresses it with yet greater force. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 68.2.⁴

2:8 *Priests and Rulers Fell Short*

GOD CHALLENGES FALSE PASTORS. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Jeremiah was known before he was formed, and sanctified from the womb.⁵ . . . He longs for water over his head and a fountain of tears for his eyes that he may adequately weep for Israel.⁶ No less does he lament the depravity of its rulers. God speaks to him to rebuke the priests: “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who handle the law did not know me; the rulers transgressed against me.” Again he says to him, “The shepherds are stupid, and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.”⁷ Again, “Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.”⁸ He further attacks the pastors again: “‘Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: ‘You have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD.’ ”⁹ IN DEFENSE OF HIS FLIGHT TO PONTUS, ORATION 2.67-68.¹⁰

ON THE MONASTIC RULE. HORSIESI: God has also entrusted a deposit to us: the brothers’ way

¹NPNF 2 4:365. ²CS 47:210-11. ³FC 96:54*. ⁴NPNF 1 10:416. ⁵Jer 1:5. ⁶Jer. 9:1. ⁷Jer 10:21. ⁸Jer 12:10. ⁹Jer 23:1-2. ¹⁰NPNF 2 7:219.

of life. While laboring on their behalf, we look forward to future rewards, lest this be said of us as well, "Let this people go,"¹¹ and lest, if we forsake the traditions of our ancestors, this be hurled at us: "Those who have my law do not

know me; the shepherds have rebelled against me." THE TESTAMENT OF HORSIESI II.¹²

¹¹Ex 5:1-2. ¹²CS 47:178.



BROKEN CISTERNS JEREMIAH 2:9-13

OVERVIEW: God shamed his people through the revelation that even those who worship idols do not exchange their false gods (CHRYSOSTOM, BASIL). The desire to adore an image of God leads his people to idolatry and paganism and the adoration of demons (JOHN CASSIAN). In his mercy for humanity, God showed humility even in chastising them for this (CHRYSOSTOM). Those who have abandoned the assembly of the church have also been chastised by God through the prophet as worse than Gentiles who have forsaken their true work (DIDASCALIA). The church has been treated with contempt: the faithful teachers have been banished and falsely accused while the impious have taken over (ATHANASIUS). God, who possesses surpassing glory and greatness, has patiently endured scorn and beatings from his people (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Those to whom the ministry of the

Word is committed are to testify, calling heaven and earth to witness the evil done by God's people (BASIL). The words of the Lord through the prophet foreshadow baptism and Israel's rejection of it (EPISTLE OF BARNABAS). The chastisement of God's people by Jeremiah and the prophets is the highest form of instruction (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

Where the church is, there is the Spirit of God; a life-giving fountain issuing from Christ in contrast to the broken cisterns that provide putrid water (IRENAEUS). The faithful have received by faith the reviving water from the tree of Christ's passion and have not fallen away to false gods (TERTULLIAN). Christ has circumcised our hearts from evil by the springs of baptism, filling us with love for the Father. Though descendants of Canaan we have become heirs of Christ, freely receiving water from the living

fountain of God (JUSTIN MARTYR). Circumcision is a profitless baptism from broken cisterns dug by people, while the baptism of life comes from the living fountain of God as announced by Christ (JUSTIN MARTYR). Christ is the fount of pure wisdom and living water from which the church draws (AMBROSE).

Impulsive, demon-worshipping heretics have forsaken the source of truth and the fountain of living water, Christ, for broken cisterns (AUGUSTINE). The name “fountain of life” is a revelation of the mystery of the Trinity (THEODORET) and of Christ’s eternal nature begotten of the Father (ATHANASIUS). Those who separate themselves from the church catholic separate themselves from the source of living water (PACIAN). When the fountain of life is abandoned, iniquity ensues and deceives itself through separatist sympathies. The soul that has abandoned the fountain of life has been taken by the transitory world and is dead (AUGUSTINE). Though God is described as a fountain of living water, fire or spirit, these do not capture his divine essence (CHRYSOSTOM). The people of God that have been torn away by demons to heresies are attempting to draw water from broken cisterns (LACTANTIUS). The Lord spoke by his prophet that the baptism that he has ordained is valid against the false baptism of heretics who have hewn out broken cisterns that hold no water (CYPRIAN).

The body corrupted by sin once desired the broken cisterns but has now been satisfied by the Lord in the fountain of life. The body is a vessel for fidelity not to be corrupted by drinking from dissolute cisterns (JEROME). Holy Scripture assigns the term “pit” to those abominable detractions that draw away from the pure “wells” God gives (BASIL). The Jews abandoned the fountain and have made for themselves dry pits, and the living water turned its course to the hearts of the Gentiles (AMBROSE).

2:9-11 *God Contends with Israel*

GOD SHAMES ISRAEL THROUGH FALSE GODS.

CHRYSOSTOM: For since you are not persuaded by the Scriptures, I am compelled to shame you by those who are outside your company. God also did this to the Jews when he said, “Go to the Isles of Kittim and send to Kedar and find out if the nations will change their gods which are no gods.”¹ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 17.6.²

JEREMIAH DESCRIBES AN UNFAITHFUL

PEOPLE. BASIL THE GREAT: This alone among all evils is without comparison. This is a new act of shamelessness in life. “Go over to the islands of Kittim and see,” the Lord says. “Send to Kedar and consider carefully whether anything like this has ever been done—if a nation has changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.)” But the virgin “has changed her glory,” and her glory is in her shame. LETTER 46, TO A FALLEN VIRGIN.³

IDOLATRY OF THE USE OF IMAGES. JOHN CASSIAN: The same erroneous notion by which they used to worship devils formed in the figure of people they use even now in thinking that the incomprehensible and ineffable glory of the true Deity should be worshiped under the limitations of some figure. They think they are unable to grasp and hold anything if they do not have some image set before them that they can continually address while they are at their devotion and that they can carry about in their mind and have always fixed before their eyes. . . . Jeremiah also says, “My people have changed their glory for an idol.” CONFERENCE I.10.5.⁴

GOD’S CONDESCENSION TO HUMANKIND.

CHRYSOSTOM: God actually permitted erroneous and unworthy opinions of himself to prevail—opinions such as that he was formerly a body and that he was visible. . . . For he nowhere considers his own dignity but always what will be profitable to us. . . . Even in reproving he stoops down,

¹Jer 2:10-11 (LXX). ²NPNF 1 10:122. ³FC 13:123. ⁴NPNF 2 11:403.

as when he speaks by the prophet, “Has a nation changed their gods?” And in every part of Scripture there are instances of his humility both in words and actions. **HOMILIES ON TITUS 3.**⁵

DO NOT ABANDON THE ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITHFUL. **DIDASCALIA:** Those who are not saved always are taking care of those things that do not profit or benefit them in any way. So what kind of excuse is there for a Christian who withdraws from the assembly of the church? Such a person does not even imitate the Gentiles but by reason of his absence grows indifferent and careless. He stands aloof and does evil. The Lord said, . . . You have not walked in my statutes or kept my ordinances, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you,⁶ “you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.”⁷ How, then, shall the indifferent excuse himself, since he has no zeal for the assembly of the church? If anyone takes the occasion of worldly business to withdraw, let him know this: the trades of the faithful are called works of surplus, for their true work is religion. Pursue your trades, therefore, as a work of surplus, for your sustenance, but let your true work be religion. **DIDASCALIA 13.[2.60].**⁸

2:12 *The Heavens Appalled at Israel’s Fall*

REACTION OF NATURE: SUPPRESSION OF THE GOSPEL. **ATHANASIUS:** Who that witnessed these things, or that has merely heard of them, will not be greatly appalled and cry aloud to the Lord, saying, “Will you make a full end of Israel?”⁹ Who that is acquainted with these proceedings will not with good reason cry out and say, “A wonderful and horrible thing is done in the land,” and, “The heavens are astonished at this, and the earth is even more horribly afraid.” The ancestors of the people and the teachers of the faith are taken away, and the impious are brought in to lead the churches? Who that saw when Liberius, bishop of Rome, was banished, and when the great Hosius, the father of the

bishops, suffered these things, or who that saw so many bishops banished out of Spain and the other parts could fail to perceive—however little sense he might possess—that the charges against Athanasius also and the rest were false, and altogether mere calumny? This is also why others endured the suffering they did, because they saw plainly that the conspiracies laid against these men were founded in falsehood. **HISTORY OF THE ARIANS 6.46.**¹⁰

REMARKABLE HUMILIATION. **CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA:** Here too let the prophet Jeremiah say of the race of Israel, “Who will grant for my head to be waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I may weep for this people day and night?”¹¹ “For what lamentation can suffice for those who fell into the pit of destruction because of their wicked conduct to Christ, and for guilt so great, that not with words only did they grieve him, and mock him with blasphemous cries, but even laid sinful hands upon him and prepared the snare of death for him? . . . “The heavens themselves were astonished, and shuddered very greatly,” says the Lord. For the Lord of earth and heaven, the Creator and Maker of all, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, he who is of such surpassing greatness in glory and majesty, the foundation of everything, and that in which all things exist and abide—for all things exist in him¹²—he who is the breath of all the holy spirits in heaven is scorned like one of us and patiently endures beatings. **COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 150.**¹³

HEAVEN’S SURPRISE AT ISRAEL’S EVIL. **BASIL THE GREAT:** Not only Paul, but generally all those to whom is committed any ministry of the word, never cease from testifying but call heaven and earth to witness on the ground that now every deed that is done is done within them,

⁵NPNF 1 13:529*. ⁶Ezek 5:7 (LXX). ⁷Ezek 16:47. ⁸DA 126-27**. ⁹Ezek 11:13. ¹⁰NPNF 2 4:287. ¹¹Jer 9:1. ¹²Col 1:17. ¹³CGSL 594*.

and that in the examination of all the actions of life they will be present with the judged. So it is said, "He shall call to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people."¹⁴ And so Moses when about to deliver his oracles to the people says, "I call heaven and earth to witness this day,"¹⁵ and again in his song he says, "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak. Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth."¹⁶ Isaiah invokes: "Hear, O heavens. Listen, O earth."¹⁷ Jeremiah describes astonishment in heaven at the tidings of the unholy deeds of the people: "The heaven was astonished at this and was horribly afraid, because my people committed two evils." ON THE SPIRIT 13.30.¹⁸

THE LIVING FOUNTAIN PREFIGURES BAPTISM.

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS: Let us inquire whether the Lord took care to foreshadow the water and the cross. Now concerning the water, it is written with reference to Israel that they would never accept the baptism that brings forgiveness of sins but would create a substitute for themselves. For the prophet says, "Be astonished, heaven, and let the earth shudder greatly at this, because this people has done two evil things: they have abandoned me, the fountain of life, and they have dug for themselves a pit of death." EPISTLE OF BARNABAS II.1-2.¹⁹

THE HIGHEST FORM OF INSTRUCTION. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Reproof is the bringing forward of sin, laying it before one. This form of instruction God employs as necessary in the highest degree by reason of the feebleness of the faith of many. For he says by Isaiah, "You have forsaken the Lord and have provoked the holy One of Israel to anger."²⁰ He says also by Jeremiah: "Heaven was astonished at this, and the earth shuddered exceedingly. My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that will not be able to hold water." CHRIST THE EDUCATOR I.9.²¹

THE CHURCH HAS THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

IRENAEUS: For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God. Where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and every kind of grace. The Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of him are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most clear fountain that issues from the body of Christ. Instead, they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the church lest they be convicted. They reject the Spirit with the result that they are not instructed. AGAINST HERESIES 3.24.1.²²

2:13 Forsaking the Living Water

THE TREE OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

TERTULLIAN: This "tree" is a mystery. In ancient times, Moses sweetened the bitter water with it. The people who were perishing of thirst in the desert drank and were revived because of it.²³ We do this, too. We were drawn out from the calamities of the world in which we were lingering, perishing with thirst (that is, deprived of the divine Word). We drank "by the faith which is on him,"²⁴ the baptismal water of the "tree" of the passion of Christ. We have revived the faith from which Israel has fallen away, as foretold through Jeremiah, who says, "Send, and continue to ask whether such things have been done, whether nations will change their gods (and these are not gods!). But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled at this, O heavens!"—and when were they appalled? Undoubtedly when Christ suffered—"and be shocked," he says, "utterly desolate."²⁵ AN ANSWER TO THE JEWS 13.²⁶

BAPTISM CIRCUMCISES THE HEART.

JUSTIN MARTYR: Our hearts are thus circumcised from evil so that we are happy to die for the name of

¹⁴Ps 50:4 (49:4 LXX). ¹⁵Deut 4:26. ¹⁶Deut 32:1. ¹⁷Is 1:2. ¹⁸NPNF 2:8:19. ¹⁹AF 303, 305. ²⁰Is 1:4. ²¹ANF 2:229. ²²ANF 1:458*. ²³Ex 15:22-26. ²⁴Acts 26:18. ²⁵Jer 2:10-12. ²⁶ANF 3:170**.

the good Rock that causes living water to burst forth for the hearts of those who by him have loved the Father of all and that allows those who are willing to drink of the water of life. But you do not comprehend what I am saying when I speak these things. You have not understood what has been prophesied about what Christ would do. You do not believe us when we draw your attention to what has been written. For Jeremiah thus cries, "Woe to you! You have forsaken the living fountain and have dug for yourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. Shall there be a wilderness where Mount Zion is, because I gave Jerusalem a bill of divorce in your sight?" *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO* 114.²⁷

JACOB IS A TYPE OF CHRIST. JUSTIN MARTYR: Jacob, as I have remarked before, being himself a type of Christ, had married the two handmaids of his two free wives and had sons by them. He did this to indicate ahead of time that Christ would receive even all those who among Japheth's race are descendants of Canaan equally with the free and would have their children be heirs with them. This is what we are. But you cannot comprehend this because you cannot drink of the living fountain of God but of broken cisterns that can hold no water, as the Scripture says. *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO* 140.²⁸

BAPTISM OF LIFE. JUSTIN MARTYR: We do not receive that useless baptism of cisterns, for it has nothing to do with this baptism of life. This is why God also announced that you have forsaken him, the living fountain, and dug for yourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO* 19.²⁹

SAVING BAPTISM REPLACES ALL JEWISH WASHINGS. JUSTIN MARTYR: By reason, therefore, of this bath of repentance and knowledge of God, which has been ordained on account of the transgression of God's people, as Isaiah cries, we have believed and testify that that very baptism that he announced is alone able to purify those

who have repented. This is the water of life. But the cisterns that you have dug for yourselves are broken and profitless to you. *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO* 14.³⁰

THE FOUNT OF WISDOM AND LIFE. AMBROSE: And so the church of the soul went down to the fountain of wisdom to fill its own vessel and drew up the teachings of pure wisdom that the Jews did not wish to draw from the flowing fountain. Listen to him as he says who that fountain is: "They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water." *ISAAC, OR THE SOUL* 1.2.³¹

HERETICS HAVE ABANDONED THE TRUE FOUNTAIN. AUGUSTINE: Doubtless the heretics, who follow the teachings of demons,³² who think up false systems under the impulse of their spirit, who let it be known that they have seen visions that they have not seen and by their deadly arguments sow their seed in foolish and credulous hearts—doubtless these are the ones who do not hold the head, namely, Christ, the source of truth. Whatever is opposed to his teaching is without sense, and these are the "blind, leaders of the blind,"³³ of whom I think it is said, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." *LETTER* 121.³⁴

A FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER. THEODORET OF CYR: Now, here he clearly reveals to us the mystery of the holy Trinity: he called the only-begotten Word of God a fountain of life. This is the name, too, remember, God personally gave himself through the prophet Jeremiah: "They have forsaken me, a fountain of living water, taken their leave and dug for themselves cracked cisterns incapable of holding water." *COMMENTARY ON PSALM* 36.6.³⁵

²⁷ANF 1:256. ²⁸ANF 1:269. ²⁹ANF 1:203. ³⁰ANF 1:201*.

³¹FC 65:11*. ³²1 Tim 4:1-2. ³³Mt 15:14. ³⁴FC 18:326*. ³⁵FC 101:220-21.

THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST'S NATURE.

ATHANASIUS: Is it right to say that what is God's offspring and proper to him exists out of nothing? Or, is it reasonable in the very idea that what is from God has accrued to him, that someone should dare to say that the Son does not always exist? For in this again the generation of the Son exceeds and transcends human thoughts, that we become parents of our own children in time, since we ourselves first did not exist and then came into being. But God, in that he always exists, is always Father of the Son.³⁶ And the origination of humankind is brought home to us from parallel experiences. However, since "no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and the one to whom the Son will reveal him,"³⁷ therefore the sacred writers to whom the Son has revealed him have given us a certain image from things visible, saying, "Who is the brightness of his glory and the expression of his person"³⁸; and again, "For with you is the well of life, and in your light shall we see lights."³⁹ And when the Word chides Israel, he says, "You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom,"⁴⁰ and this is the fountain that says, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters."⁴¹ Although the illustration is rather ordinary and vague⁴² compared with what we would like, it is still nonetheless possible from it to understand something above humanity's nature, instead of thinking the Son's generation is on a level with ours. For who can even imagine that the radiance of light ever did not exist so that he should dare to say that the Son has not always existed or that the Son did not exist before his generation? Or who is capable of separating the radiance from the sun or to conceive of the fountain as always void of life that he should madly say, "The Son exists from nothing," when it is the Son who says, "I am the life"?⁴³ Or, who can conceive of him as "alien to the Father's essence," who says, "He that has seen me, has seen the Father"?⁴⁴ For the sacred writers, wishing us to understand things in this way, have given these illustrations. It is

unseemly and truly irreligious, when Scripture contains such images, to form ideas concerning our Lord from others that are neither in Scripture nor have any religious bearing. DEFENSE OF THE NICENE DEFINITION 3.12.⁴⁵

THE SPIRIT GIVES LIVING WATER IN THE CHURCH.

PACIAN OF BARCELONA: In fact, with us is "the living water," the very water that gushes from Christ. But you, separated from the everlasting fountain, from where do you receive your birth? And likewise had the Holy Spirit not departed from the original mother; from which did it come to you? Of course, perhaps the Spirit has followed one who engages in strife and, having abandoned so many priests and not content with its consecrated dwelling place, has truly loved the broken cistern of an impure fountain? From where do your people possess the Spirit, those whom an anointed priest has not sealed? From where do they possess the water, those who have withdrawn from their mother's womb? From where do they possess spiritual renewal, those who have lost the cradle of nuptial peace? LETTER 3.3.1.⁴⁶

SELF-DECEPTION OF SIN. AUGUSTINE: Iniquity lies to itself⁴⁷ either by corrupting the nature you

³⁶"A human being," Cyril of Alexandria says, "inasmuch as he had a beginning of existence, also has of necessity a beginning of begetting since what comes into being from him is a thing generated, but . . . if God's essence transcends time, or origin or interval, his generation too will transcend these. Nor does the fact that this generation does not occur in time deprive the divine nature of the power of generating. For the manner of divine generation is different from human generation; and God's existing is implied together with his generating, and the Son was in him by generation, nor did his generation precede his existence, but the Son always existed, and that existence was by generation" (*TheSaurus* 5). ³⁷Mt 11:27. ³⁸Heb 1:3. ³⁹Ps 36:9 (35:10 LXX). ⁴⁰Bar 3:12. ⁴¹All these titles, Word, Wisdom, Light, and so on, serve to guard the title Son from any notions of parts or dimensions. For example, "He is not composed of parts, but being impassible and single. He is impassible and indivisibly Father of the Son . . . for . . . the Word and Wisdom is neither creature, nor part of him whose Word he is, nor an offspring passibly begotten." See Athanasius *Oration Against the Arians* 1.28; 1.19. ⁴²Athanasius *Letter to Serapion* 20. ⁴³Jn 14:6. ⁴⁴Jn 14:9. ⁴⁵NPNF 24:157-58*. ⁴⁶FC 99:41. ⁴⁷Ps 26:12 (LXX).

have made and ordained or by perverting it. It lies to itself when it practices an immoderate use of things permitted or when it burns for things forbidden to that use which is against nature. It lies to itself when convicted, raging with heart and voice against you as it kicks against the goads,⁴⁸ or when—breaking through the pale of human society—they audaciously rejoice in private cliques or divisions on the basis of whether they have been pleased or offended. These things happen whenever you are abandoned and whenever, from a self-willed pride, they choose to align themselves instead with something false that they cherish instead of you, O Fountain of life, the one, true Creator and Ruler of the universe. *CONFESSIONS* 3.8.16.⁴⁹

DEATH APART FROM CHRIST. *AUGUSTINE:* The arrogance of pride, the pleasure of lust and the poison of curiosity are the motions of a dead soul. It is not that it is dead in such a way as to lack all movement; rather, it dies by “abandoning the fountain of life” and thus is taken up by the transitory world and is conformed to it. *CONFESSIONS* 13.21.30.⁵⁰

GOD IS ALL THAT HE IS CALLED. *CHRYSOSTOM:* Still the Anomoeans have another well-rehearsed argument. What is that? Scripture says, “God is spirit.”⁵¹ Tell me, then, does that bring his essence to light? Will anyone accept that argument if he has even drawn a little way near to the doors of the divine Scriptures? According to that argument, God will also be fire, just as it has been written that God is spirit, so has it been written, “Our God is a consuming fire,”⁵² and again, “a fountain of living water.” Not only will God be a spirit and a fountain and a fire; he will also be a soul, a wind, a human mind, and other things far more absurd than these. *AGAINST THE ANOMOEANS* 5.41.⁵³

HERETICAL CHURCHES ARE BROKEN CISTERNS. *LACTANTIUS:* But since many heresies have existed and the people of God have been

torn apart at the instigation of demons, the truth must be briefly exposed by us and placed in its own peculiar dwelling place, so that if any one shall desire to draw the water of life, he may not be born to broken cisterns that hold no water but may know the abundant fountain of God. Watered by this fountain, he may enjoy perpetual light. *DIVINE INSTITUTES* 4.30.⁵⁴

THE INVALIDITY OF THE BAPTISMS OF HERETICS. *CYPRIAN:* We read the letter you wrote concerning those who seem baptized among heretics and schismatics, as to whether they ought to be baptized when they come to the church catholic, which is one. On this matter, although you yourselves hold the truth and certainty of the catholic rule, yet since you have thought that of our mutual love we ought to be consulted, we put forward our opinion, not as a new one though. Rather, we join with you in equal agreement, in an opinion long since decreed by our predecessors and observed by us—judging and holding it for certain that no one can be baptized outside the church, since there is one baptism appointed in the holy church. And it is written in the words of the Lord, “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” *LETTER* 69.1.⁵⁵

THE BODY CORRUPTED BY SIN. *JEROME:* O blessed change! Once the body wept, but now laughs forevermore. Once it desired the broken cisterns of which the prophet speaks, but now it has been satisfied in the Lord, the fountain of life.⁵⁶ *LETTER* 108.22.⁵⁷

MARITAL FIDELITY. *JEROME:* Let him “possess his vessel in sanctification and honor,”⁵⁸ let him drink of his own wells, not out of the dissolute cisterns of the harlots that cannot hold within

⁴⁸Acts 9:5. ⁴⁹NPNF 1 1:65**. ⁵⁰NPNF 1 1:200*. ⁵¹Jn 4:24.

⁵²Heb 12:29; cf. Deut 4:24; Is 33:14. ⁵³FC 72:154-55. ⁵⁴ANF 7:133*. ⁵⁵ANF 5:375-76. ⁵⁶Jn 4:14. ⁵⁷NPNF 2 6:207. ⁵⁸1 Thess 4:4.

them the pure waters of chastity.⁵⁹ LETTER 128.3.⁶⁰

HOLD TO THE CONFESSION YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT. BASIL THE GREAT: Is he not one who bewitches the sheep of our patriarch, that they may not drink from the pure water that springs up unto life everlasting⁶¹ but may draw down on themselves the saying of the prophet: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water"? Because they should confess that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, as the divine Word teaches and as they who have pondered it more deeply have taught. LETTER 8.⁶²

THE "PIT" AND THE "WELL." BASIL THE GREAT: "He has opened a pit and dug it."⁶³ We do not find the name of "pit" ever assigned in the divine Scriptures to something good or a "well" of water to something bad. That into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers is a pit.⁶⁴ There is a slaughter "from the firstborn of Pharaoh to

the firstborn of the captive woman that was in prison."⁶⁵ In the Psalms, "I am counted among those who go down to the pit."⁶⁶ In Jeremiah it is said, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 11.8 (Ps 7).⁶⁷

JEWISH REJECTION OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL. AMBROSE: So when the whole world was parched with the drought of Gentile superstition, then came that dew of the heavenly visits on the fleece. But after that the lost sheep of the house of Israel⁶⁸ (whom I think that the figure of the Jewish fleece foreshadowed), after that those sheep, I say, "had refused the fountain of living water," the dew of moistening faith dried up in the breasts of the Jews and that divine Fountain turned away its course to the hearts of the Gentiles. ON THE HOLY SPIRIT I.INTRO.7.⁶⁹

⁵⁹Prov 5:15. ⁶⁰NPNF 2 6:259. ⁶¹Jn 4:14. ⁶²FC 13:22-23. ⁶³Ps 7:15 (7:16 LXX). ⁶⁴Gen 37:24. ⁶⁵Ex 12:29. ⁶⁶Ps 88:4 (87:5 LXX). ⁶⁷FC 46:179**. ⁶⁸Mt 15:24. ⁶⁹NPNF 2 10:94.



THE EVIL AND BITTERNESS OF FORSAKING GOD JEREMIAH 2:14-19

OVERVIEW: Parents will condemn their wicked children on account of their wretched rejection of the Lord (PACHOMIUS). The servant of God leads the sheep to the quiet waters of the Lord, which upon drinking, good works flow (AUGUSTINE). God who created you and underwent the suffering of death calls you back from the churned waters (PACHOMIUS). The enemy seeks to prepare a trap for you, to draw you back to Egypt, but discipline in small matters can deter his attack in greater ones (ISAAC). To drink the waters of Egypt is to foolishly depart from God (ATHANASIUS). God permits punishment in order to educate and teach those who are not convinced by his Word (CHRYSOSTOM). God, who is unchangeably good, does not hurt anyone, but punishment comes on account of sin. Even one who is justified feels the bitterness of his daily sins (JOHN CASSIAN). While human beings are instructed through their punishments, God displays patience with the ungodly (IRENÆUS).

2:18 *How Will Egypt and Assyria Help?*

OUR PARENTS WILL CONDEMN US. PACHOMIUS: Truly, I fear that our parents according to the flesh will be found to condemn us and to quote the words of Scripture, "How have you become wretched, greatly put to shame? Great is your affliction; a fire is kindled on you; your branches have become useless." For this cause they have become a prey. The lions have roared at it and have given out their voice against it.¹ For this reason, the beloved are like the abhorred and the crown of your head is taken away. Cities that face the south, how are you shut off? There is nobody to give access to you. Let indeed the wicked be removed, that he may not see the glory of the Lord. PARALIPOMENA 19.²

GOOD WORKS FLOW. AUGUSTINE: If we are not false servants of God, if there is in us a spark of that fire whereby "charity seeks not its own,"³ we certainly should make our good works appear, not only before God but even before people, for fear that, while drinking of quiet waters in our own conscience, we should be constrained by careless feet to drive the sheep of the Lord to drink the troubled waters. LETTER 125.⁴

FLEE TO GOD. PACHOMIUS: My child, flee to God, for it is he who created you. It was for you that he underwent these sufferings. For he said, "I gave my back to the whips and my cheek to the slaps. I did not turn my face away from the shame of spittle."⁵ O mortal, what is the good of your going to Egypt, to drink the water of the Geon that is churned up? INSTRUCTIONS 1.31.⁶

DISCIPLINE IN SANCTIFICATION. ISAAC OF NINEVEH: The intellect especially strays when the eyes wander and the belly is at ease. . . . If you patiently endure in the desert, you will not be tempted, for there you will see no women, nor [will you encounter] anything harmful to your mode of life, nor will you hear unseemly cries. "And what hast thou to do with the way of Egypt, to drink the water of Geon?"⁷ Understand what I say. Show the enemy your patience and experience in small matters so that he does not seek great things from you. Let these small matters be a pattern for you, that through your struggles in small things you may lay a trap for him and give him no leisure to contrive great snares for you. ASCETICAL HOMILIES 40.⁸

¹Jer 11:16; 2:14-15. ²CS 46:42-43*. ³1 Cor 13:5. ⁴FC 18:340-41*. ⁵Is 50:6. ⁶CS 47:27*. ⁷The Peshitta has "the water of the Nile." ⁸AHSIS 200.

THE SOURCE OF LIVING WATER. ATHANASIUS: For the fool does not know that those who depart far from God shall perish. And besides, there is the restraint of the prophetic admonition that says, ‘What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Gihon? And what have you to do in the way of Ashur, to drink the waters of the rivers?’ FESTAL LETTERS 7.5.⁹

2:19 Judah Lacks Fear of God

LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE. CHRYSOSTOM: When he does not convince with his word, God many times permits the experience of things to be the teaching, something that he also said to the Jews. When he expended myriads of words though the prophets, he neither persuaded nor embraced the Jews. Allowing them to be educated through punishment, he said to them, “Your apostasy shall correct you, and wickedness shall reprove you.” HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING I.4.27.¹⁰

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SIN. JOHN CASSIAN: So also that unwearied goodness of God and his unchanging nature hurt no one indeed, but we ourselves by falling from on high and tending to the depths are the authors of our own death, or rather the very fall becomes death to the one who falls. . . . For “your own wickedness shall reprove you, and your apostasy shall rebuke you. Know and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for you to have left the Lord your God”; for “everyone is bound by the cords of his sins.”¹¹ CONFERENCE 3.23.9.¹²

THE JUSTIFIED IS STILL A SINNER. JOHN CASSIAN: This then is that body of death from which we cannot escape, confined in those who are perfect, who have tested “how gracious the Lord is,”¹³ daily feel with the prophet “how bad for himself and bitter it is for a man to depart from the Lord his God.” CONFERENCE 3.23.16.¹⁴

GOD IS PATIENT EVEN WITH APOSTATES.

IRENAEUS: The Lord has therefore endured all these things on our behalf, in order that we, having been instructed by means of them all, may be in all respects judicious for the time to come. He endured that, having been rationally taught to love God, we may continue in his perfect love. God has displayed patience in the case of humankind’s apostasy. While humankind has been instructed by means of it, as also the prophet says, “Your own apostasy shall heal you.” God thus determined all things beforehand in order to bring people to perfection, to edify them and to reveal God’s dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and that righteousness be perfected, and that the church may be fashioned after the image of his Son and that humankind may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming mature through such privileges to see and comprehend God. AGAINST HERESIES 4.37.7.¹⁵

⁹NPNF 2 4:525. ¹⁰FC 96:12. ¹¹Hos 7:13; 9:12; Prov 5:22.
¹²NPNF 2 11:525. ¹³Ps 34:8 (33:9 LXX). ¹⁴NPNF 2 11:528.
¹⁵ANF 1:520-21**.





ISRAEL'S HOPELESS IDOLATRY JEREMIAH 2:20-25

OVERVIEW: God did not create death (ORIGEN). The great Physician allows evil chastisements to happen for the benefit and profit of the sick patient (EUSEBIUS). The law, though planted by God as a true vine, has become a bitter, strange vine in the hands of Jewish tradition (ORIGEN). Though God called many to be children, some abandoned the path of godliness for bitterness (THEODORET). God reproaches evil through Jeremiah and in doing so declares evil to be a defect caused by people, and not effected by his divine creation (FULGENTIUS). God is not a desert (ORIGEN). Sin is an evil fruit coming from the will, not produced on account of the Planter, who planted it for good. Sin is a free choice of the soul, not an effect of God, who planted humankind as a pure vine (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). Christ spoke by the prophet as the One who planted a pure vine (AMBROSE). The Lord spoke through the prophet's harsh words not meant for despair or abandonment but to rouse his people to repentance (CHRYSOSTOM). Those who do not look for salvation do not expect a last judgment (JEROME). The one who can hold fast to the

heavenly precepts in the midst of diverse evils is dedicating a library to the divine Word within himself constructed from the sound, uniform prophetic and apostolic Scriptures (ORIGEN).

2:21-22 A Choice Vine Gone Bad

GOD DID NOT MAKE DEATH. ORIGEN: God did not make "death, and he does not delight in the destruction of living things; for he created all things that they might exist, and the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of hades is not on earth."¹ Passing over, then, a little passage, I will ask, From where, then, did death come? "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world."² If, then, there is something excellent in our regard, God has made it, but we have created evil and sins for ourselves. For the same reason, the beginning of the passage just read from the prophet speaks in a rhetorical sense to those who have bitter-

¹Wis 1:13-14. ²Wis 2:24.

ness in the soul contrary to the sweetness that God fashioned for it: “How have you turned to bitterness, you strange vine?” as if he was saying, God did not make lameness, but he has made all things swift of foot, yet what cause arose that has made the lame lame? And God has made all limbs absolutely sound, but what cause arose that makes things suffer? In the same way, the soul, not only of the first man but of all people, arose according to the image—for the statement “Let us make man according to our image and according to our likeness,”³ applies to all people. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 2.1.1.⁴

THE GOOD PHYSICIAN HURTS THAT HE MIGHT HEAL. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: So

also God is introduced by the prophet as saying to the person who had become evil by his own choice, “Yet I had planted you a fruitful vine. How have you turned back into a wild vine?” Anywhere it is said that evils happen to the wicked from God, it must be understood as an accidental coincidence of name. This name is given to the chastisements that God in his goodness is said to send not for the hurt of those who are chastised but for their benefit and profit, in the same way that a physician might be thought to apply bad things in his painful and bitter remedies to save the sick. PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL 13.3.⁵

FAITH IS BUILT ON SCRIPTURE. ORIGEN: Let us attempt to discuss also a third exposition at the moral level. If there is anyone who, while evils are increasing and vices are overflowing, can turn from the things that are in flux and passing away and fallen and can hear the word of God and the heavenly precepts, this person is building an ark of salvation within his own heart and is dedicating a library, so to speak, of the divine word within himself. He is erecting faith, love and hope as its length, breadth and height. He stretches out faith in the Trinity to the length of life and immortality. He establishes the breadth of love with the compassion of

gentleness and kindness. He raises the height of hope to heavenly and exalted places. For while he walks on the earth, he has his “citizenship in heaven.”⁶ But he brings the sum of his acts back to one. For he knows that “all indeed run, but one receives the palm of victory,”⁷ of course, being that one who was not changeable with a variety of thoughts and instability of mind. But he does not construct this library from planks that are unhewn and rough but from planks that have been squared and arranged in a uniform line, that is, not from the volumes of secular authors but from the prophetic and apostolic volumes. For these authors, who have been hewn by diverse temptations, all vices having been curtailed and excised, contain life that has been squared and set free in every part. For the authors of secular books can indeed be called “lofty trees” and “shady trees”—for Israel is accused of having fornicated “under every lofty and shady tree”—because they speak indeed in a lofty manner and use flowery eloquence; they have not, however, acted as they have spoken. They cannot, therefore, be called “squared planks” because life and speech will by no means be equal in them. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 2.6.⁸

THE CHURCH HAS REPLACED ISRAEL.

ORIGEN: Thus does Paul also boast that the observance of the law and the whole glory of the Jewish system was to him like garbage, so that he might be found in Christ, having not his own justification that was of the law, but the justification from God.⁹ In this sense, therefore, Paul did not keep his own vineyard—that is to say, he did not keep the Jews’ tradition after he had received the faith of Christ. Perhaps the reason why he did not keep it was that, though it had been planted by God as a true vine, it had turned into the bitterness of a strange vine. “For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah . . . their clusters are

³Gen 1:26. ⁴FC 97:23. ⁵PFG 703-4**. ⁶Phil 3:20. ⁷1 Cor 9:24. ⁸FC 71:86-87. ⁹Phil 3:7-9.

bitter; their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of asps."¹⁰ COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS 2.3.¹¹

SIN ALIENATES PEOPLE FROM GOD. THEODORET OF CYR: Now, those who were called children and were enrolled in the ranks of children made themselves foreign by proving ungrateful for favors done, limping in respect of the faith and abandoning the path of godliness. Thus God said through the prophet Jeremiah, "How did you turn into bitterness to me, a foreign vine, whereas I planted every vine to be genuine and fruitful?" COMMENTARY ON PSALM 18.19.¹²

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF EVIL. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE: God through Jeremiah reproaches the evil of the human will in such a way that he teaches that it is foreign to him. He says, "Yet I planted you as a choice vine. . . . How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?" He says that the vine is foreign to him not because of some defect in the divine creation but by the avoidance of his own will, which is justly blamed because it brought forth bitterness, something God did not produce in it. It had the bitterness not from God's predestination or from God's work but from the evil of its own will. Because of that bitterness, God rebukes it a second time through the prophet mentioned above: "Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God: the fear of me is not in you."¹³ Since, therefore, it is evil and bitter for a person to have left the Lord and not to have in him a fear of God, who is contrary to the truth in such a way that he thinks it comes from a good and kind God. LETTER TO MONIMUS 1.3-4.¹⁴

GOD IS NOT A DESERT. ORIGEN: The God who "brings forth the sun on the evil and the good" is a desert to no one. To no one is he who "rains on the just and unjust" ever a land made dry.¹⁵ How is he a desert, when he brings forth the day and causes the night to rest? How is he a desert,

when he causes the land to bear fruit? How is he a desert, when he provides for each person in his soul so that it is endowed with reason, so that it can grasp knowledge and exercise its intelligence, and in the body so that it has healthy sense faculties?¹⁶ And so with respect to the way of what is universal, God is not a desert. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 3.2.1.¹⁷

SIN IS FREELY CHOSEN. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Sin is a terrible thing, and the most grievous disease of the soul is iniquity, which corrupts the fiber of the soul and makes it liable to eternal fire. It is an evil freely chosen, the product of the will. The prophet clearly declares that we sin of our own free will: "I had planted you, a choice vine of fully tested stock; how could you turn into bitterness, a spurious vine?" The planting was good, but the fruit coming from the will is evil. So the planter is blameless, but the vine will burn with fire since it was planted for good and bore evil fruit of its own will. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 2.1.¹⁸

SIN AS A FREE CHOICE. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Learn this also, that before the soul comes into the world, it has committed no sin. But though we came into the world sinless, we now of our own choice commit sin. . . . Remember also how God again accuses them and says, "I have planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed; how then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?" CATECHETICAL LECTURES 4.19.¹⁹

CHRIST'S VOICE IS THE VOICE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. AMBROSE: Yet if the husband's power allures you, pray tell me who it was that spoke in the prophet, saying, "O Lord, make it known to me that I may know. Then I saw their thoughts. I was led as a harmless lamb to the slaughter and knew it not. They took counsel

¹⁰Deut 32:32-33. ¹¹ACW 26:116. ¹²FC 101:130. ¹³Jer 2:19. ¹⁴FC 95:217-18. ¹⁵Mt 5:45. ¹⁶Heb 5:14. ¹⁷FC 97:28-29. ¹⁸FC 61:96. ¹⁹FC 61:128-29.

together against me, saying, Come, let us throw wood into his bread.”²⁰ For if the Son here spoke of the mystery of his coming incarnation—because it was blasphemous to suppose that the words are spoken concerning the Father—then surely it is the Son who speaks in an earlier passage: “I have planted you as a fruitful vine—how did you become bitter, and a wild vine?” *ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH* 4.12.166²¹

JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE. AUGUSTINE: For it is by similitude, and not by any personal propriety, that he is thus called a vine. For when he says, “I am the true vine,” it is to distinguish himself, doubtless, from that vine to which the words are addressed: “How are you turned into sourness, as a strange vine?” For how could that be a true vine that was expected to bring forth grapes and brought forth thorns? *TRACTATES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN* 80.1.²²

ALIENATION FROM GOD. AUGUSTINE: All those who refuse Christ for another become strangers. And how are they made strangers? Because even that vine, though planted by him, when it had become sour, what did it hear? “Wherefore you have been turned into sourness, O alien vine?” *EXPOSITIONS ON THE PSALMS* 56.3.²³

THE CLEANSING OF PRAYER AND REPENTANCE. CHRYSOSTOM: Hence God gave the gift of prayer. But he does this, even though he does not need for us to ask, but that we might not grow indifferent from being saved without

effort. For this reason, he said to Jeremiah, “Do not pray for this people, for I will not hear you,”²⁴ not wishing to stop his praying (for he earnestly longs for our salvation) but to terrify them. Seeing this, the prophet did not stop praying. So that you may see that God did not wish to turn Jeremiah from it, but to shame them that he said this, hear what it says. “Don’t you see what they are doing?”²⁵ Also when he says to the city, “Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me,” it is not that he may cast them into despair that he so speaks, but that he may rouse them to repentance. *HOMILIES ON ROMANS* 14.²⁶

2:25 *Keep Your Sandals On*

WHEN PEOPLE REJECT BETTER THINGS.

JEROME: Nothing makes God as angry as when people from despair of better things cling to those that are worse. Indeed, this despair in itself is a sign of unbelief. One who despairs of salvation can have no expectation of a judgment to come. For if he dreaded such, he would by doing works prepare to meet his Judge. Let us hear what God says through Jeremiah: “Withhold your foot from a rough way and your throat from thirst,” and again, “shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?”²⁷ *LETTER* 122.1.²⁸

²⁰Jer 11:18. ²¹NPNF 2 10:283. ²²NPNF 1 7:344. ²³NPNF 1 8:219. ²⁴Jer 11:14. ²⁵See Ezek 8:6 (LXX). ²⁶NPNF 1 11:448*. ²⁷Jer 8:4. ²⁸NPNF 2 6:225.





LET THE GODS YOU WORSHIP SAVE YOU
JEREMIAH 2:26-29

OVERVIEW: Those who are in Christ are not full of shame but are bold in the freedom of faith (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Making an idol is spiritual adultery (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). God allows himself to be called the father of people, even though he is far above them (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). The heretics are not wise because they do not fear God (AMBROSE).

2:26 Israel Should Be Ashamed

NEED FOR REPENTANCE. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Against those who, in the greatness of their wickedness, have scorned God's goodness and rejected the Savior, there is decreed wrath and misery. . . . For those who are in their sins are full of shame. For so it is somewhere said of the Israelites, who violated the law of Moses: Like the shame of a thief when he is caught, so will the children of Israel be ashamed. But those who are in Christ by faith, escaping from the pollutions of sin, are certainly not full of shame but also have that boldness that becomes those who are free. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 95.¹

2:27 They Turned Their Backs on God

IDOLATRY IS ONE FORM OF ADULTERY.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: It is adultery, if you abandon the ecclesiastical and true knowledge and the opinion about God, and consent to false and incompatible opinion, either by deifying any created object or by making an idol of anything that does not exist, so as to overstep, or rather step away from, knowledge. . . . For this reason, the noble apostle calls one of the kinds of fornication, idolatry.² In following the prophet says, "My people have committed fornication with wood and stone. They have said to the wood, 'you are my father' and to the stone, 'you have begotten me.'" STROMATEIS 6.16.³

ISRAEL REJECTED GOD'S BENEVOLENCE.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: With unspeakable mercy, God deigned to be called the Father of humankind. He is in heaven, they on earth. He is the eternal Maker. They are made in time. He holds the earth in the hollow of his hand. They are like grasshoppers on the earth.⁴ Yet people forsook their heavenly Father and said to wood, "you are my father, and to the stone, you have begotten me." And for this reason, I think, the psalmist

¹CGSL 382. ²Col 3:5; Gal 5:20; 1 Pet 4:3. ³ANF 2:514. ⁴Is 40:12, 22.

says to humankind, "Forget your own people as well, and your father's house."⁵ CATECHETICAL LECTURES 7.12.⁶

TRUE WISDOM. AMBROSE: How is a person wise who looks not for his Maker but says to a stone, "You are my father"? Who says to the devil as the Manichaeon does, "You are the author of my being"? How is Arius wise, who prefers an imperfect and inferior creator to one

who is a true and perfect one? How can Marcion or Eunomius be wise, who prefer to have an evil rather than a good God? And how can one be wise who does not fear his God? For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."⁷ DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 1.25.117.⁸

⁵Ps 45:10 (44:11 LXX). ⁶NPNF 2 7:46**. ⁷Ps 111:10 (110:10 LXX). ⁸NPNF 2 10:20.



GOD WILL PUNISH UNREPENTANT ISRAEL JEREMIAH 2:30-37

OVERVIEW: Just as a physician gives medicine to patients who cannot be cured, God disciplines his children (AUGUSTINE). Although God disciplined his people with the Babylonian captivity, they did not take correction (EPHREM). The virgin Mary is the maid who could not forget

her attire (JEROME). God is angry at everyone who claims to be sinless. When you pray, first confess your sins. God has mercy on those who remember their sins and confess them (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Put your confidence in God, not in yourself (SALVIAN).

2:30 Israel Does Not Accept Correction

PERSISTENT IMPENITENCE. AUGUSTINE: “Some of those measures do not succeed,” you say. Is a remedy, then, to be discontinued because the illness of some patients is incurable? You are looking at those who are so hardened that they are not affected by such correction. Concerning these it has been written: “In vain have I struck your children. They have not received correction.” LETTER 13.93.¹

GOD’S MERCY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Behold, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree.² This refers to the three captivities in which the Israelites were taken away as captives, so that they might be chastened, but they were not chastened. In vain have I smitten your children, but they have not taken correction. To show that even after these things he was still patient, he said to the vinedresser, Cut it down. The vinedresser replied to him, Leave it, Lord, for another year.³ He agreed to be patient with the Israelites. COMMENTARY ON TATIAN’S DIATESSARON 14.26.⁴

2:32 Can a Bride Forget Her Wedding Dress?

CONCERNING MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY. JEROME: It is the virgin Mary of whom God by the mouth of Jeremiah speaks, saying, “Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?” Concerning her we read of a great miracle in the same prophecy⁵—that a woman should compass a man and that the Father of all things should be contained in a virgin’s womb. AGAINST JOVINIANUS 1.32.⁶

2:35 Do Not Plead That You Are Innocent

DEFILEMENT ANGERS GOD. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: It makes God angry for us to imagine that we are free from all impurity. He is even found saying to one of those who led polluted

lives, Behold, I have a suit with you because you say I have not sinned, in that you have acted very contemptuously in repeating your ways. For the repetition of the way to sins is for us, when we are overtaken by offenses, to refuse to believe that we are guilty of the defilement that arises from them. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 149.⁷

NEED FOR CONFESSION OF SIN. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Let us, therefore, pray without ceasing, according to the expression of the blessed Paul.⁸ Let us be careful to do so aright. . . . Remember him who says by the voice of Isaiah, Declare your sins first, that you may be justified;⁹ remember too that he rebukes those who will not do so and says, Behold, I have a judgment against you, because you say I have not sinned. Examine the words of the saints, for one says, “The righteous is the accuser of himself in the beginning of his words,”¹⁰ and another says, “I said, I will confess against myself my transgression to the Lord; and you forgave the iniquity of my heart.”¹¹ COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 120.¹²

IMPORTANCE OF CONFESSION. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: For God readily accepts and has mercy on those who do not forget their offenses but fall down before him and ask of him forgiveness. But he is severe, and very justly so, on the hardhearted and the proud, and on one who in his great ignorance acquits himself of blame. For God said to one thus disposed, Behold, I have a suit against you, because you say, I have not sinned. For who can boast that he has a pure heart? Or who can have confidence that he is undefiled by sins? The road then to salvation, and which delivers those who earnestly walk on it from the wrath of God, is the confession of offenses, and to say in our prayers to him who

¹FC 18:59. ²Lk 13:7. ³Lk 13:7-8. ⁴ECTD 226. ⁵Jer 31:22 (38:22 LXX). ⁶NPNF 2:6:370**. ⁷CGSL 592*. ⁸1 Thess 5:17. ⁹Is 43:26. ¹⁰Prov 18:17. ¹¹Ps 31:5. ¹²CGSL 482*.

purifies the wicked, Forgive us our sins. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 76.¹³

2:37 The Lord Rejects Those You Trust

PUT CONFIDENCE IN GOD. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: Our soldiers were brought low by a similar disdain of pride and by the same outcome. That saying of the prophet was brought home to our army: "The Lord shall cast aside your con-

fidence, and you shall not have prosperity." We were confident in our own wisdom and strength, contrary to the command of God, who says, "Let not the wise person glory in his wisdom or the strong person in his strength, but let him who glories glory in this, to know and understand me, because I am the Lord."¹⁴ THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD 7.II.¹⁵

¹³CGSL 316*. ¹⁴Jer 9:23-24. ¹⁵FC 3:200.



ISRAEL'S MANY LOVERS JEREMIAH 3:1-5

OVERVIEW: God shows his unfaithful people not justice, but pity (GREGORY THE GREAT). God married his people, even though they were prostitutes with many lovers. If God forgave those who committed fornication again and again, he will certainly forgive those who have fallen only once (CHRYSOSTOM). Souls that prostitute themselves to bodily desires forsake

union with the Spirit (ORIGEN). To pursue the love of the world and its corruption is to leave the Lord for prostitutes (AUGUSTINE). Widows must guard their chastity, for if they exceed it in the least way, they will yield to excess. Flirting leads to harlotry (JEROME). Harlots belong to whoever has money, whether he is noble or slave, gladiator or freeman (ORIGEN). After censuring

his unfaithful people, God calls them back to faithfulness (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

3:1-2 *Israel Plays the Harlot*

GOD'S MERCY. GREGORY THE GREAT: Those who have experienced the sins of the flesh are to be admonished to observe vigilantly with how great a benevolence God opens the bosom of his pity to us, if after transgressions we return to him. He says through the prophet, "If a man puts away his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, shall he return to her again? Shall not that woman be polluted and contaminated? But you have played the harlot with many lovers. Yet return again to me, says the Lord." So, concerning the wife who has played the harlot and has deserted, the argument of justice is put forward. Yet to us, returning after the fall, not justice but pity is displayed. Where we are surely meant to gather, how great is our wickedness if we return not, even after transgression, seeing that, when transgressing, we are spared with so great pity. Or what pardon for the wicked will there be from him who, after our sin, ceases not to call us. PASTORAL RULE 3.28.¹

THE WAY GOD COMES AS PHYSICIAN. CHRYSOSTOM: He has come as a physician, not as a judge. Therefore, in like manner, as those of old took harlots for wives, even so God too married to himself the nature that had played the harlot. This also prophets from the beginning declare to have taken place with respect to the synagogue. But that spouse was ungrateful toward him who had been a husband to her, while on the contrary, the church, when once delivered from the evils received from our ancestors, continued to embrace the Bridegroom. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 3.5.²

GOD DESIRES TO BESTOW MERCY. CHRYSOSTOM: "You did sit waiting for them like a deserted bird." Now if God did not exclude from

repentance her who had many times committed fornication, much more will he embrace your soul, which has now fallen for the first time. For certainly there is no lover of bodily beauty, even if he be very frantic, who is so inflamed with the love of his mistress as God longs after the salvation of our souls. . . . See at least, both in the introduction of Jeremiah and many other places of the prophets, when he is despised and scorned, how he again hastens forward and pursues the friendship of those who turn away from him. He also himself made clear in the Gospels saying, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! The city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"³ LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE 1.13.⁴

FAITHLESS PEOPLE ARE AS ADULTERERS. ORIGEN: Scripture designates the children of adulterers as imperfect.⁵ Such a soul, to be sure, that prostrates itself totally to the tendencies of the flesh and bodily desires, has forsaken union with the spirit, and as if turned away from God will shamelessly hear, "You have the face of a harlot. You have made yourself shameless to all." She will be punished, therefore, like a harlot, and her children will be ordered to be prepared for slaughter. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 1.15.⁶

3:3-5 *The Face of a Whore*

THE DANGER OF PRIDE. AUGUSTINE: To move away from that one simple and single good toward this multitude of pleasures, and to draw near to the love of the world and earthly corruptions, is what going whoring away from the Lord consists in. It is to such a one that he cries out, "You have acquired the face of a whore and become totally shameless." SERMON 142.2.⁷

¹NPNF 2 12:58. ²NPNF 1 10:17*. ³Mt 23:37. ⁴NPNF 1 9:103**. ⁵Wis 3:16. ⁶FC 71:68. ⁷WSA 3 4:414*.

ADMONITION FOR CHASTENESS. JEROME:

No, a widow must take every precaution not to overstep by an inch the bounds of chastity. For if she once oversteps them and breaks through the modesty that becomes a matron, she will soon riot in every kind of excess. So much so that the prophet's words shall be true of her, "You have a whore's forehead, you refuse to be ashamed." LETTER 123.9.⁸

BEWARE OF HARLOTRY. JEROME: When they go out, they do their best to attract notice and with nods and winks encourage troops of young fellows to follow them. Of each and all of these the prophet's words are true, "You have a whore's forehead. You refuse to be ashamed." Their robes have but a narrow purple stripe, it is true. And their headdress is somewhat loose, so as to leave the hair free. LETTER 22.13.⁹

INFIDELITY AS HARLOTRY. CHRYSOSTOM:

And this again is the peculiarity of harlots that they are his who gives the gold. Even if he is a slave or a gladiator, or any person whatever, yet if he offers their hire they receive him. But the free, even should they be nobler than all, they do not accept without the money. . . . For that shamelessness makes harlots, hear the prophet saying, "You were shameless toward all. You had a harlot's countenance." This may be said to the covetous also, "You were shameless toward all," not toward these or those, but "toward all." ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS 15.7.¹⁰

APPLY DISCIPLINE SLOWLY. CHRYSOSTOM:

What then is one to do? . . . We ought not to apply punishment merely to the scale of the offense. Rather, keep in view the disposition of

the sinner so that, while wishing to mend what is torn, you do not make the rent worse. Because you do not wish, in your zealous endeavors to restore what is fallen, to make the ruin greater. Weak and careless characters are addicted for the most part to the pleasures of the world. If they have the opportunity to be proud of their birth and position, they may yet, if gently and gradually brought to repent of their errors, be delivered, partially at least, if not perfectly, from the evils by which they are possessed. But if anyone were to inflict the discipline all at once he would deprive them of this slight chance of amendment. When the soul has been forced to put off shame, it lapses into a callous condition. It neither yields to kindly words, nor bends to threats nor is susceptible of gratitude but becomes far worse than that city that the prophet reproached, saying, "You had the face of a harlot, refusing to be ashamed before all men." ON THE PRIESTHOOD 2.4.¹¹

THE AIM OF JEREMIAH'S ACCUSATION. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Accusation is censure of wrongdoers. . . . Of this help the divine Instructor made use by Jeremiah, saying, "You have a prostitute's forehead. You were shameless toward all. You did not call me to the house, I who am your father, and Lord of your virginity." "And a fair and graceful harlot skilled in enchanted potions." With consummate art, after applying to the virgin the disgraceful name of whoredom, he at once calls her back to an honorable life by filling her with shame. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.9.¹²

⁸NPNF 2 6:233*. ⁹NPNF 2 6:27. ¹⁰NPNF 1 14:441*. ¹¹NPNF 1 9:41*. ¹²ANF 2:230*.



THE PROSTITUTE SISTERS
ISRAEL AND JUDAH
JEREMIAH 3:6-10

OVERVIEW: The Scriptures call all sins fornication or adultery (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). To observe the command against adultery spiritually, a Christian must forsake all heathen superstitions and occult practice and the astrologers they trusted to help them (JOHN CASSIAN). Those who worship other gods will reap the fruit of their infidelity (THEODORET). God is both kind and severe with his people (ORIGEN). Even though God's people have committed spiritual adultery, Christ calls them to return to him (BASIL). In a new kind of goodness, he receives even the soul that committed adultery (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, ORIGEN). He pleads for his people to return. When we return to God, he does not hold our infidelities against us (CHRYSOSTOM). It is better to sin doing an evil you think is good, rather than to sin knowingly (JEROME).

3:6-9 Israel Gets Judah to Join Her Harlotry

ALL SIN IS INFIDELITY TO GOD. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: It is not only bodily sin that is called fornication and adultery, but any sin you have committed, and especially transgression against that which is divine. Perhaps you ask how we can prove this. "They prostituted themselves," it says "with things they made."¹

Don't you see an impudent act of fornication? And again, "They committed adultery with pieces of wood."² Don't you see a kind of adulterous religion? Do not then commit spiritual adultery, while keeping your bodies chaste. ON THE WORDS OF THE GOSPEL, "WHEN JESUS HAD FINISHED THESE SAYINGS," ORATION 37.19.³

IMPORTANCE OF FIDELITY. JOHN CASSIAN: It is written in the law: "You shall not commit adultery."⁴ This is rightly observed according to the simple meaning of the letter by one who is still in bondage to foul passions. But by one who has already forsaken these dirty acts and impure affections, it must be observed in the spirit, so that he may forsake not only the worship of idols but also all heathen superstitions and the observance of auguries and omens and all signs and days and times, or at any rate he should not be entangled in the conjectures of words and names that destroy the simplicity of our faith. This is the kind of fornication by which Jerusalem is said to have been corrupted, the fornication "on every high hill and beneath every leafing tree." The Lord criticized Jerusalem for this through the

¹Ps 106:39 (105:39 LXX). ²Jer 3:9 (LXX). ³NPNF 2 7:343**. ⁴Ex 20:14 (20:13 LXX).

words of the prophet, “Let them stand and save you, these astrologers who studied the stars and counted the months so as to tell from these what was coming to you.” CONFERENCE 2.14.II.⁵

THE INFIDELITY OF ISRAEL. THEODORET OF CYR: Those who place themselves far from your care and choose to serve idols will reap the destructive fruit of defection. He calls idolatry infidelity here. God likewise says also through Jeremiah, “She went up every high hill and under every green tree and was unfaithful there. I said, after all this infidelity of hers, ‘Return unto me,’ and she did not return.” Again, “She committed adultery with tree and stone,” meaning, “Leaving me, her spouse, she served false gods.” Accordingly, here too he called the worship of idols infidelity. COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS 73.12.⁶

GOD IS BOTH KIND AND SEVERE. ORIGEN: Note the kindness and severity of God. For he is not kind without being severe or severe without being kind. For if he were only kind and not severe, we would not think much of his kindness. If he were severe and not kind, perhaps we would also despair in our sins. But God is both a kind and a severe God—for we who repent need his kindness, but those of us who persist in sins need his severity. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 4.4.2.⁷

SCRIPTURE HEALS BY INVITING TO REPENTANCE. BASIL THE GREAT: In addition to these things, “when people fall, do they not rise again? If one turns away, does he not return?”⁸ Why, then, is the virgin “turned away with a stubborn revolting,” even though she heard Christ, her spouse, saying through Jeremiah, “And when she had committed all these fornications, I said, ‘Return to me, and she did not return?’”⁹ “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?”¹⁰ Indeed, many safeguards against evil would you find in the divine Scripture and many remedies which from destruction bring salvation—the mysteries of death and resurrec-

tion, the words of the terrible judgment and everlasting punishment, the doctrines of repentance and the forgiveness of sin, those innumerable examples of conversion, the drachma, the sheep, the son who spent his livelihood with harlots, was lost and found, was dead and alive again.¹¹ Let us use these safeguards against evil. Through them, let us heal our soul. LETTER 46.¹²

ADMONITION IS THE EXPRESSION OF LOVING CARE. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Admonition, then, is loving care’s censure and produces understanding. Such is Christ the Educator in his admonitions, as when he says in the Gospel, “How often would I have gathered your children, as a bird gathers her young ones under her wings, and you would not!”¹³ And again, the Scripture admonishes, saying, “And they committed adultery with stock and stone and burned incense to Baal.”¹⁴ For it is a very great proof of God’s love that, though knowing well the shamelessness of the people who had kicked and bounded away, he nevertheless exhorts them to repentance. He says by Ezekiel, “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of scorpions. Nevertheless, speak to them, if by chance they will hear.”¹⁵ Further, to Moses he says, “Go and tell Pharaoh to send my people forth, but I know that he will not send them forth.”¹⁶ CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.9.¹⁷

GOD WILL WELCOME ALL WHO TRULY REPENT. ORIGEN: This is a new kind of his goodness that even after adultery God nevertheless would receive the soul that returns and repents from the heart as he also says through the prophet, “If a woman leaves her husband and sleeps with another man, shall she return to her husband? Will she not be contaminated? You, however, have committed fornication with your many shepherds and returned to me.”¹⁸ He says

⁵NPNF 2 11:440. ⁶FC 102:9. ⁷FC 97:35. ⁸Jer 8:4. ⁹Jer 3:7 (LXX). ¹⁰Jer 8:22. ¹¹Lk 15. ¹²FC 13:125*. ¹³Mt 23:37. ¹⁴Jer 3:9; 7:9; 11:13; 32:29 (39:29 LXX). ¹⁵Ezek 2:6-7. ¹⁶Ex 6; 8. ¹⁷ANF 2:228**. ¹⁸Jer 3:1.

the same thing elsewhere, "After you committed fornication, with all these, I said, 'Return to me.' And you have not thus returned, says the Lord." *HOMILIES ON EXODUS 8.5.*¹⁹

CHRIST'S MINISTRY. CHRYSOSTOM: He directs his speech to the city, in this way, too, being minded to correct his hearers, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" What is meant by this repetition? This is the manner of one pitying her and gently loving her. She is like a woman who is beloved. He always loved her indeed, yet she has despised him who loved her. Therefore at the point of being punished, he pleads, being now about to inflict the punishment. This he does also in the prophets, using these words, "I said, 'she will return to me,' but she did not return." *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 74.3.*²⁰

CALLED TO CONTINUAL REPENTANCE. CHRYSOSTOM: These two indeed are chief sins, engendered by violent lusts, the one of sexual desire, the other of the desire of money. Hear what God said to Jerusalem, "I said, after she had committed all these prostitutions, she will return to me, and she did not return." When we have come back to the earnest love of God, he remembers not the former things. God is not as people. He reproaches us not with the past, neither does he say, when we repent, "Why were you absent for so long a time?" Only let us approach him as we ought. Let us cleave to him earnestly and rivet our hearts to his fear. . . .

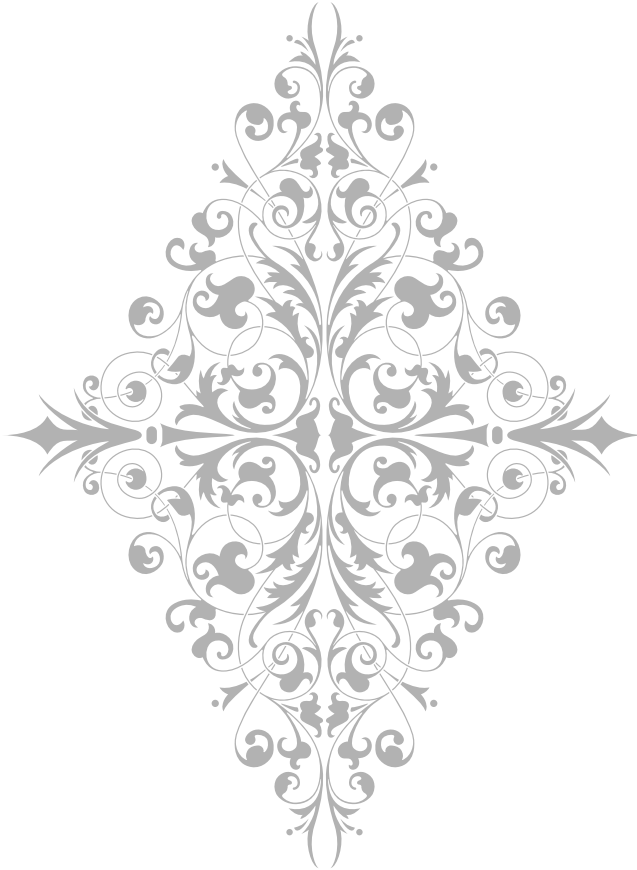
How many other such changes would you see, both to have taken place back then and now taking place every day? For this reason I say, "Neither let him on the cross despair, nor let him in the church be confident." For to this last it is said, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."²¹ And to the other, "Shall not he that falls arise?"²² And, "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees."²³ Again,

to these he said, "Watch"; but to those, "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead." These need to preserve what they have, and those to become what they are not. These need to preserve their health, those to be delivered from their infirmity, for they are sick. But many even of the sick become healthy, and of the healthy many, in being remiss, get sick. *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 67.3-4.*²⁴

THE CALL TO RETURN. CHRYSOSTOM: For the evils we have once perpetrated cannot provoke God so much as our being unwilling to make any change in the future. To sin may be a merely human failing, but to continue in the same sin ceases to be human and becomes altogether devilish. For observe how God by the mouth of his prophet blames this more than the other. "For," we read, "I said unto her after she had done all these deeds of fornication, return to me, and yet she returned not." . . . "Declare you first your iniquities that you may be justified." Now this he demands from us in order to intensify our love toward him. *LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE 1.15.*²⁵

IMPORTANCE OF FIDELITY. JEROME: "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not returned to me with her whole heart, but feignedly." It is a smaller sin to follow evil that you think is good than not to venture to defend what you know for certain is good. If we cannot endure threats, injustice and poverty, how shall we overcome the flames of Babylon? Let us not lose by hollow peace what we have preserved by war. I should be sorry to allow my fears to teach me faithlessness when Christ has put the true faith in the power of my choice. *AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 1.PROLOGUE.2.*²⁶

¹⁹FC 71:327. ²⁰NPNF 1 10:447**. ²¹1 Cor 10:12. ²²Jer 8:4. ²³Is 53:3. ²⁴NPNF 1 10:412-13**. ²⁵NPNF 1 9:106**. ²⁶NPNF 2 6:449*.





THE CALL FOR FAITHLESS
ISRAEL'S RETURN
JEREMIAH 3:11-25

OVERVIEW: God is a shepherd to the shepherds and a guide to the guides (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). God will provide shepherds who govern wisely (BASIL). God takes his people away from bad shepherds and gives them to good ones (AUGUSTINE). Since God rebukes those he loves, priests should love those whom they rebuke (CYPRIAN). No sin we commit against God can cool the passion of his love for us (JOHN CASSIAN). God will heal those children who return to him (AUGUSTINE). With our whole heart, let us return to God, who is good to us (ORIGEN, HORSIESI).

3:14-15 *Shepherds After God's Heart*

MAY THE LORD ATTEND A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: God, who gave the word¹ to those who preach the gospel with great power for the perfection of the gospel, may he himself hold me by my right hand, and guide me with his counsel and receive me with glory.² He is a shepherd to shepherds and a guide to guides that we may feed his flock with knowledge,³ not with the instruments of a foolish shepherd,⁴ according to the blessing, and not according to the curse pronounced against the people of former days. May he give strength and power to his people,⁵ and himself present them to himself.⁶ IN DEFENSE OF HIS FLIGHT TO PONTUS, ORATION 2.117.⁷

GOD WILL PROVIDE A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD.

BASIL THE GREAT: We should consider our pastor happy in his death because he has laid aside his life at an age rich with years and has gone to his rest with the greatest honors from the Lord. Concerning all else we have this to recommend, that you should cast off all depression, regain self-control and rise to the necessary duty of caring for the church, so that the holy God may give heed to his own flock and provide for you a shepherd according to his will, one who will govern you wisely. LETTER 62.⁸

CHRIST'S FLOCK LISTENS TO HIS VOICE.

AUGUSTINE: And what are we saying, brothers? Aren't there any good shepherds? Doesn't it say in another passage of the Scriptures, "I will set up for them shepherds after my own heart, and they shall feed them with instruction." So how can he fail to give the sheep he takes from the bad shepherds to good ones, and say, as though there were absolutely no good ones left anywhere at all, "I will feed them"? He said to Peter, "Feed my sheep." So what are we to make of it? When the sheep are entrusted to Peter, the Lord does not say on that occasion, "I will feed my sheep,

¹Ps 68:11 (67:12 LXX). ²Ps 73:23-24 (72:23-24 LXX). ³Jer 3:15.

⁴Zech 11:15. ⁵Ps 68:35 (67:36 LXX). ⁶Eph. 5:27. ⁷NPNF 2 7:227.

⁸FC 13:155-56*.

don't you do it," but, "Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep."⁹ SERMON 46.23.¹⁰

PASTORS LOVE THOSE THEY DISCIPLINE.

CYPRIAN: Brethren and especially priests, if God rebukes whom he loves, and rebukes him for the very purpose of amending him, do not hate, but love those whom you rebuke, that you may amend them. God also before predicted by Jeremiah and pointed to our times, when he said, "And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, and they shall feed you with the food of discipline." But if in Holy Scripture discipline is frequently and everywhere prescribed, and the whole foundation of religion and of faith proceeds from obedience and fear, what is more fitting for us urgently to desire? What is there more to wish for and to hold fast than to stand with roots strongly fixed and with our houses based with solid mass on the rock, which is unshaken by the storms and whirlwinds of the world, so that we may come by the divine precepts to the rewards of God? THE DRESS OF VIRGINS 1-2.¹¹

3:19-22 God Wants to Bless

GOD'S ROBUST LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE. JOHN CASSIAN: Our obstinacy and scorn, reflecting our spirit of rebellious disdain for him when he urges us to return and be saved, is described in the following comparison. He says, "And I said you shall call me Father and shall not cease to walk after me. But as a woman that despises her lover, so has the house of Israel despised me, says the Lord." It is only appropriate that as he has compared Jerusalem with an adulteress forsaking her husband, he compares his own love and persevering goodness with a man's undying love for a woman. For the goodness and love of God that he has always shown to the human race could not be more appropriately described by any comparison than the case of a man inflamed with most ardent love for a woman. God's love is overcome by no injuries that might make him stop caring for our salvation or that might

drive him from his first intention as if he were defeated by our sins. Instead, he is consumed by a more burning passion for her, the more he sees that he is slighted and despised by her. CONFERENCE 2.13.8.¹²

GOD'S ABIDING, ROBUST MERCY. AUGUSTINE: Through the prophet the Lord speaks and declares with his own gracious words how much mercy and goodness he wishes to bestow on humankind. He says, "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he has committed, and keeps all my commandments and does justice and mercy, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he has done. In his justice, which he has done, he shall live." And, "Is it my will that a sinner should die," says the Lord God, "and not that he should be converted from his evil ways, and I shall cause him to live?" In another passage we find, "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him on the day that he turns from his wickedness." And again: "Return, you returning children, and I will heal your sorrow."¹³ THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 2.¹⁴

WE WILL BE YOURS. ORIGEN: God has then said to us, "Return, you children, and when you return, I will heal your afflictions." And when we see our afflictions and the promise of healing, we answer and say immediately, "Behold, we will be yours because you are the Lord our God."¹⁵ So when we obey and say, "We will be yours," let us remember that we submitted ourselves to God in saying, "We will be yours." And by saying, "We will be yours," we belong to no other, not to the spirit of anger, or the spirit of grief or the spirit of desire; let us not belong to the devil or his angels.¹⁶ But after we were called and said, "Behold, we will be yours," let us show by works that when we have promised to become his, we have devoted ourselves to none other than him.

⁹Jn 21:15-17. ¹⁰WSA 3 2:278*. ¹¹ANF 5:430*. ¹²NPNF 2 11:426*. ¹³Jer 3:22. ¹⁴FC 16:13*. ¹⁵Jer 3:22. ¹⁶See Mt 25:41.

HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 5.2.4.¹⁷

ENCOURAGEMENT. HORSIESI: Let us return to the Lord our God, and whenever we pray, he, who daily urges us to pause and get to know him, will hear us. And in another place he says, "Return to me, and I will return to you." And again, "Return to me, my backsliding children, and I will rule over you." Ezekiel likewise calls on us, saying, "Why will you die, O house of Israel? I want not the death of the sinner, only that he turn from his evil ways and live."¹⁸ The most merciful Lord and source of all goodness cries out to us in the Gospel and declares, "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Carry my yoke on you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will

find rest for your souls."¹⁹ Let us consider that the goodness of God calls us to repentance, and holy people encourage us to salvation. Let us not harden our hearts and collect against ourselves a store of divine anger for the day of wrath. Then, on that day, shall be revealed the just judgment of God, who will repay each one according to his deeds. But let us return to the Lord with our whole heart. According to the words of Moses, who reminds us, "If you return to the Lord with your whole heart, he will purify your heart and the heart of your descendants."²⁰ **THE TESTAMENT OF HORSIESI 33.**²¹

¹⁷FC 97:43. ¹⁸Ezek 33:11 ¹⁹Mt 11:28-29. ²⁰Deut 30:2, 6. ²¹CS 47:196-97.



RETURN, O ISRAEL
JEREMIAH 4:1-4

OVERVIEW: The Lord calls on Israel to swear by his name so that they would learn to adore him alone (THEODORET) and not worship idols (CHRYSOSTOM). Instead, we are to imitate the example of holy people so that thorns and briars may not spring up among God's people

(HORSIESI). Teach Christians only what they are spiritually ready to hear (ORIGEN). Use the grace given to produce fruit (ATHANASIUS). When theologians are formed by Scripture, thorns are not sown in them (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS).
God calls for circumcision of the heart, not

the flesh. God gave spiritual circumcision for the salvation of obedient people (TERTULLIAN). He circumcised our ears so that we might hear and believe (EPISTLE OF BARNABAS). Circumcision of the flesh is now void, having served as a type (THEODORET), and spiritual circumcision is promised in its place (CYPRIAN). God commands Israel to leave behind the letter of the law and follow the Spirit instead (JEROME). Circumcision of the heart is sufficient for the faithful (DIDASCALIA). Christians are circumcised in the heart by the Holy Spirit in baptism (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM).

4:2 Swearing by the Lord's Name

TRUE WORSHIP EVANGELIZES. THEODORET OF CYR: "If you swear, 'The Lord lives,' in truth, in justice and in righteousness." In the sacred Gospels, by contrast, he made more perfect prescriptions than these: "It was said to the ancients, You shall not swear falsely: you shall discharge your oaths to the Lord. But I tell you, do not swear at all."¹ He bids Jews, being weak as they are, to swear by him so that through the habit of swearing they may learn to adore him alone. He also promises that if this is done, "nations will be blessed through him and through him will praise God in Jerusalem." In other words, when they practiced true worship of God, many of the neighboring peoples would learn about godliness. ON JEREMIAH 1.4.2.²

TRUST IN GOD, NOT IDOLS. CHRYSOSTOM: If the old law had belonged to the devil, it would not have led people away from idolatry. Rather, it would have drawn them on and cast them into it, for this is the devil's desire. But now we see the opposite effect produced by the old law. And indeed this very thing, the oath, was ordained of old for this cause: that they might not swear by the idols. "You shall swear," said he, "by the true God."³ There were then no small advantages that the law effected, but rather very great. That they came to the "strong meat" was the work of its care. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 17.5.⁴

4:3 Break the Fallow Ground

IMITATE GODLY PEOPLE. HORSIESI: Let us imitate the example of all these people, that there may be peace and righteousness in our days, and that what we read in another place may not happen to us: "Thorns and briars shall spring up on the soil of my people." Rather, let us clean the fallow ground for ourselves and not sow among thorns. THE TESTAMENT OF HORSIESI 44.⁵

TEACH CAREFULLY. ORIGEN: This, then, "is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Break up fallow ground and sow not among thorns.'" This word is especially directed to those who teach, lest they entrust what is said to the pupils too soon before they have prepared the fallow ground in their souls. For whenever they put the "hand to the plow,"⁶ they make the "ground fallow" in their souls, according to the "beautiful"⁷ and the "good earth"⁸ of those who hear. Then, when they sow, the sowers do not sow "among thorns." But if prior to the "plow" and prior to the making of "fallow ground" in the heart of those who hear, someone takes the holy seeds, the word concerning the Father, concerning the Son and Holy Spirit, the word concerning the resurrection, the word concerning the punishment, the word concerning the final rest, concerning the Law, the Prophets and in general each of the Scriptures, and sows them, he disobeys the first commandment, which states first, break up their fallow ground; second, and do not sow among thorns. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 5.13.2.⁹

NO CHEAP GRACE. ATHANASIUS: The departure from virtue gives place for the entrance of the unclean spirit. There is, moreover, the apostolic injunction, that the grace given us should not be unprofitable. Those things that he wrote particularly to his disciple, he enforces

¹Mt 5:33-34. ²PG 81:525. ³Jer 4:2 (LXX) ⁴NPNF 1 10:121*. ⁵CS 47:203*. ⁶See Lk 9:62. ⁷Mt 13:8. ⁸Lk 8:8. ⁹FC 97:54-55.

on us through him, saying, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you. For he who tills his land shall be satisfied with bread. But the paths of the slothful are strewn with thorns.” The Spirit warns ahead of time not to fall into them, saying, “Break up your fallow ground. Do not sow among thorns.” *FESTAL LETTERS* 3.3.¹⁰

THE PROPER THEOLOGIAN. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: In the last discourse we laid down clearly what sort of character the theologian ought to bear, what kind of subject he may philosophize about, and when and to what extent he may do so. We saw that he ought to be pure, as far as he can be, in order that light may be apprehended by light. He ought to associate with serious people in order that his word will not be fruitless by falling on an unfruitful soil and creating a climate of calm within from the whirl of outward distractions. Then we will not be like madmen constantly trying to catch our breath. This way, we can go as far as we have ourselves advanced or at least in the direction we are advancing. This is how it is when we have broken up for ourselves the fallows of Divinity, so as not to sow seed among thorns.¹¹ We have plowed the ground,¹² being molded and molding others by Holy Scripture. *ON THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ORATION* 2(28).1.¹³

4:4 Circumcise Yourself to the Lord

MARCION WRONGLY INSISTS ON CIRCUMCISION. TERTULLIAN: Paul mentioned “certain false brethren as having crept in secretly,” who wished to turn the Galatians to another gospel.¹⁴ He shows that that adulteration of the gospel was not meant to transfer them to the faith of another god and christ, but rather to perpetuate the teaching of the law. He blames them for maintaining circumcision and observing times, and days, and months and years, according to those Jewish ceremonies that they ought to have known were now abolished, according to the new dispensation willed by the Creator,

who foretold in ancient times this very thing by his prophets. Thus he says by Isaiah: “Old things have passed away. Behold, I will do a new thing.”¹⁵ And in another passage: “I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.”¹⁶ In the same he said by Jeremiah: Make to yourselves a new covenant, “circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart.” It is this circumcision, therefore, and this renewal, that the apostle insisted on when he forbade those ancient ceremonies concerning which their very founder announced that they were one day to cease. *AGAINST MARCION* 1.20.¹⁷

SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION COMES WITH CHRIST. TERTULLIAN: This was God’s forethought: He gave circumcision to Israel, as a sign by which they might be identified when the time should arrive that their above-mentioned reward should prevent them from entering Jerusalem. This situation, because it would come to be, was announced. Because we see it accomplished, we recognize it. Just as the physical circumcision, which was temporary, was made to be “a sign” in a rebellious people, so spiritual circumcision has been given for salvation to an obedient people.

The prophet Jeremiah says, “Renew yourselves, and do not sow among thorns. Be circumcised to God, and circumcise the foreskin of your heart,” and in another place he says, “Behold, days shall come, the Lord says, when I will draw up for the house of Judah and for the house of Jacob a new testament; not such as I once gave their fathers in the day that I led them out from the land of Egypt.”¹⁸ *AN ANSWER TO THE JEWS* 3.¹⁹

THE CHRISTIAN HAS A CIRCUMCISED HEART. EPISTLE OF BARNABAS: God circumcised our ears

¹⁰NPf 2 4:513*. ¹¹Mt 13:7. ¹²Is 28:25. ¹³NPf 2 7:288**.

¹⁴Gal 1:6-7. ¹⁵Is 43:19. ¹⁶Jer 31:32. ¹⁷ANF 3:285-86. ¹⁸Jer 31:31-32. ¹⁹ANF 3:154**.

that we might hear the word and believe. But the circumcision in which they trust has also been abolished. For God said that circumcision was not of the flesh. But they were mistaken because an evil angel was teaching them vain cleverness. He says to them, "Thus says the Lord your God." Here I find a commandment, "sow not among thorns. Be circumcised to your Lord." And what does he say? "Circumcise the hardness of your heart, and do not stiffen your neck." Take this again: "Behold, says the Lord, all the Gentiles are uncircumcised in the foreskin, but this people is uncircumcised in their heart." EPISTLE OF BARNABAS 9.1-5.²⁰

CIRCUMCISION AS A TYPE. THEODORET OF CYR: He clearly brought out that the visible circumcision is a type of the invisible, and that if there is circumcision within, bodily circumcision is unnecessary. Taking a lead from this text, the divine apostle wrote to the Romans, "A person is not a Jew, you see, who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision what is outward, in the flesh; rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit and not in letter. That person's commendation comes not from people but from God."²¹ ON JEREMIAH 1.4.4.²²

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART. CYPRIAN: The first circumcision of the flesh is made void, and the second circumcision of the spirit is promised instead. In Jeremiah, "Thus says the Lord to the men of Judah, and to them who inhabit Jerusalem, 'Renew newness among you, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise the foreskin of your heart lest my anger go forth like fire, and burn you up, and there be none to extinguish it.'" TO QUIRINUS: TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE JEWS 1.8.²³

CIRCUMCISION AS PURIFICATION. JEROME: What we translate as "be circumcised to the Lord and remove the foreskin of your hearts," Symmacus renders as "be purified to the Lord and remove the malice from your hearts,"

understanding circumcision as purification and the foreskin as vice. But this was commanded to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, who followed the true faith and lived in the church, that they not sow among thorns,²⁴ meaning that they should not spread the word of the gospel among those who would suffocate God's planting, but that they should first sow on fallow ground and remove every thorn bush and briar patch, so that pure seeds may be received by pure soil. In other words, as it is said elsewhere, "Do not cast your pearls before swine, and do not give holy things to dogs."²⁵ For how is it possible for anyone to hear the word of God and to conceive and to bear fruit, whose soul is full of the hardness of the world? Hence, "be circumcised to the Lord and remove the foreskin of your hearts," is commanded to none other than the men of Judah and residents of Jerusalem, that they might forsake the letter that kills and follow the vivifying Spirit instead.²⁶ "If you fail to do this," he adds, "my wrath will go forth like fire and burn, and there will be no one to extinguish it." Therefore, he warns and cautions beforehand, lest he be compelled to do this, as we also observe among the Ninevites, to whom a warning was issued that they repent to avoid his imminent wrath.²⁷ But all of this evil occurs because of our malicious thoughts or intentions. Where are those who say that sin is not located in one's thoughts, when every wickedness, according to the truth of the Gospel, proceeds from the heart?²⁸ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 1.70.1-4.²⁹

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART. DIDASCALIA: Circumcision of the heart is sufficient for the faithful. It is spiritual, as he said by Jeremiah; light a lamp and "sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord. Remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah." DIDASCALIA 24.[6.12].³⁰

²⁰FC 1:204-5*. ²¹Rom 2:28-29. ²²PG 81:528. ²³ANF 5:510*.

²⁴See Mt 13:7ff. ²⁵Mt 7:6. ²⁶See 2 Cor 3:6. ²⁷See Jon 3:4ff. ²⁸See Mt 15:19. ²⁹CCL 74:41*. ³⁰DA 204**.

CHRISTIANS ARE CIRCUMCISED IN CHRIST BY BAPTISM. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Let us see, then, how Abraham is the father of many nations.³¹ We confess that he is the father of Jews, through descent according to the flesh. But if we hold to the descent according to the flesh, we are forced to say that the prophecy was false. For he is no longer father of us all according to the flesh. Yet the example of his faith makes us all children of Abraham. How and in what manner? With people it is unbelievable that one should rise from the dead. In the same way, it is also unbelievable that there should be offspring from aged persons as good as dead. Yet when Christ is preached as having been crucified on the tree, as having died and

risen again, we believe it. By the likeness of our faith, therefore, we become the adopted children of Abraham. And consequently by our faith, like him, we receive the spiritual seal, being circumcised by the Holy Spirit through the font of baptism, not in the foreskin of the body, but in the heart, according to the words of Jeremiah: "For the sake of the Lord, be circumcised, remove the foreskins of your hearts." And according to the apostle: In the "circumcision that is of Christ, buried together with him in baptism," and so forth. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 5.6.³²

³¹Rom 4:17-18. ³²NPNF 2 7:30*.





DISASTER FROM THE NORTH JEREMIAH 4:5-18

OVERVIEW: Nebuchadnezzar is a type of Satan, who as a roaring lion seeks to destroy the church with false doctrine (JEROME). Therefore, it is all the more important that we wash our hearts with the pure water of repentance that is not mixed with the filth of sin (CHRYSOSTOM).

4:7 The Lion Who Seeks to Destroy

THE DEVIL SOWS FALSE DOCTRINE. JEROME: This is the true Nebuchadnezzar, as we have said before, about whom Peter also said, "Our adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion."¹ He ascended from the depths to which he had been relegated and for fear that he is sent back, the plunderer or destroyer of the nations entreats and arises. He is whom it was said that "he will dominate all his enemies"² and those who boast in the face of the Lord: "I have gone around the earth and trampled it."³ For whom has the venom of the devil not affected except for he alone who is able to say "the prince of this world comes and finds that he has nothing over me"?⁴ He repeatedly makes all the territory of the church a wasteland, that those who have left the church might do battle against it, those about whom John

the Evangelist also says, "They went forth from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us."⁵ The cities of the land of Judah are devastated, and the councils of heretics flourish. It can be said, therefore, about every patron of the authors of perverse doctrine: "A lion ascended from his lair and a destroyer of nations has arisen," and so on. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 1.72.1-3.⁶

4:14 Wash Your Heart

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTIC REPENTANCE. CHRYSOSTOM: To pray with unwashed hands is a thing of no consequence, but to pray with an unclean conscience is the worst of all evils. Listen to what was said to the Jews, who were much concerned about such exterior purification, "Wash your heart from wickedness. How long shall hurtful thoughts abide in you?" Let us also wash our hearts, not with filth but with pure water, with almsgiving and not with covetousness. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 73.⁷

¹1 Pet 5:8. ²Ps 10:5 (9:26 LXX). ³Job 2:2. ⁴Jn 14:30. ⁵1 Jn 2:19. ⁶CCL 74:42-43*. ⁷FC 41:290*.



ANGUISH OVER JUDAH'S DESTRUCTION JEREMIAH 4:19-31

OVERVIEW: The leaders of Israel continued their lack of understanding when they rejected Christ, the Word of God (IRENÆUS) as do heretics such as the Arians, who were “wise” in their misquoting of Scripture but lacked the knowledge to understand and obey what the Scriptures

say (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, JUSTIN MARTYR). Those who lack such understanding place a false priority on outward appearance rather than true beauty (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

4:22 *People Without Understanding*

THE PHARISEES REFUSED GOD'S WORD—CHRIST. IRENAEUS: The scribes and Pharisees, who from the times of the law had begun to despise God, did not receive his Word, that is, they did not believe in Christ. Of these Isaiah says, "You princes are rebellious, companions of thieves, loving gifts, following after rewards, not judging the fatherless and negligent of the cause of the widows."¹ He speaks in Jeremiah in the same way. "They," he says, "who rule my people did not know me. They are senseless and imprudent children. They are wise to do evil, but to do well they have no knowledge." *AGAINST HERESIES* 4.2.6.²

ABANDONING THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: The ancient and pious doctrine that defended the Trinity was abolished, by setting up a fort and battering down the incarnation. They opened the door to impiety by means of what is written, using as their pretext their reverence for Scripture and for the use of approved terms but really introducing unscriptural Arianism. For the phrase "like, according to the Scriptures," was a bait to the simple, concealing the hook of impiety, a figure seeming to look in the direction of all who passed by, a boot fitting either foot, a winnowing with every wind, gaining authority from the newly written wickedness and tool against the truth. "They were wise to do evil, but they had no knowledge to do good." *ON THE GREAT ATHANASIUS, ORATION* 21.22.³

THE PEOPLE LACK FAITH. JUSTIN MARTYR: In the beginning, God commanded that you do these things because of your wickedness. In the same way, because of your determination to re-

main wicked, or rather, because you are increasingly prone to do it, he uses the same precepts to call you to remember it or come to know it. But you are a people hard-hearted and without understanding, both blind and lame, children without faith, as he himself says, honoring him only with your lips, far from him in your hearts, teaching doctrines that are your own and not his. *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO* 27.⁴

4:30 *The Vanity of False Beauty*

MODESTY IN DRESS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: And if Plutus is blind, are not those women who are crazy about him and have an attraction with him blind too? Having, then, no limit to their lust, they push on to shamelessness. For the theater, and pageants, and many spectators, and strolling in the temples and loitering in the streets, that they may be seen conspicuously by all, are necessary to them. For those who glory in their looks, not in heart, dress to please others. For as the brand shows the slave, so do gaudy colors the adulteress. "For though you clothe yourself in scarlet, and deck yourself with ornaments of gold and anoint your eyes with paint, in vain is your beauty," says the Word by Jeremiah. Is it not monstrous that while horses, birds and the rest of the animals spring and bound from the grass and meadows, rejoicing in ornament that is their own, in mane and natural color and varied plumage, woman, as if inferior to the brute creation, should think herself so unlovely as to need foreign, bought and painted beauty? *CHRIST THE EDUCATOR* 3.2.⁵

¹Is 1:23. ²ANF 1:464-65. ³NPNF 2:7:275*. ⁴ANF 1:208**.
⁵ANF 2:273*.



ALL THE PEOPLE HAVE BROKEN THEIR YOKE
JEREMIAH 5:1-6

OVERVIEW: Although prayers for our correction persist (JEROME) and even after God has afflicted us, we still have not corrected our lives (SALVIAN). Disasters occur to discipline stubborn people (CYPRIAN), but those who are spiritually poor are treated mercifully (CHRYSOSTOM) because they lack knowledge (BASIL), although poor and rich alike are judged when they break the law (THEODORET). Yet the spiritually strong are praised (ORIGEN).

5:1 Does Anyone Seek the Truth?

WE RESIST PRAYERS FOR OUR CORRECTION. JEROME: After the address of the Lord in which he commanded, “go throughout Jerusalem,” and so on, the prophet addresses the Lord in return: “Lord, your eyes look for faith,” which is *’emûnā* in Hebrew, referring not to

the works of the Jews, in which they exulted according to ceremonies of the law, but to the faith of Christians, through which we are saved by faith.¹ In this chapter, therefore, we learn that supplications are brought for the correction of our faults. This is why he says, “You struck them, and they did not grieve; you wore them out, but they refused to accept discipline.” For Jerusalem was emended through many torments and chastisements and was found to have no shame for their faults after all of this, but with rock-hard shamelessness on their brow, they would not convert to the better way. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH I.93.1-2.²

5:2 God Disciplines His Children

¹See Eph 2:8. ²CCL 74:52.

PEOPLE REFUSE TO REPENT DESPITE DISCIPLINE. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: Who among us has amended his life, or what part of the Roman world, no matter how afflicted, is corrected? As we read, "For all have declined, they have become useless at same time." Therefore, the prophet cries out to God and says, "You have struck them, and they have not sorrowed. You have consumed them, and they have refused to accept discipline. They have hardened their faces harder than a rock and were unwilling to return." Present affairs show how truly this applies to us. *THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD* 7.12.³

THOSE WHO REFUSE REPENTANCE WILL BE PUNISHED. CYPRIAN: Disasters occur either to discipline the obstinate people or punish evil people. The same God declares in the Holy Scriptures, "I have struck your children in vain. They have not received correction."⁴ The prophet devoted and dedicated to God answers these words in the same way and says, "You struck them, but they have not grieved. You scourged them, but they have refused to receive correction." See, God inflicts stripes, and there is no fear of God. *TO DEMETRIAN* 7.⁵

5:4 Ignorant of the Lord's Ways

TREAT THE IMPIOUS MERCIFULLY. CHRYSOSTOM: Paul says about those who live in piety and prosperity, "I thank God that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge." And to those who are impious, the blessed Jeremiah says, "Maybe they are poor. For this reason, they could not hear the word of the Lord." Do you see that he calls poor those who have distanced themselves from piety? Therefore, God is merciful to those who sin because they are spiritually poor, and he places demands on those who act justly because they are spiritually rich. To the former he gives freely, on account of their poverty. From the latter he collects with great care, on account of their wealth of piety. That which he does to the righteous and to sinners, he

does to both the rich and the poor. *HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING* 7.3.8.⁶

"POOR" REFERS TO THOSE LACKING FULL KNOWLEDGE. BASIL THE GREAT: Truly, slander humiliates a person, and slander troubles the poor person. The evil of slander is so great that it brings down both the perfect person . . . from his height, and the poor person, that is, the one who lacks great learning, as it seems to the prophet, who says, "Perhaps they are poor . . . therefore they will not hear. I will go to the great ones," meaning by "the poor" those lacking in intelligence, and here, of course, those not yet made orderly in the inner person or having attained to the perfect measure of their age. These, the proverb says, are troubled and made to waver. *LETTER* 223.⁷

POOR AND RICH ALIKE BREAK THE LAW.

THEODORET OF CYR: "Well-off" refers to the priests and the teachers of the law; "poor" refers to the rest, insofar as they did not possess the wealth of divine knowledge. Yet he accuses both of lawlessness, proceeding in this way, "They all alike broke the yoke, they snapped the bonds." It was not without purpose the prophet said this. Instead, since the Lord promised lovingkindness, provided he found someone "doing justice and seeking faith," he explains that though he went looking, as he was commanded to do, he found they had all broken the yoke of the law. *ON JEREMIAH* 2.5.4-5.⁸

STRONG AND GREAT LISTENERS. ORIGEN:

The strong in soul are spoken of with approval. For also among the Greeks the strong and the greatness of the rational soul are continually named. For whenever anyone throws himself into great deeds, has worthwhile objectives, always considers what is right and how he can live in accordance with right reason, wishing not to

³FC 3:202**. ⁴Jer 2:30. ⁵ANF 5:459**. ⁶FC 96:92-93*. ⁷FC 28:126*. ⁸PG 81:536.

know anything abject and small, such a person has in the soul the strong and the great. The others, then, the ones the Word disparaged since they were poor, did not hear, the prophet said; they did not hear for this reason: since they were poor. I will go to the strong and speak to them,

and if it is so that the blessed person is meant in the saying the ears of those who hear one is blessed if he should ever meet a strong and great listener. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 6.3.3.⁹

⁹FC 97:66.



ISRAEL'S BESTIAL APOSTASY JEREMIAH 5:7-13

OVERVIEW: We should be careful about what we borrow from the culture lest we inadvertently invoke the names of idols instead of God's name (DIDASCALIA). Israel, in fact, was so caught up in the culture of its day that they began to behave like animals rather than like God's holy people (IRENAEUS) who should rather rejoice in the true freedom he gives (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). We, unlike the angels, are subject to changes in mind and behavior due to anger, lust and other sinful desires that in the end can be harmful (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BASIL). For instance, it is only

when a man truly wants to commit adultery with his neighbor's wife that he becomes like a wild beast (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). Rather than become like his creator, man allows lust to make him like the beasts (BASIL). Those who do not obey the Lord's commands become like the beasts who do not understand anything (ATHANASIUS). We should consider those who are slaves to their passion as animals, as Scripture does (CHRYSOSTOM). The rich do not observe the sacrament of marriage but pursue anyone whom they lust after (SALVIAN). God shows his love by showing his people their sin

and salvation side by side. God uses censure to instruct sinners (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

5:7 How Can I Pardon You?

A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN SHOULD NOT SING HEATHEN SONGS. DIDASCALIA: We must conduct our festivals and rejoice with fear and trembling. A faithful Christian, the psalm says,¹ must not sing the songs of the heathen or have anything to do with the principles and doctrines of strange assemblies. It may happen that through their songs, he might make mention of the names of idols, which God forbids the faithful to do. The Lord scolds certain people through Jeremiah and says, “Your children have forsaken me, and have sworn by those who are no gods.” DIDASCALIA 21.[5.10].²

5:8 Like Unbridled Stallions

WITHOUT GOD, MEN BECOME LIKE ANIMALS. IRENAEUS: The prophets compare them to irrational animals, because of the irrationality of their conduct: “They have become like horses lusting for females. Each one of them neighs for his neighbor’s wife.” And again, “Man, when he is honored, was made to be like cattle.”³ This means that, for his own fault, he is compared with cattle, rivaling their irrational life. And we also, as the custom is, do designate people like this as cattle and irrational beasts. AGAINST HERESIES 5.8.3.⁴

THE FREEDOM OF CHRISTIANS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: At another time, he speaks of us under the figure of a colt. He means by that that we are unyoked to evil, unsubdued by wickedness, unaffected and high-spirited only with him our Father. We are colts, not stallions “who whinny lustfully for their neighbor’s wife,” beasts of burden unrestrained in their lust. Rather, we are free and newly born, joyous in our faith, and hold fast to the course of truth. We are swift in seeking salvation, and we spurn and trample on worldliness. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 15.⁵

RECKLESS YOUNG MEN. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: The neighing horse depicts the recklessness of young men. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 9.13.⁶

LUST CHANGES PEOPLE. BASIL THE GREAT: Angels do not change. Not one of them is a child, or a young man, or an old man, but in whatever state they were created, in the beginning, in that state they remain. Their substance is preserved pure and inviolate for them. But we change in our body, as has been shown, and in our soul and in the inner person, always shifting our thoughts with the circumstances. In fact, we are one sort of person when we are cheerful and when all things in our life are moving forward with the current. But we are another sort in precarious times, when we stumble against something that is not according to our wishes. We are changed through anger, assuming a certain savage state. We are also changed through our lusts of carnal things, becoming like beasts through a life of pleasure. “They become amorous horses,” being madly in love with their neighbors’ wives. The deceitful person is compared with a fox, as Herod was. The shameless person is called a dog, like Nabel the Carmelian. Do you see the variety and diversity of our change? Then, admire him who has fittingly adapted this title to us. For this very reason, a certain one of the interpreters seems to me to have handed over beautifully and accurately the same thought through another title. He says, “For the lilies,” in place of, “For them that shall be changed.” He thought that it was appropriate to compare the transitory state of human nature with the early death of flowers. But since this word has been inflected in the future tense (It is said, “For them that shall be changed,” as if at some time later this change will be shown to us), let us consider whether there is suggested to us the doctrine of the resurrection, in which a change will be granted to us, but a change for something

¹Ps 2:10-12. ²DA 179**. ³Ps 49:20 (48:21 LXX). ⁴ANF 1:534**. ⁵FC 23:16*. ⁶NPNF 2:7:54**.

better and something spiritual. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 17.1-2 (Ps 44).⁷

LUST TURNS PEOPLE INTO BEASTS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: If birth is an evil, then the blasphemers must place the Lord who went through birth and the virgin who gave him birth in the category of evil. Abominable people! In attacking birth they are maligning the will of God and the mystery of creation. This is the basis of Cassian's docetism,⁸ Marcion's too, yes, and Valentinus's "semi-spiritual body." It leads them to say, "Humanity became like cattle in coming to sexual intercourse." But it is when a man, swollen with lust, really and truly wants to go to bed with a woman not his own, that that sort of man actually becomes a wild beast. "They turned into stallions crazed for mares; each was whinnying for his neighbor's wife." STROMATEIS 3.17.102.1-3.⁹

CONTENTMENT SHOULD LEAD TO RESTRAINT. BASIL THE GREAT: Fasting can be utilized as a weapon against demonic armies: "For this kind does not come out except through prayer and fasting."¹⁰ Many good things come from fasting, but being satiated introduces the beginnings of insolence. It immediately rushes in alongside the delicacy you are eating and it accompanies rich sauces. All kinds of licentious behavior begin grazing at its table. After this, men start becoming "lustful horses" toward women because all this luxury begins to start a maddening itch that enters into their soul. Those who get drunk begin perverting themselves against nature, using a male like a female, or vice versa.¹¹ Fasting, by contrast, reveals the proper boundaries for marriage. It curtails the excesses of even those things that may be permitted by law but that are abstained from by agreement so that the couple can devote themselves to prayer.¹²

But we should not limit the goodness of fasting only to abstaining from foods. True fasting, in whatever form, is the enemy of evil. "Loose the chains of injustice!"¹³ Forgive your neighbor

when an offense occurs against you and forgive his debts. Do not "fast in order to bring about judgment and strife."¹⁴

You may not eat meat, but you devour your brother. You abstain from wine but hold on to insolence. You wait till evening to indulge [in a meal] but spend the day in court. "Woe to those who are drunk, but not from wine!"¹⁵ Wrath can also be a drunkenness of the soul, making it senseless, like wine. Grief can also feel like being drunk, weighing down the mind. Fear is another form of drunkenness whenever it fears something where there is no need for fear, because the psalmist says, "deliver my soul from the fear of my enemy."¹⁶ When taken together, each of these passions that allow the mind to be taken over and to go out of control is rightly termed drunkenness. . . . Guard against this kind of drunkenness, but do not be given over to the kind that comes from wine, either. Do not start being a water drinker just because you have been drinking too much. Do not let drunkenness be what leads you into fasting. The door that leads to fasting is not entered through drunkenness. Neither is greed the entryway into justice, nor is intemperance the way to sound judgment. In summary, evil never leads to virtue. There is another door into fasting. Drunkenness leads to intemperance. Contentment is what opens the door to fasting. HOMILY ON FASTING 1.9-10.¹⁷

LUSTFUL PEOPLE ARE LIKE BEASTS. BASIL THE GREAT: Humanity . . . did not understand and neglected to follow God and to become like his Creator. And becoming a slave of the passions of the flesh, "he is compared with senseless beasts and is become like them." Now he is like an amorous horse that neighs after his neighbor's wife. Now like a ravenous wolf, lying in

⁷FC 46:276-77*. ⁸Clement is referring to Julius Cassian, a mid-second-century heretic, not John Cassian. ⁹FC 85:320-21. ¹⁰Mk 9:29. ¹¹See Rom 1:26. ¹²1 Cor 7:5. ¹³Is 58:6. ¹⁴See Is 58:4. ¹⁵See Is 51:21. ¹⁶Ps 64:1 (63:2 LXX). ¹⁷PG 31:181-84.

wait for strangers, but at another time, because of his deceit toward his brother, he makes himself like the villainous fox. Truly, there is excessive folly and beast-like lack of reason that he, made according to the image of the Creator, neither perceives his own from the beginning nor even wishes to understand such great dispensations that were made for his sake. At least, he should learn his own dignity from them, but he is unmindful of the fact, and he throws aside the image of the heavenly, but he has taken up the image of the earthly. *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS* 19.8 (Ps 48).¹⁸

DOERS OF THE SAVIOR'S COMMANDS. ATHANASIUS: Let us then, as is becoming, as at all times, yet especially in the days of the feast, be not hearers only, but doers of the commandments of our Savior. Having imitated the behavior of the saints, we may enter together into the joy of our Lord who is in heaven, which is not transitory but truly abides. . . . But they who are not doers are compared, in their disgrace, with beasts without understanding, and becoming like them in unlawful pleasures, they are spoken of as wanton horses. Also, for their craftiness, errors and being laden with death, they are called, by John, a "generation of vipers."¹⁹ *FESTAL LETTERS* 2.2.²⁰

EXCESS OF FOLLY. CHRYSOSTOM: Some are so cold and senseless that they are always looking only for the things that are here and saying such things as, "Let me enjoy all the present things for a time, and then I will consider things out of sight. I will gratify my belly. I will be a slave to pleasures. I will make full use of the present life; give me today, and take tomorrow." What foolishness! How are these people any different from goats and swine? For if the prophet allows that they are not to be considered human when they "neigh after their neighbor's wife," who shall blame us for considering them to be goats and swine and more insensible than donkeys when they hold as uncertain those things that, in the

end, are even more evident than what we see? *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW* 13.7.²¹

HOW MANY RICH ARE CONSUMED BY LUST. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: Murder is rare among slaves because of their dread and terror of capital punishment, but it is common among the rich because of their hope and trust in impunity. Perhaps we are wrong in putting in the category of sins what the rich people do, because, when they kill their slaves, they think that it is legal and not a crime. Not only this, they abuse the same privilege even when practicing the filth of unchastity. How few among the rich, observing the sacrament of marriage, are not dragged down headlong by the madness of lust? To how few are not home and family regarded as harlots? How few do not pursue their madness toward anybody on whom the heat of their evil desires centers? It was about such people that the divine Word said, "They are become as stallions rushing madly on the mares." *THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD* 4.5.²²

GOD'S REBUKE SERVES HIS SAVING INTENT. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Rebuking censures what is base and highlights what is noble. This is shown by Jeremiah: "They were horses mad for females. Each one neighed for his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit them for these things? says the Lord. Should not I avenge my soul against such a nation as this?" He everywhere interweaves fear, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of reason."²³ *CHRIST THE EDUCATOR* 1.9.²⁴

5:11-12 *The Faithlessness of Israel and Judah*

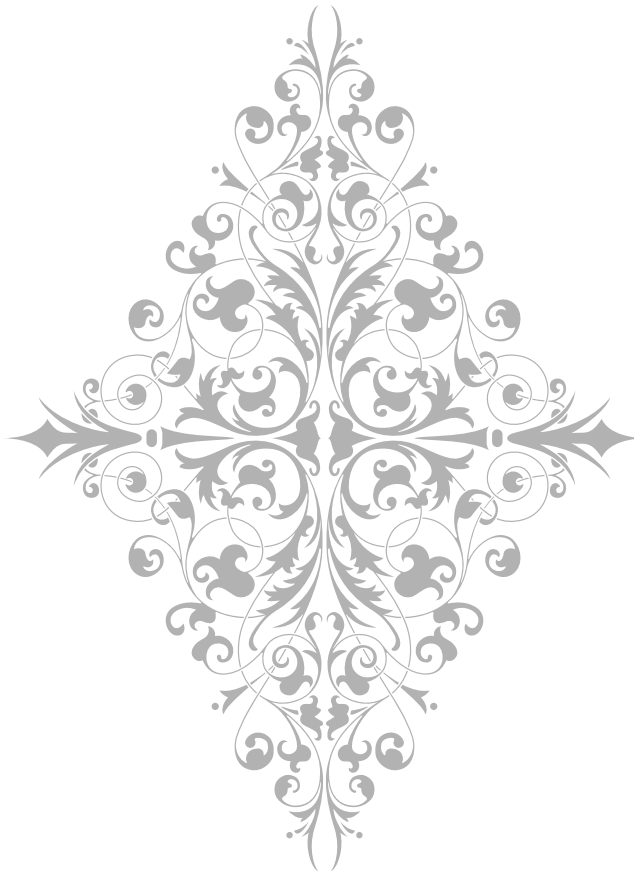
DENUNCIATION IS GOD'S MEDICINE. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Accusation is the censure of wrongdoers. This mode of instruction God employs by David, when he says, "The people whom I did not know served me, and when their

¹⁸FC 46:325**. ¹⁹Mt 3:7; Lk 3:7. ²⁰NPNF 2 4:510**. ²¹NPNF 1 10:84*. ²²FC 3:98-99*. ²³Prov 1:7. ²⁴ANF 2:229**.

ears heard they obeyed me. Sons of strangers came to me, and halted from their ways.”²⁵ And by Jeremiah: “And I gave her a divorce decree, but covenant-breaking Judah did not fear.”²⁶ And again: “And the house of Israel disregarded me.

The house of Judah lied to the Lord.” CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.9.²⁷

²⁵Ps 18:43-45 (17:44-46 LXX). ²⁶Jer 3:8. ²⁷ANF 2:230**.





THE LORD'S VERDICT

JEREMIAH 5:14-31

OVERVIEW: God's word is like fire or a live coal that devours those it judges as well as enlivening those it saves (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). True knowledge requires carefully weighing every word of Scripture with the eyes of faith (JOHN CASSIAN). Just like blind and deaf Israel, the people who saw Jesus did not understand who he was. His word that calmed the seas, however, made them tremble in their understanding because he is the one who created it (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). When you make food or money your god, you worship an alien god (ORIGEN). God sets the limits of the sea at the creation of the world. If God uses humble sand to restrain the sea, he can use people to show his glory (BASIL).

5:14 Words Like Fire

GOD'S WORD AS COAL AND FIRE. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: We say then that the power of the divine message resembles a live coal and fire. And the God of all somewhere said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Behold, I have made my words in your mouth to be fire, and this people to be wood, and it shall devour them." And again, "Are not my words as burning fire, says the Lord?"¹ Rightly, therefore, did our Lord Jesus Christ say to us, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled."² For already some of the Jewish crowd believed on

him, whose firstfruits were the divine disciples. The fire, being once kindled, was soon to seize on the whole world immediately after the whole dispensation had attained to its completion. . . . He had borne his precious passion on the cross and had commanded the bonds of death to cease. He rose on the third day from the dead. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 94.³

5:19 Judah Follows Foreign Gods

SERVING TWO MASTERS. ORIGEN: The Word literally said to them, "As you have forsaken me and served other gods in your land, you shall serve in a land not your own." But every person who makes something a god serves alien gods. Do you deify food and drink? "Your god is the belly."⁴ Do you honor silver and the wealth here below as a great good? Your god and lord is Mammon. For Jesus spoke of the love of money when he said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon. No one can serve two masters."⁵ Thus one who honors money and esteems wealth and supposes that it is good and accepts the rich as gods and despises the poor as not possessing god in their character, deifies silver. If anyone in the land of God, in the church, should worship alien gods by making things worthy to be god that

¹Jer 23:29. ²Lk 12:49. ³CGSL 378. ⁴Phil 3:19. ⁵Lk 16:13.

are not to be made god, he will be rejected to an alien land and worship gods that he worshiped when he was inside. Outside let him be rejected by the church as a lover of money; let the one who is a glutton be outside the church. **HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 7.3.2.**⁶

5:21 Eyes That Do Not See

TRUE KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED BY TRUE WORSHIPERS. JOHN CASSIAN: One who does not carefully weigh every word of the opinions uttered cannot rightly discover the value of the assertion. For someone like this, who only possesses skill in disputation and ornaments of speech, cannot penetrate to the very heart of Scripture and the mysteries of its spiritual meanings. True knowledge is acquired only by true worshipers of God. And certainly this people does not possess it to whom it is said, "Hear, O foolish people, you who have no heart, you who have eyes but do not see and who have ears but do not hear."⁷ And again, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from acting as my priest."⁸ It is said that in Christ "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden."⁹ So how can we hold the opinion that someone has acquired spiritual knowledge when that person has not even wanted to find Christ, or, when he does find him, blasphemes him with impious lips or at least defiles the catholic faith by his impure actions? "The Spirit of God will avoid deception and does not live in a body that is subject to sin." There is then no way of arriving at spiritual knowledge but by this which one of the prophets has accurately described: "Sow to yourselves for righteousness. Reap the hope of life. Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge." **CONFERENCE 2.14.16.**¹⁰

PEOPLE DID NOT HEAR OR SEE JESUS. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Not understanding him who had been anointed and sent and who was the author of such wonderful works, they returned to their usual ways and talked about him in a fool-

ish and vain way. For although they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded out of his mouth, yet their wish was to treat them as valueless. They said, "Is not this the son of Joseph?" But what does this diminish from the glory of the worker of the miracles? What prevents him from being both venerated and admired, even had he been, as was supposed, the son of Joseph? Didn't you see the miracles? Satan fallen, the herds of devils vanquished, multitudes set free from various kinds of maladies? You praise the grace that was present in his teaching. Then do you, in Jewish fashion, think lightly of him because he considered Joseph for his father? How ignorant can you be! It is true what they say about them: "Lo! A people foolish and without understanding, they have eyes and see not, ears, and hear not." **COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 12.**¹¹

5:22 The Sea Is Under God's Control

CHRIST'S CONTROL OF THE SEA. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The vessel was severely tossed by the violence of the tempest and the breaking of the waves. And along with the ship, the faith of the disciples also was tossed, so to speak, by similar agitations. But Christ, whose authority extends over all, immediately arose. He at once appeased the storm, restrained the blasts of wind, quieted their fear and yet further proved by his actions that he is God at whom all created things tremble and quake and to whose nod is subject the very nature of the elements. He rebuked the tempest, and Matthew says that the manner of the rebuke was with God-like authority. He tells us that our Lord said to the sea: "Peace! Be still!"¹² What can there be more grand than this in majesty? Or what can equal its sublimity? Appropriately worthy of God is the word and the might of the commandment, so that we too may utter the praise written in the book of Psalms:

⁶FC 97:71-72. ⁷Jer 5:21. ⁸Hos 4:6. ⁹Col 2:3. ¹⁰NPNF 2 11:443**. ¹¹CGSL 95. ¹²Mk 4:39.

“You rule the power of the sea. You still the turbulence of its waves.”¹³ He too has himself said somewhere by one of the holy prophets, “Why do you not fear me,” says the Lord, “nor tremble at my presence? I who have set the sand as the bound of the sea, a commandment forever, and it has not passed it.” For the sea is subject to the will of him who made all creation and is, as it were, placed under the Creator’s feet, varying its motions at all times according to his good pleasure and yielding submission to his lordly will. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 43.¹⁴

GOD CONTROLS CREATION. BASIL THE GREAT: Through all the story of waters be mindful of that first word, “Let the waters be gathered.”¹⁵ It was necessary for them to flow that they might reach their own place. Then, being in the places appointed, they were to remain by themselves and not to advance further. For this reason, according to the saying of Ecclesiastes, “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea does not overflow.”¹⁶ It is through the divine command that waters flow, and it is due to that first legislation, “Let the waters be gathered into one place,” that the sea is enclosed within boundaries. For fear that the flowing water, spreading beyond the beds that hold it, always passing on and filling up one place after another, should continuously flood all the lands, it was ordered to be gathered into one place. Therefore, the sea, frequently

raging with the winds and rising up in waves to towering heights, whenever it merely touches the shores breaks its onrush into foam and retires. “Will you not then fear me, says the Lord? I have set the sand as a bound for the sea.” With the weakest of all things, sand, the sea, irresistible in its violence, is bridled. HOMILIES ON THE HEXAMERON 4.3.¹⁷

ENCOURAGE FAITHFUL CARE. BASIL THE GREAT: When I say “we,” I do not refer to human power but to the grace of God, who in the weakness of people shows forth his own power. This the prophet, speaking in the person of the Lord, says, “Will not you, then, fear me? I have set the sand as the boundary for the sea.” For by this weakest and most contemptible of all things, sand, the mighty One has bound the great and ponderous sea. Therefore, since our condition is somewhat similar, it would follow that some of the true brethren should be sent continuously from your charity to visit us in our afflictions and that affectionate letters should come more frequently to us, on the one hand to strengthen our zeal, and on the other to correct us if we fail in any respect. Indeed, we do not deny that we are subject to many faults, since we are people and are living in the flesh. LETTER 203.¹⁸

¹³Ps 89:9 (88:10 LXX). ¹⁴CGSL 187*. ¹⁵Gen 1:9. ¹⁶Eccles 1:7. ¹⁷FC 46:58*. ¹⁸FC 28:66-67*.





SOUND THE WARNING JEREMIAH 6:1-9

OVERVIEW: Because God is merciful, he chastises his sinful people (ORIGEN). He purifies them with this discipline (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA) but offers pardon to his people while promising peace to those who follow his path (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, THEOPHILUS).

6:6-9 *The City Must Be Punished*

GOD IS COMPASSIONATE EVEN IN SUFFERING. ORIGEN: Behold the mercy and piety of the good God. When he wishes to be merciful, he says that he is displeased and angry. As he says through Jeremiah, “You will be chastised, Jerusalem, with pain and a scourge, lest my soul depart from you.” If you understand these words, it is the voice of God having compassion when he is angry, when he is jealous, when he brings pains and beatings. “For he scourges every one whom he receives.”¹ HOMILIES ON EXODUS 8.5.²

THE LORD SAVES THROUGH TRIALS. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: It was that you may learn that God silently and noiselessly observes the affairs of people and watches the course of each one’s

life, and so it is written, “The paths of a person are before the eyes of God, and God looks at all his tracks.”³ And as he is good and wills that all people should be saved, he often purifies those who are entangled in sins by inflicting sickness on their body. He somewhere says by the voice of Jeremiah, “You shall be taught, O Jerusalem, by labor and the scourge.” COMMENTARY ON LUKE, CHAPTER 5.18.⁴

GOD PROMOTES SALVATION BY ADMONISHING US. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: God invites us to knowledge also, when he says by Jeremiah, “If you had walked in the way of God, you would have dwelled forever in peace.”⁵ . . . God grants pardon to those who have erred. He says, “Turn, turn, as a grape gatherer returns to his basket.” Do you see the goodness of justice in that it advises us to repent? And through Jeremiah, he provides further enlightenment in the truth for those who have erred” “Thus says the Lord, stand in the roads, and look. Ask for the eternal paths of the Lord. Look for the good path, and

¹Heb 12:6. ²FC 71:328*. ³Prov 5:21. ⁴CGSL 111. ⁵Bar 3:13.

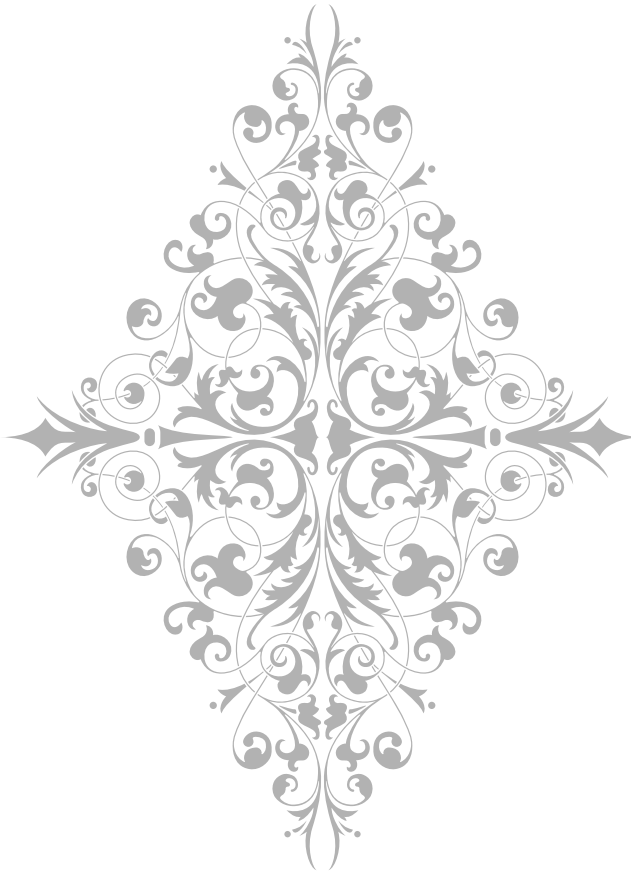
walk in it, and you shall find purification for your souls.”⁶ He leads us to repentance in order to promote our salvation. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.10.⁷

GOD ALWAYS SEEKS TO SAVE SINNERS.

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH: And another prophet, Jeremiah, says, “Turn to the Lord your God,

as a grape gatherer to his basket, and you shall find mercy.” The sayings in the Holy Scriptures regarding repentance are many, yes, countless. God always desires that the human race turn from all its sins. TO AUTOLYCUS 3.11.⁸

⁶Jer 6:16. ⁷ANF 2:233*. ⁸ANF 2:114*.



POUR OUT THE WRATH OF THE LORD
JEREMIAH 6:10-19

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah blamed the Jews and their rulers for being arrogant, which did not please them (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). False prophets promise pleasant things and please the people for awhile (JEROME). We, however, need a divine teacher who is not afraid to speak the truth (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). Jesus is our teacher who leads us on the path to peace (ATHANASIUS), and the paths of all the prophets lead to him as the one path (JEROME, THEODORET). Read the Scriptures and other writings from people of faith every day, and you will grow in faith and life (JEROME). Israel, however, chose to reject the leaders God provided for them, which Jeremiah refers to as shepherds in the Septuagint (THEODORET), and so God rejected disobedient Israel (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA).

6:10 *The Word Is an Object of Scorn*

ARROGANCE REFUSED THE LORD. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The prophet Jeremiah also blamed the Jewish multitudes with their rulers because of their excessive arrogance, saying, “To whom shall I speak and testify, and he will hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, and they cannot hear. Behold, the Word of the Lord has become to them a derision. They will not hear it.” And in another place he spoke of Jerusalem: “We healed Babel, and she was not healed. Let us leave her and depart every one to his land, because her judgment has reached to the heavens.”¹ COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 134.²

6:14 “Peace, Peace”

BEWARE OF LUST AND GLUTTONY. JEROME: Idol temples had fallen before the standard of

the cross and the severity of the gospel. Now, on the contrary, lust and gluttony endeavor to overthrow the solid structure of the cross. And so God says by Isaiah, “O my people, they who bless you cause you to wander and trouble the paths of your feet.” Also by Jeremiah,³ “Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save everyone his life, and believe not the false prophets who say, ‘Peace, peace,’ and there is no peace.” Who are always repeating, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.”⁴ “Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish things. They have not laid bare your iniquity that they might call you to repentance. They devour God’s people like bread. They have not called on God.” Jeremiah announced the captivity and was stoned by the people. Hananiah, the son of Azzur, broke the bars of wood for the present but was preparing bars of iron for the future.⁵ False prophets always promise pleasant things and please for a time. AGAINST JOVINIANUS 2.37.⁶

6:16 *Ask for the Ancient Good Paths*

SEEK THE TRUTH FROM TRUTHFUL TEACHERS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Since the soul became too enfeebled for the apprehension of realities, we needed a divine teacher. The Savior is sent down—a teacher and leader in the acquisition of the good, as the secret and sacred token of the great Providence. “Where, then, is the scribe? Where is the searcher of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”⁷ it is said. And again, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and

¹Jer 51:9 (28:9 LXX). ²CGSL 532*. ³Jer 51:6. ⁴Jer 7:4 (28:6 LXX). ⁵Jer 28:13 (35:13 LXX). ⁶NPNF 2 6:415**. ⁷1 Cor 1:20.

bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,”⁸ speaks plainly of those who are wise in their own eyes and contentious. Excellently, therefore, Jeremiah says, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand in the ways, and ask for the eternal paths, what is the good way, and walk in it, and you shall find expiation for your souls.’” STROMATEIS 5.1.⁹

JESUS LEADS US TO THE FEAST. ATHANASIUS: What sprinklings shall we now employ while we celebrate the feast? Who will be our guide as we haste to this festival? None can do this, my beloved, but him whom you will name with me, even our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the Way.”¹⁰ For it is he who, according to the blessed John, “takes away the sin of the world.”¹¹ He purifies our souls, as Jeremiah the prophet says in a certain place, “Stand in the ways and see, enquire, and look which is the good path, and you shall find in it cleansing for your souls.” FESTAL LETTERS 14.2.¹²

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY. JEROME: What are the marks of the person who fears the Lord? What is the stamp of those “who walk in his ways.” There are many ways, and the many ways lead to the one way. Wherefore it says in Jeremiah: “Stand beside the ways of the Lord, and ask for the eternal pathways. Find the one way, and walk it.” Notice that it says, “Stand beside the pathways of the Lord, and ask for the eternal paths of the Lord. Find the one way, and then walk it.” Through many ways, we find the one way. The same thought occurs in the gospel. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 42 (Ps 127).¹³

ALL PATHS LEAD TO CHRIST. THEODORET OF CYR: The holy prophets might themselves be considered as “many ways”; our Lord, however, is the truly good way. In fact, listen to his words, “I am the way, the truth and the life.”¹⁴ But each of the prophetic ways leads to this way, Moses the lawgiver hinting at this in his words, “The Lord our God will raise up for you from among

your brothers a prophet like me.”¹⁵ David, king and prophet, and also Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel and each of the prophets give a glimpse of this way. And as there is one way leading to the biggest cities that we are accustomed to call kingly and royal—whereas some paths do conduct people from both town and country to this one way—so there is one way leading to the Father, the only-begotten Son of God, while the blessed prophets lead people to this one way who choose to travel by the particular path they represent. The prophetic word, therefore, bids Jews to search out the prophetic ways and through them to discover the good way and travel in it. ON JEREMIAH 2.6.16.¹⁶

READ AND LOVE THE SCRIPTURES. JEROME: When you eat your meals, remember that you must immediately afterwards pray and read. Have a fixed number of lines of Holy Scripture, and render it as your task to your Lord. On no account resign yourself to sleep until you have filled the basket of your breast with a thread of this weaving. After the Holy Scriptures you should read the writings of learned people, of those at any rate whose faith is well known. You need not go into the mire to seek for gold. You have many pearls. Buy the one pearl with these. Stand, as Jeremiah says, in more ways than one so that you may come on the true way that leads to the Father. LETTER 54.11.¹⁷

6:17-18 *The People Ignore the Watchmen*

“SHEPHERDS” INCLUDES KINGS AND RULERS. THEODORET OF CYR: Jeremiah refers to their guides by the term “shepherds,”¹⁸ not simply those accorded spiritual guidance but also kings and rulers who have accepted the divine message. This is the way the divine apostles Barnabas and Paul also behaved. When they entered a

⁸1 Cor 1:19. ⁹ANF 2:446*. ¹⁰Jn 14:6. ¹¹Jn 1:29. ¹²NPNF 2 4:542*. ¹³FC 48:317*. ¹⁴Jn 14:6. ¹⁵Deut 18:15. ¹⁶PG 81:545. ¹⁷NPNF 2 6:106*. ¹⁸Jer 6:18 (LXX).

certain synagogue, they principally engaged the Jews in discussion. But when they perceived their unbelief, they said, "It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first, but since you resist it and pass judgment on yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we turn to the nations, the Lord having given us this direction. I have placed you as a light for the nations to bring salvation to the ends of the earth."¹⁹ This is where this prophecy finds its fulfillment. ON JEREMIAH 2.6.18.²⁰

6:19 *They Reject God's Law*

ISRAEL REJECTED THE LORD. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The blessed prophet Jeremiah loudly condemned both the ignorance and pride of the [unfaithful] Jews. He rebukes them in these words, "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. The wise people shall be put to shame. They shall be dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the Word of the Lord, so what wisdom is in them?"²¹ For being neither wise nor acquainted with the sa-

cred Scriptures, though the scribes and Pharisees falsely assumed to themselves the reputation of being learned in the law, they rejected the Word of God. For when the Only-begotten had become man, they did not receive him or yield their neck obediently to the summons that he addressed to them by the gospel. Because, therefore, by their wicked conduct they rejected the Word of God, they were themselves rejected, being condemned by God's just decree. He said, by the voice of Jeremiah, "Call them rejected silver because the Lord has rejected them."²² And again, "Shave your head, and cast it away, and take lamentation on your lips because the Lord has rejected and thrust away the generation that has done these things."²³ And what these things are the God of all has declared to us, saying, "Hear, O earth: behold! I am bringing on this people evils, the fruit of their turning away, because they regarded not my word and have rejected my law." COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 131.²⁴

¹⁹Acts 13:46-47. ²⁰PG 81:545-48. ²¹Jer 8:8-9. ²²Jer 6:30. ²³Jer 7:29. ²⁴CGSL 518*.





UNACCEPTABLE SACRIFICES JEREMIAH 6:20-30

OVERVIEW: God does not require observance of legal requirements but rather that we should live by the Gospel (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). The people of Judah followed the sacrificial law but made it worthless by not showing compassion to others (ATHANASIUS). He promised Israel that, if they straightened the paths of their lives, he would show mercy to them (IRENAEUS). Yet God's people did not reform their ways (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS) and so God rejected them (APHRAHAT) and gave their place to the Gentiles (IRENAEUS).

6:20 Sacrifices No Longer Pleasing

HOLY LIVING TO MARK WORSHIP. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The legal manner of service is not what he requires. This is a thing in no respect difficult to see from the prophetic and apostolic writings. For by the word of Jeremiah he says, "Why do you bring me frankincense from Sheba and cinnamon from a far country? Your whole burnt offering is not acceptable, and your sacrifices do not please me." . . . The will of God, therefore, that will that we pray may be done on earth, is not that we should conform to the law and live according to the grossness of its letter. But we should endeavor to live by the gospel. And this is

effected by a faith correct and free from error. By a holy life possessed of the sweet savor of every virtue and proved by the testimony of good and noble conduct in every thing that is excellent. . . . And he also said of them by the word of Jeremiah, "Hear, O earth, behold, I bring on this people evils, the fruit of their turning aside, because they have not regarded my word and have rejected my law." COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 74.¹

EMPTY WORSHIP CONDEMNED. ATHANASIUS: Actions not done lawfully and piously are not of advantage, though they may be reputed to be so, but they rather argue hypocrisy in those who venture on them. Therefore, although such persons feign to offer sacrifices, yet they hear from the Father, "Your whole burnt offerings are not acceptable, and your sacrifices do not please me. Although you bring fine flour, it is vanity. Incense also is an abomination to me." . . . And by Jeremiah, since they were very bold, he threatens, "Gather together your whole burnt offerings with your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning whole burnt offerings and sacri-

¹CGSL 310*.

fices.”² For they did not act as was right, neither was their zeal according to law. But they rather sought their own pleasure in such days, as the prophet accuses them, beating down their bond servants and gathering themselves together for fights and quarrels. They struck the lowly with the fist and did all things that tended to their own gratification. For this cause, they continue without a feast until the end, although they make a display now of eating flesh, out of place and out of season. For, instead of the legally appointed lamb, they have learned to sacrifice to Baal. Instead of the true unleavened bread, “they collect the wood, and their fathers kindle the fire, and their wives prepare the dough, that they may make cakes to the host of heaven. And they pour out libations to strange gods, that they may provoke me to anger, says the Lord.”³ They have the just reward of such devices, since, although they pretend to keep the Passover, yet joy and gladness is taken from their mouth, as Jeremiah said: “There has been taken away from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the voice of those who are glad, and the voice of those who rejoice, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.”⁴ FESTAL LETTERS 19.2.⁵

DO GOOD AND BE JUST. IRENAEUS: Since God is merciful, he did not cut them off from good counsel. After he had said by Jeremiah, “Why do you bring me incense from Sheba and cinnamon from a far country? Your whole burnt offerings and sacrifices are not acceptable to me.” He proceeds: “Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah. These things says the Lord, the God of Israel, Make straight your ways and your doings, and I will establish you in this place. Put not your trust in lying words, for they will not at all profit you, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, it is here.”⁶ AGAINST HERESIES 4.17.2.⁷

6:28-29 Refining Has No Effect

GOD’S PUNISHMENT HAS NOT BROUGHT REPENTANCE. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Perhaps

he will say to me, who am not reformed even by blows, I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, the heedless is heedless, and the lawless person acts lawlessly, naught is the heavenly correction, naught the scourges. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed, as I once reproached you by the mouth of Jeremiah, the founder melted the silver in vain, your evil deeds are not melted away. Can you abide my wrath? says the Lord. Has not my hand the power to inflict on you other plagues also? ON HIS FATHER’S SILENCE, ORATION 16.II.⁸

6:30 The Lord Has Rejected Them

ISRAEL HAS NOT RECEIVED THE KINGDOM OF THE MOST HIGH. APHRAHAT: Daniel said, “The saints of the most High shall receive the kingdom.”⁹ What shall we say concerning this? Have the children of Israel received the kingdom of the most High? God forbid. Or has that people come on the clouds of heaven? This has passed away from them. For Jeremiah said concerning them, “Call them rejected silver, for the Lord has rejected them.” Again he said, “He will not again regard them.”¹⁰ And Isaiah said concerning them, “Pass by! Pass by! Approach not the defiled.”¹¹ DEMONSTRATIONS 5.21.¹²

THE CHURCH IS NOW GOD’S PEOPLE. IRENAEUS: Jeremiah says, “I set watchmen over you. Hear the sound of the trumpet. They said, We will not listen. Therefore the Gentiles have heard, and they who feed the flocks in them.” It is therefore one and the same Father who planted the vineyard, who led forth the people, who sent the prophets, who sent his own Son and who gave the vineyard to those other husbandmen¹³ that render the fruits in their season. AGAINST HERESIES 4.36.2.¹⁴

²Jer 7:21-22. ³Jer 7:18. ⁴Jer 7:34. ⁵NPNF 2 4:545*. ⁶Jer 7:2-4. ⁷ANF 1:483 ⁸NPNF 2 7:250-51*. ⁹Dan 7:27. ¹⁰Lam 4:16. ¹¹Is 52:11. ¹²NPNF 2 13:359*. ¹³That is, the church of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ANF 1:515*.



TURN FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS JEREMIAH 7:1-15

OVERVIEW: Put away your evil, correct what you are doing and learn to do what is right if you want to be the temple of the Lord (EPHREM, IRENAEUS). When we do become God’s temple, this should help us realize that we should not put our faith in the splendor of earthly buildings but in the one who lives within us. When he does not live within us, the church becomes a den of thieves as evil enters within it (JEROME). Then the church and its people must receive admonition from God, which is proof of his great love for his people (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). By doing God’s will, we join the church founded before the creation of the world (PSEUDO-CLEMENT OF ROME).

7:1-6 Repentance and the True Temple of the Lord

CORRECT WHAT YOU ARE DOING. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Do not put your hope in deceptive words that say, ‘Here is the temple of the Lord,’” that imply you are his temple. They are only trying to assure you that you will never be left by God as though God would decide to preserve his blessed temple and would save his priests even though they are wicked. No! Do not find hope in those who flatter you with these words. If you have not corrected what you are doing, then you are no temple of God, and God will not save you on account of the sacredness of his temple that is desecrated by you. His soul is disgusted by the multitude of your sacrifices that you offer in your wickedness. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 7.4.¹

¹ESOO 2:113.

THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. IRENAEUS: Wash! Make yourselves clean! Put away evil from your hearts. Learn to do well. Seek judgment, protect the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come, let us reason together, says the Lord.² And again: "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips that they speak no guile. Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it."³ In preaching these things, the prophets sought the fruits of righteousness. *AGAINST HERESIES* 4.36.2.⁴

MECHANICAL USE OF THE TEMPLE IS INAPPROPRIATE. JEROME: If heaven and earth must pass away, obviously all things that are earthly must also pass away. Therefore the spots that witnessed the crucifixion and the resurrection profit those only who bear their several crosses, who day by day rise again with Christ and who thus show themselves worthy of an abode so holy. Those who say, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," should give ear to the words of the apostle: "you are the temple of the Lord," and the Holy Spirit "dwells in you." Access to the courts of heaven is as easy from Britain as it is from Jerusalem, for "the kingdom of God is within you." *LETTER* 58.3.⁵

THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD IS TRUE FAITH AND VIRTUE. JEROME: He instructs both the people of Judea of that time and us today, who are seen to be constituted as the church. We are not to put our faith in the splendor of its buildings. Nor are we to put faith in its golden ceilings and decorated walls of marble. We are not to say "this is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." For the temple of the Lord is there where the true faith dwells, in holy living and the chorus of all the virtues. Then he infers, "If you make your ways straight and if your thoughts do not follow error, and if you will do justice and refrain from evil, nor shed innocent blood or scandalize the little ones.⁶ If you do not walk after alien gods, honoring perverse doctrines that you simulate in your own hearts

for evil purposes.⁷ I will dwell with you in that place that you call the temple of God and in the land that I gave to your ancestors, who were obviously apostles and apostolic men. Or at least I will cause you to dwell there from beginning to end in security." This can be compared with the virgin who spreads modesty and freely prefers chastity, who has another conscience and knows only that virginal purpose of the apostle that "she be holy in body and in spirit."⁸ For what good is a chaste body to a corrupt spirit that does not have the other virtues that this prophetic word describes? *SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH* 2.32.2-4.⁹

7:8-15 *The Temple as a Den of Thieves*

WEALTH CAN CONSUME CHURCH LEADERS. JEROME: "Has not this house, in which my name is invoked, been made a den of thieves before your eyes? I who am, I have seen it, says the Lord." I believe that it was from here that the Gospel took: "It is written, 'My father's house will be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of thieves,"¹⁰ or, according to another Gospel, "a house of trade."¹¹ The church of God is turned into a den of thieves when robbery, murder, adultery, perjury, sacrilege, heretical inventions and other evils are practiced within it. When its leaders burn with greed and when cheap or not so cheap palliums [the distinctive mantle worn by archbishops] possess the riches formerly of kings. Hence, he infers, "I who am, I have seen it, says the Lord." In other words, "My eyes have beheld what you thought was hidden. The darkness of your treasures do not escape my consciousness." He who, though he was rich, became poor for our sake,¹² is now ashamed at our riches and says, "Woe to you wealthy, who have your consolation now!" *SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH* 2.34.1-3.¹³

²Cf. Jer 7:3; Zech 7:9-10; 8:17; Is 1:17-19. ³Ps 34:13-14 (33:14-15 LXX). ⁴ANF 1:515*. ⁵NPNF 2 6:120*. ⁶Mt 18:6. ⁷Job 13:4.

⁸1 Cor 7:34. ⁹CCL 74:75-76*. ¹⁰Mt 21:13. ¹¹Jn 2:16. ¹²2 Cor 8:9. ¹³CCL 74:77*.

ADMONITION IS A PROOF OF GOD’S GREAT LOVE. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Let us now proceed to consider the mode of his loving discipline, with the aid of the prophetic testimony. Admonition, then, is loving care’s censure and produces understanding. Such is Christ the Educator in his admonitions, as when he says in the Gospel, “How often would I have gathered your children, as a bird gathers her young ones under her wings, and you did not allow it!”¹⁴ And again, the Scripture admonishes, saying, “And they committed adultery with wood and stone and burned incense to Baal.”¹⁵ For it is a very great proof of his love, that, though knowing well the shamelessness of the people who had kicked and bounded away, he notwithstanding

exhorts them to repentance and says by Ezekiel, “Son of man, you live in the midst of scorpions; nevertheless, speak to them, if perhaps they will hear.”¹⁶ CHRIST THE EDUCATOR I.9.¹⁷

CHURCH AS SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION.

PSEUDO-CLEMENT: Brothers, by doing the will of God our Father, we shall belong to the first church, the spiritual one established before the sun and the moon. But if we do not do the will of the Lord, we shall verify the Scripture that says, “My house has become a den of thieves.”
2 CLEMENT 14.I.¹⁸

¹⁴Mt 23:37. ¹⁵Jer 3:9; 7:9; 11:13; 32:29 (39:29 LXX). ¹⁶Ezek 2:6-7. ¹⁷ANF 2:228*. ¹⁸FC 1:74*.



DO NOT PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE
JEREMIAH 7:16-26

OVERVIEW: God knows both how to heal and how to strike (TERTULLIAN). And so, although he told Jeremiah not to intercede for his people, the prophet prayed for them anyway and obtained pardon for them (AMBROSE). God explains his actions to his prophets when he punishes a people. God threatens punishment so that he might perhaps destroy contempt with fear (CHRYSOSTOM). Therefore he abandoned his people because they worshiped idols. Although God wants his people to be pure, they do not listen to him and worship other gods (ORIGEN). When they do so, they should understand that God is appeased not by sacrifice but by repentance (THEODORET, APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). When Christ abolished sacrifices, his gracious intent was that we ask how to approach him (EPISTLE OF BARNABAS). God called his people to come to him continually, but they did not listen to him (TERTULLIAN). They longed for the glory they had in the past rather than seeing the future glory that awaited them. Thus they merited nothing but punishment, but they were nonetheless saved by the gospel (JEROME) as the Sun of Justice shone forth in the darkness of a world filled with sin (MAXIMUS).

7:16 Do Not Pray for This People

GOD IS NOT PLEASED WITH FALSE PIETY.

TERTULLIAN: Just as God knows how to heal, so does he furthermore know how to smite. He knows how to make peace but likewise permits evils. He prefers repentance but moreover commands Jeremiah not to pray for the reversal of ills on behalf of the sinful people. He says, "If they will fast, I still will not listen to their plea."¹ And again: "Do not pray to me on behalf of the people, and do not request on their behalf in prayer and supplication, since I will not listen to them in the time when they shall have invoked me, in the time of their affliction."² And further he, the same One who prefers mercy above sacrifice, says, "And do not pray to me on behalf of this people, and do not request that they may

obtain mercy, and do not approach me on their behalf, since I will not listen to them in the time wherein they shall have invoked me, in the time of their affliction." ON PURITY 2.³

THE PROPHET PRAYS FOR THE PEOPLE.

AMBROSE: Rightly, then, is it said, "Who shall entreat for him?" It implies that it must be such a one as Moses to offer himself for those who sin. Or such as Jeremiah, who, though the Lord said to him, "Pray not for this people," yet prayed and obtained their forgiveness. For at the intercession of the prophet and the entreaty of so great a seer, the Lord was moved. And Jerusalem, which had meanwhile repented for its sins, had said, "O Almighty Lord God of Israel, the soul in anguish and the troubled spirit cries to you. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy." CONCERNING REPENTANCE 1.9.43.⁴

UNREPENTANT SIN IS PUNISHED.

CHRYSOSTOM: He did the same thing in explaining himself to Noah about the flood that he did to Ezekiel when while living in Babylon he caused him to see the people's evil deeds in Jerusalem. And when he told Jeremiah not to pray, there too he explained himself adding, "Do you not see what they do?" And he does the same thing everywhere as he does here [in Matthew]. For what does he say? "The people of Nineveh shall rise up and shall condemn this generation, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold, a greater one than Jonah is here." HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 43.3.⁵

7:17-20 Drink Offerings to Other Gods

DEEDS DETERMINE STANDING BEFORE GOD.

CHRYSOSTOM: This is why God threatens punishment, so that by fear he may destroy contempt, and when the threat alone is sufficient to cause fear in us he does not permit us to undergo

¹Jer 14:12. ²Jer 11:14. ³ANF 4:76*. ⁴NPNF 2 10:336**. ⁵NPNF 1 10:274**.

the actual trial. See, for instance, what he says to Jeremiah, “Do you not see what they do? Their fathers light a fire, their children gather sticks together, their women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven.” It is to be feared lest the same kind of thing be said also concerning us. *HOMILIES ON I CORINTHIANS* 8.8.⁶

ONE SHOULD NOT WORSHIP WOOD. ORIGEN: You will find at least in the book of Jeremiah the words of God censuring by the mouth of the prophet the Jewish people for doing obeisance to such objects and for sacrificing to the queen of heaven and to all the host of heaven. The writings of the Christians, moreover, show, in censuring the sins committed among the Jews, that when God abandoned that people on account of certain sins, these sins of idol worship also were committed by them. *AGAINST CELSUS* 5.8.⁷

GOD CALLS US FROM SIN AND IDOLATRY. ORIGEN: “God is jealous” and does not wish the soul that he betrothed to himself in faith to remain defiled by sin,⁸ but he wishes it to be purified immediately, wishes it to cast out all its impurities immediately, if it has been, by chance, snatched away by some of them. But if the soul continues in sins and says, “We will not hear the voice of the Lord, but we will do what we wish and will burn incense to the ‘queen of heaven,’” a practice condemned by the prophet, it will then be held over for that judgment of Wisdom: “Since I indeed called you and you did not listen but jeered at my words, therefore I will laugh at your ruin, too,”⁹ or is that judgment that has been placed on those in the Gospel when the Lord says, “Depart from me into the eternal fire that God has prepared for the devil and his angels.”¹⁰ *HOMILIES ON EXODUS* 8.6.¹¹

7:21-23 Burnt Offerings Not Prescribed for the Exodus

GOD’S LAW AND OUR LIMITATIONS. THEO-

DORET OF CYR: It is made clear also from this that the obsolete prescriptions of the law had been imposed because of Israel’s limitations. Since they had learned in Egypt how to sacrifice to idols, he wanted to separate them from those practices—in all the prophets he rejects them, remember—yet out of consideration for their limitations he utters this remark, “Eat flesh,” that is, Although I reject the sacrifices, I shall not oppose your partaking of flesh. After all, he declares in the law that those wishing to partake of flesh in their own cities and towns should “perform the sacrifice, but pour out the blood on the ground and then partake of the sacrifice,” not as though they were offering it as a sacrifice but as ordinary flesh, as part of the prohibition imposed on performing sacred rites outside the designated place.¹² *ON JEREMIAH* 2.7.21-23.¹³

CHRIST HAS REMOVED THE NEED FOR SACRIFICES. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: You are blessed who are delivered from the curse. Christ, the Son of God, by his coming has confirmed and completed the law but has taken away the additional precepts, although not all of them, yet at least the more grievous ones. He confirmed the former and abolished the latter, and he has again set the free will of humankind at liberty. He does not subject them to the penalty of a temporal death but gives laws to them according to another constitution. For this reason, he says, “If anyone will come after me, let him come.”¹⁴ And again, “Will you also go away?”¹⁵ And besides, before his coming he refused the sacrifices of the people, while they frequently offered them, when they sinned against him and thought he was to be appeased by sacrifices but not by repentance. *CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES* 6.4.22.¹⁶

⁶NPNF 1 12:48*. ⁷ANF 4:546. ⁸The immediate context of this passage reflects Origen’s doctrine that the world is a school to discipline the fallen soul and restore it to the original purity it possessed before its existence in the body. ⁹Prov 1:24-26. ¹⁰Mt 25:41. ¹¹FC 71:331-32. ¹²See Deut 12:13-16. ¹³PG 81:552-53. ¹⁴Mt 16:24. ¹⁵Jn 6:67. ¹⁶ANF 7:460*.

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE REMOVES SACRIFICIAL SYSTEMS. EPISTLE OF BARNABAS: He has abolished these things so that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human offering. And again he says to them, "Did I command your ancestors, when they went out from the land of Egypt, to offer to me burnt offerings and sacrifices? But this rather I commanded them, Let no one of you cherish any evil in his heart against his neighbor and love not an oath of falsehood." We ought, therefore, being possessed of understanding, to perceive the gracious intention of our Father. He speaks to us, desirous that we, not going astray like them, should ask how we may approach him. To us, then, he declares, "A sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. A smell of sweet savor to the Lord is a heart that glorifies him that made it."¹⁷ We ought, therefore, carefully to inquire concerning our salvation, lest the wicked one, having made his entrance by deceit, should hurl us forth from our [true] life. EPISTLE OF BARNABAS 2.6-10.¹⁸

7:24-26 *Stubborn Hearts*

GOD'S LONGING FOR HIS PEOPLE WAS REFUSED. TERTULLIAN: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you will be my people; and you will walk in all my ways, which I have commanded you." This was God's invitation. "But," it says, "they did not listen, nor inclined their ear." This was Israel's refusal. "They departed, and walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart."¹⁹ I have bought a field, I have purchased oxen, I have married a wife. So again he adds: "I have sent to you all my servants the

prophets, rising early even before daylight"—this would be the Holy Spirit who calls to those who are feasting—"Yet my people did not listen to me, nor inclined their ear, but stiffened their neck." AGAINST MARCION 4.31.²⁰

PINING FOR THE PAST, DESPISING THE FUTURE. JEROME: When I said, "Hear my voice and I will be your God," "they did not listen or incline their ears" but followed the desires of their own hearts and, contrary to the principle of the apostle, who forgot what was in the past and strived for what lay before him,²¹ they did the opposite, pining for the past and despising the future. He also reports that they acted offensively against the Lord "from the day on which their ancestors left the land of Egypt until the present time." Hence, the grace of the gospel was necessary to save them, not due to their own merits but to the Lord's mercy. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 2.41.2-3.²²

PROPHETS ANNOUNCED THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. MAXIMUS OF TURIN: When the whole world was oppressed by the darkness of the devil. When the gloom brought on by sin had laid hold of the world. At the last age, when night had already fallen, this sun deigned to bring forth the rising of his birth. Before the light, before the sun of justice shone, he sent the oracle of the prophets as a kind of dawning, as it is written: "I sent my prophets before the light." SERMON 62.2.²³

¹⁷Ps 51:19 (50:21 LXX). ¹⁸ANF 1:138*. ¹⁹Jer 11:8. ²⁰ANF 3:401*. ²¹See Phil 3:13. ²²CCL 74:81-82. ²³ACW 50:153*.





GOD'S REJECTION AND
THE VALLEY OF DESTRUCTION
JEREMIAH 7:27-34

OVERVIEW: Although God was justly angry with his people, he continued to send his prophets (JEROME). Not only did they reject the prophets, but they also rejected his own Son whom he sent. And so his calling was then extended beyond his people to the entire human race (JEROME, IRENAEUS).

7:27-29 They Will Not Listen

THE WRATH OF THE LORD IS JUSTIFIED.

JEROME: The wrath of the Lord, therefore, is just. It is kindled and poured out on a contemptuous and stiff-necked people who are unwilling to hear the words of God. Yet, as we said above, how God continued to send prophets to them all day long and even through the night!¹ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 2.42.1.²

GOD CALLS THE HUMAN RACE. JEROME: "Have no doubt," he says, "that they are stiff-necked and that their works are worse than those of their ancestors. Behold, I give them a place of penance. I do not speak that they may repent, but I only predict what is coming. In any event, you will now speak my word to them and they will not listen to you, and you will call them and they will not answer you, for they are so prideful that when you ask them for a hearing, no one will even bother to respond. And you should then say to them: This is the generation who did not listen to the voice of the Lord their God or accepted his discipline." It is beautiful, as I said before, not that he calls his own people, but that he calls the human race. For, although at the

¹Jer 7:25-28. ²CCL 74:82*.

time of the prophets, it was done in part and as a foreshadowing,³ it was only fulfilled in Christ, when they refused to accept discipline and despised the voice of their Lord. Thus, Jeremiah has the apt phrase: “faith has perished”—which is distinctive of Christians—“and was removed from their mouth,” clearly referring to the confession of faith of the child of God. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 2.43.1-3.⁴

7:30-34 Rejection in the Valley of Slaughter

ISRAEL REJECTED FOR ITS SIN. IRENAEUS: Last of all he sent to those unbelievers his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the wicked husbandmen cast out of the vineyard when they had killed him.⁵ For this reason, the Lord God gave it up (no longer hedged around but thrown open

throughout all the world) to other tenants, who render the fruits in their seasons—the beautiful elect tower being also raised everywhere. For the illustrious church is now everywhere, and everywhere is the winepress dug. Those who do receive the Spirit are everywhere. Because the former tenants have rejected the Son of God and cast him out of the vineyard when they killed him, God has justly rejected them and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation. This is in accordance with what Jeremiah says: “The Lord has rejected and cast off the nation that does these things. The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the Lord.” AGAINST HERESIES 4.36.2.⁶

³See Heb 10:1. ⁴CCL 74:82-83. ⁵Lk 20:14-15. ⁶ANF 1:515**.





PREFERRING DEATH TO LIFE

JEREMIAH 8:1-7

OVERVIEW: Confession rescued the king of Babylon from his many sins. When you return, the Father will embrace you (PACIAN). God is quick to forgive. Have hope in God whose love of humanity is as vast as the sea (CHRYSOSTOM). Remember the good Shepherd who pursues and delivers you (BASIL). Do not despair because God lifts up the fallen. It is never too late (CHRYSOSTOM). Pray for sinners because there is always hope that they will repent (IGNATIUS). The lost son repents quickly, weeps bitterly and rises promptly, knowing God is merciful (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). No sin is unforgivable if you do not stiffen your neck (FULGENTIUS). God does not want sinners to perish (JOHN CASSIAN). Yet God's people rebel against him (JEROME). Like Jeremiah, Jesus uses animals to illustrate truths in ways everyone can understand (CHRYSOSTOM). God sent Jesus to his people to give them one more chance to repent (LACTANTIUS).

8:4 The Return of Those Who Have Fallen

WELCOME REPENTANCE. PACIAN OF BARCELONA: Did not confession deliver the king of the Babylonians when he had been condemned after so many sins of idolatry? And what is it that the Lord says? "Shall he who has fallen not arise, and shall he who has turned away not return?" LETTER 1.5.3.¹

GOD WELCOMES THE CONTRITE. PACIAN OF

BARCELONA: Immediately, on your return, the robe shall be put on you. The ring will adorn you. Your Father's embrace again shall receive you.² Behold, he says, "I do not wish the death of the sinner as much as I prefer that he turn about and live."³ And again he says, "Shall he who has fallen not arise, and shall he who has turned away not return?" The apostle states, "God has the power to make him stand."⁴ ON PENITENTS 12.2.⁵

GOD FORGIVES THE CONTRITE. CHRYSOSTOM: God is indeed good to everyone, but he shows his patient endurance especially to those who sin. If you want to hear a paradoxical statement—paradoxical because it is not customary but true for the great piety it reveals—listen. God always seems to be severe to the righteous. But he seems good to sinners and quick to clemency. He restores the one who sinned and fell, and he tells him, "Shall not he who falls get up? Or the one who turns away, shall he not turn back again?" And "Why did the stupid daughter of Judah turn away with a shameless revolting?" And again, "Return to me, and I will return to you."⁶ HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING 7.2.5.⁷

GOD FORGIVES. CHRYSOSTOM: The very thing I said in the beginning, I say now, that both of these cause us to betray our salvation: placing

¹FC 99:23. ²See Lk 15:20-22. ³Ezek 33:11; cf. Ezek 18:23, 32; 2 Pet 3:9. ⁴Rom 14:4. ⁵FC 99:85-86*. ⁶Jer 8:4, 5 and Zech 1:3, respectively. ⁷FC 96:89*.

our courage in our goodness and losing our hope to wickedness. This is why Paul, to protect those who remain in goodness, said, "Let any one who thinks that he stand take heed in fear that he fall."⁸ And again: "I am afraid that, after preaching to others, I myself should be disapproved."⁹ In order to lift up those who are found fallen in wickedness and to excite them to greater readiness, he bore testimony to the Corinthians. He wrote to them, "I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented."¹⁰ In this way, he revealed that the sinners do not deserve equal pity with the unrepentant. And the prophet said to them, "Shall not he that falls arise, or he that turns away, shall he not turn back again?" Hence, as long as the "today" is said let us not despair but have good hope in the Master. Let us recognize the vast sea of his philanthropy. HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING I.4.3I.¹¹

REMEMBER THE COMPASSION OF GOD. BASIL THE GREAT: Have the strength to rise up from the earth. Remember the good Shepherd and how he will pursue and deliver you. And if there are but "two legs or the tip of an ear,"¹² leap back from him who has wounded you. Remember the compassion of God, how he heals with olive oil and wine.¹³ Do not despair of salvation. Recall the memory of what has been written: how he who falls rises again, and he who is turned away turns again. He who has been smitten is healed, and he who is caught by wild beasts escapes. He who confesses is not rejected. The Lord does not wish the death of the sinner but that he return and live.¹⁴ Do not have contempt for yourself, like one who has fallen into the depths of sin. LETTER 44.¹⁵

GOD WILL LIFT THE FALLEN. CHRYSOSTOM: Is it not strange that others do not even now despair of your salvation? They instead are continually praying that they may have their member restored to them. However, while they pray, you yourself, having once fallen, are unwilling to get

up again and remain prostrated. You all but cry aloud to the enemy: "Slay me, smite me, spare not." "Does he who falls not rise up again?" so speaks the divine oracle. But you strive against this and contradict it. If one who has fallen despairs, it is as much as to say that he who falls does not rise up again. I entreat you. Do not do so great a wrong to yourself. Do not pour on us such a flood of sorrow. I do not say this merely at the present time when you have not yet completed your twentieth year. But I would entreat you, even if after achieving many things and spending your whole life in Christ, you had experienced this attack. Even then, in extreme old age, it would not have been right to despair. But call to mind the robber who was justified on the cross. The laborers who came the eleventh hour and received the wages of the whole day. LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE 2.4.¹⁶

PRAY FOR OTHERS. IGNATIUS: Pray without ceasing on behalf of other people. There is always hope for the repentance that they may attain before God. For "cannot he who falls arise again, and he who goes astray return?" Permit them, then, to be instructed by you. Be therefore the ministers of God and the mouth of Christ. For thus says the Lord, "If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth."¹⁷ Be humble in your earnest prayers. While they go astray, stand steadfast in the faith. TO THE EPHESIANS IO.¹⁸

THE PENITENT ARE FULLY RESTORED. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: It is worth our while observing, in what way his sin was forgiven, and how he put away his fault. The event may prove of no slight benefit to us. He did not then defer his repentance. Nor was he careless about it, for as rapid as was his decent into sin, so quick were his tears because of it. Nor did he merely weep,

⁸1 Cor 10:12. ⁹1 Cor 9:27. ¹⁰2 Cor 12:21. ¹¹FC 96:14*. ¹²Amos 3:12. ¹³As he did, for instance, in the parable of the good Samaritan. ¹⁴See Ezek 18:32. ¹⁵FC 13:114*. ¹⁶NPNF 1 9:114**. ¹⁷Jer 15:19. ¹⁸ANF 1:53-54*.

but he wept bitterly. As one who had fallen, so bravely did he spring up again. He knew that the merciful God somewhere says by one of the prophets, "Shall not he that falls arise? And he that backslides, shall he not return?" In returning, therefore, he did not miss the mark, for he continued to be what he had been before, a true disciple. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 149.¹⁹

8:5 *Perpetual Backsliding*

GOD IS MERCIFUL, UNLESS A SINNER HARDENS. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE: Just as there is no illness that is incurable for our physician, so the heavenly medicine cannot be powerless in any wound or for any length of time. Therefore, the physician testifies that he is always able to restore health to the one converted. He says, "In returning and rest, you shall be saved."²⁰ Hence God, through Jeremiah, does not cease to reprove the hardheartedness of certain ones. Instead he says in this way: "When people fall, do they not get up again? If they go astray, do they not turn back? Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding? They have held fast to deceit. They have refused to return." God does not punish the sins in the sinner, if the neck of the sinner is not stiffened. LETTER 7.12.²¹

GOD DESIRES CONTRITION AND REPENTANCE. JOHN CASSIAN: Those then who perish, perish against his will. This he testifies against each one of them day by day: "Turn from your evil ways. Why will you die, O house of Israel?" And again: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not."²² And: "Why has this people in Jerusalem turned away with a stubborn revolting? They have hardened their faces and refused to return." The grace of the Christ then is at hand every day. For it "wills all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."²³ It calls all without any exception, saying, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh

you."²⁴ CONFERENCE 2.13.7.²⁵

HUMANITY'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD.

JEROME: They have all abandoned him. There is no one who speaks well and does penance for his sins. They follow their own wills like a horse ready for battle. They bend their tongue as a bow.²⁶ They invent everything, and there is no truth in them. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.26.²⁷

8:6-7 *Learn from Nature About Repentance*

JEREMIAH'S USE OF THE SWALLOW AS IMAGE.

CHRYSOSTOM: It was exceedingly right to admire the consideration of our Lawgiver. He could have brought forward his illustration from among people. He could have spoken of Moses, Elijah, John, and others like them. But, so that he might touch them more to the quick, he made mention of the irrational beings. For had he spoken of those righteous men, these would have been able to say, "We have not yet become like them." But now by passing them over in silence and bringing forward the fowls of the air, he has cut off from them every excuse. Therefore, he imitates in this place also the old law. Yes, for the old covenant likewise looks to the bee, to the ant, to the turtle and to the swallow. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 21.4.²⁸

PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE LOST THE LORD.

LACTANTIUS: Jeremiah also says, in like manner: "The turtle and the swallow have known her time, and the sparrows of the field have observed the times of their coming, but my people have not known the judgment of the Lord. How do you say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? The meting out is in vain. The scribes are deceived and confounded. The wise men are dismayed and taken, for they have rejected the word of the Lord." Therefore (as I had begun to

¹⁹CGSL 592*. ²⁰Is 30:15. ²¹FC 95:360*. ²²Mt 23:37. ²³1 Tim 2:4. ²⁴Mt 11:28. ²⁵NPNF 2 11:425*. ²⁶Cf. Jer 9:3 (9:2 LXX). ²⁷FC 53:340. ²⁸NPNF 1 10:148-49**.

say), when God had determined to send to people a teacher of righteousness, he commanded him to be born again a second time in the flesh and to be made in the likeness of humankind himself, to whom he was about to be a guide, and companion and teacher. But since God is kind and merciful to his people, he sent him to those very persons whom he hated,²⁹ that he might not close the way of salvation against them

forever but might give them a free opportunity of following God, that they might both gain the reward of life if they should follow him (which many of them do and have done) and incur the penalty of death by their fault if they should reject their King. DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.II.³⁰

²⁹Rom 5:9-10; Is 63:10. ³⁰ANF 7:110.



PEACE WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE JEREMIAH 8:8-12

OVERVIEW: When you forsake the Lord, you leave wisdom behind, no matter what outward appearances might say (SALVIAN). The outward appearances of peace, too, can be deceptive if that peace is based on something or someone other than Christ (COMMODIAN). Christ is the only place where true peace can be found, and people should not pretend to have peace with each other where Christ is not present. The truth is often a bitter pill to swallow for those who hear it and for those who speak it (JEROME). Ministers, too, when you preach peace,

you must practice it as well (AUGUSTINE).

8:9 No Wisdom in Them

THE NAME CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE JOINED TO VIRTUE. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: What is a holy title without merit but an ornament set in the mud? The Holy Scriptures have testified to this in writing: "A golden ring in a swine's snout, a woman fair and foolish."¹ And in us the title

¹Prov 11:22.

Christian is like a golden ornament. If we use it unworthily, we seem to be swine with an ornament. . . .

For this reason, our God spoke elsewhere about the Hebrew people to the prophet, saying, "Call his name, Not Beloved." And again to the Jews, "You are not my people, and I am not your God."² But he showed clearly elsewhere why he said this about them, for he said, "They have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters."³ And again: "For they have cast away the word of the Lord, and there is no wisdom in them." *THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD* 4.1.⁴

8:11 *Peace, Peace*

A DECEITFUL PEACE. *COMMODIAN:* The time spoken about has come to our people. There is peace in the world and, at the same time, ruin is weighing us down from the enticement of the world—the destruction of the reckless people whom you have torn into schism. Either obey the law of the city, or leave it. You see the speck sticking in our eyes and do not even notice the beam in your own. A treacherous peace is coming to you. Persecution is rife although the wounds are hidden, and thus, without slaughter, you are destroyed. War is waged in secret because, in the midst of peace, scarcely one of you has exhibited even a hint of caution. O badly fortified and foretold for slaughter, you praise a treacherous peace—a peace that will do you more harm than good. Having become the soldiers of another than Christ, you have perished. *THE INSTRUCTIONS OF COMMODIAN* 66.⁵

TRUTH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. *JEROME:* Do not believe the false prophets who say, "Peace, peace, and there is no peace"; who are always repeating, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." "Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish things; they have not laid bare your iniquity that they might call you to repentance—those who devour God's people like bread have not called on God."⁶ Jeremiah an-

nounced the captivity and was [punished] by the people.⁷ Hananiah, the son of Azzur, broke the bars of wood for the present but was preparing bars of iron for the future. False prophets always promise pleasant things, and please for a fee. Truth is bitter, however, and those who preach it are filled with bitterness. For with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth the Lord's Passover is kept, and it is eaten with bitter herbs. *AGAINST JOVINIANUS* 2.37.⁸

WORDS OF PEACE MUST BE SUPPORTED BY ACTIONS. *JEROME:* But what can I do, I who can only wish for peace and have no power to bring it about? Even though the wish may win its reward with God, its futility must still sadden one who cherishes it. When the apostle said, "as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all,"⁹ he knew quite well that the realization of peace depends on the consent of two parties. The prophet truly cries, "They say Peace, peace: and yet there is no peace." To overthrow peace by actions while professing it in words is not hard. To point out its advantages is one thing, and to strive for it another. People's speeches may be all for unity, but their actions may in fact enforce bondage. I wish for peace as much as any one else; and not only do I wish for it, I ask for it. But the peace that I want is the peace of Christ; a true peace, a peace without rancor, a peace that does not involve war, a peace that will not reduce opponents but will unite friends. How can I term domination peace? I must call things by their right names. Where there is hatred, there let people talk of feuds; and where there is mutual esteem, there only let peace be spoken of. For my part I neither tear the church apart nor separate myself from the communion of the fathers. From my very cradle, I may say, I have been reared on Catholic milk; and no one can be a better churchman than one who has never been a heretic. But I

²Hos 1:9. ³Jer 17:13. ⁴FC 3:90-91*. ⁵ANF 4:216**. ⁶Jer 7:4; Ps 14:4 (13:4 LXX); 53:4 (52:5 LXX). ⁷Jer 20:2. ⁸NPNF 2 6:415*. ⁹Rom 12:18.

know nothing of a peace that is without love or of a communion that is without peace. In the Gospel I read, "If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."¹⁰ If then we may not offer gifts that are our own unless we are at peace with our brothers; how much less can we receive the body of Christ if we cherish enmity in our hearts? How can I conscientiously approach Christ's Eucharist and answer the Amen¹¹ if I doubt the charity of him who ministers it? LETTER 82.2.¹²

MINISTERS BESTOW THE PEACE THEY HAVE.

AUGUSTINE: Such, then, should Christ's apostles be preachers of the gospel and not ones who

greet on the road. That is, not ones who look for something else, but those who proclaim the gospel out of genuine brotherly love. Let them come to the house and say, "Peace be to this house." They do not only say it with their lips, but they pour out what they are full of. They preach peace, and they have peace. They are not like those of whom it is said, "Peace, peace, and there is no peace." What's the meaning of "Peace, peace, and there is no peace"? They preach it and do not have it. They praise and do not love it. They say, and they do not do.¹³ As for you, though, be sure you accept peace, whether Christ is being proclaimed casually or with sincerity. SERMON 101.II.¹⁴

¹⁰Mt 5:23-24. ¹¹1 Cor 14:16, where in the Greek "giving of thanks" is "eucharist." ¹²NPNF 2 6:171**. ¹³Mt 23:3. ¹⁴WSA 3 4:71**.





A HARVEST OF TERROR
WITH HOPE FOR HEALING
JEREMIAH 8:13-22

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah's adder stands for envy, against which there is no cure (JOHN CASSIAN). Like an unpleasant medicine, the law punishes to heal (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA), serving as a balm of healing on our wounds of sin (BASIL). Let us then confess our sins and cling to the mercy of God (HORSIESI).

8:17 Adders That Cannot Be Charmed

ENVY IS HARD TO CURE. JOHN CASSIAN: You should know that the disease of envy is harder to cure than any other. I would say that someone tainted by its poison is almost beyond healing. This is the plague described figuratively by the prophet: "See, I will send you serpents against which there are no incantations, and they will bite you." The bites of envy are quite rightly compared by the prophet with the lethal poison of the basilisk. CONFERENCE 3.18.16.¹

8:18-22 Is There No Balm in Gilead?

THE LAW SEEKS THE GOOD OF PEOPLE. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Let no one, then, run down the law, as if, on account of the penalty, it were not beautiful and good. Shouldn't he who drives away bodily disease appear as a benefactor? Shouldn't he who attempts to deliver the soul from iniquity even more appear as a friend since

the soul is a more precious thing than the body? Besides, for the sake of bodily health we submit to incisions, cauterization and medicinal draughts. He who administers them is called savior and healer. He is called this even though he amputates parts, but he works not from a grudge or ill will toward the patient. He instead acts according to the principles that the art prescribes so that the sound parts may not perish along with them. No one accuses the physician's art of wickedness. In the same way, shouldn't we submit, for the soul's sake, to either banishment, or punishment or bonds, as long as from unrighteousness we shall obtain righteousness? STROMATEIS I.27.²

THE HEALING BALM OF THE LAW AND GOSPEL. BASIL THE GREAT: "Shall not he that falls rise again, and he that is turned away, shall he not turn again?"³ Why, then, is the virgin "turned away with a stubborn revolting," even though she heard Christ, her spouse, saying through Jeremiah: "And when she had committed all these fornications, I said: Return to me, and she did not return?"⁴ "Is there no balm in Gilead? Or is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the wound of the daughter of my people closed?" Indeed, you will find many safeguards against evil in the divine Scripture,

¹NPNF 2 11:488**. ²ANF 2:339**. ³Jer 8:4. ⁴Jer 3:7.

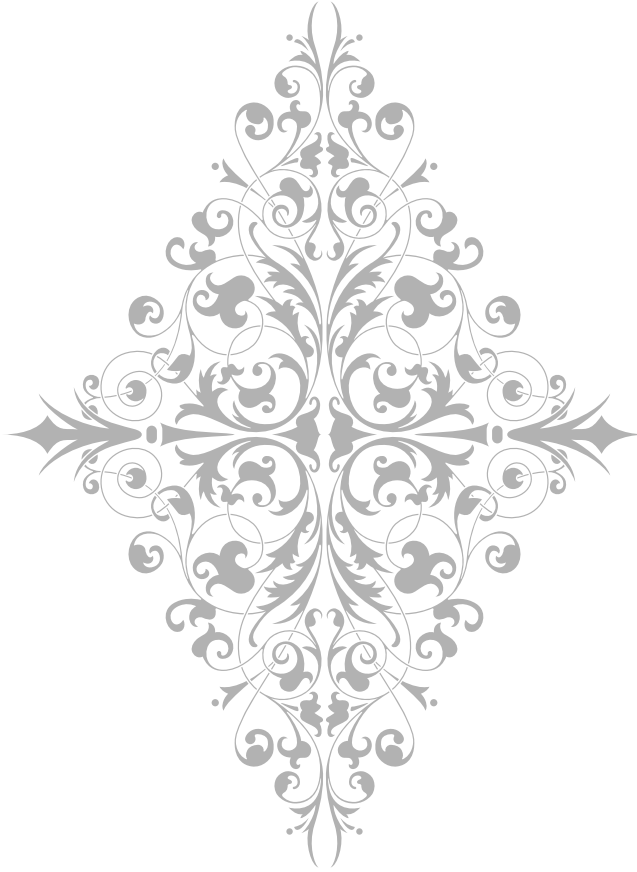
and many remedies which from destruction bring salvation. There are the mysteries of death and resurrection, the words of terrible judgment and everlasting punishment, the doctrines of repentance and the forgiveness of sin and those innumerable examples of conversion. There are the drachma, the sheep and the son who spent his livelihood with harlots, who was lost and found, was dead and lived again.⁵ Let us use these safeguards against evil. Through them, let us heal our soul. . . .

While we can, let us lift ourselves from the fall. Let us never despair of ourselves, if only we depart from evil. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "O come, let us worship and fall down; let us weep before him."⁶ The Word who invited us to repentance calls aloud, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁷ There is, then, a way of salvation, if we want it. "Death in his might has swallowed up, but again the Lord has wiped away tears from off all faces"⁸ of those who repent. The Lord is faithful in all his words.⁹ He does not lie when he says, "Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."¹⁰ The great Physician of souls who is the ready liberator, not of you alone, but of all who are enslaved by sin, is ready to heal your sickness. From him come the words, it was his sweet and saving lips that said, "They who are whole do not need a physician but those who are sick. . . . I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."¹¹ What excuse have you, what excuse has anyone, when he speaks in this way? The Lord wishes to cleanse you from the trouble of your sickness and to show you light after darkness. The good Shepherd who

left those who had not wandered away is seeking after you. If you give yourself to him, he will not hold back. He, in his love, will not disdain even to carry you on his own shoulders, rejoicing that he has found his sheep that was lost. The Father stands and awaits your return from your wandering. Only come back, and while you are yet far off, he will run and fall on your neck, and, now that you are cleansed by repentance, will enfold you in embraces of love. He will clothe with the chief robe the soul that has put off the old person with all his works. He will put a ring on hands that have washed off the blood of death and will put shoes on feet that have turned from the evil way to the path of the gospel of peace. He will announce the day of joy and gladness to those who are his own, both angels and human beings, and will celebrate your salvation far and wide. For "truly I say unto you," he says, "there is joy in heaven before God over one sinner who repents."¹² LETTER 46.5-6.¹³

LET US CONFESS OUR SINS. HORSIESI: What should we do? Let us allow a spring of tears to flow every day, day and night. Let us, too, say with the weeping Jeremiah, the great prophet, "Who will give some water to my head, and a spring of tears to my eyes? I would weep for my sins day and night." Let us first of all confess our sins before this. . . . which is full of terror and trembling tears. Let us invoke the goodness and mercy of our God, while we are in this exile of tears, before death overtakes us.¹⁴ INSTRUCTIONS I.3.¹⁵

⁵Lk 15. ⁶Ps 95:6 (94:6 LXX). ⁷Mt 11:28. ⁸Is 25:8 (LXX). ⁹Ps 145:13 (144:13 LXX). ¹⁰Is 1:18. ¹¹Mt 9:12-13. ¹²See Lk 15:7. ¹³NPNF 2 8:151-52**. ¹⁴Jer 9:1 (8:23 LXX). ¹⁵CS 47:136*.



DECEIT HAS OVERTAKEN THE LAND
JEREMIAH 9:1-11

OVERVIEW: You should not cry because the church expels heretics unless you are involved with them (AUGUSTINE). Let us cry because we seek to sin rather than serve (CHRYSOSTOM). Otherwise deceit and lawlessness will rule the land because no one repents or knows the Lord

(THEODORET).

Silence and pretended praise are worse than insults (JOHN CASSIAN). Both good and evil are done by the tongue (AUGUSTINE). Not only do people sin willingly, but also they work hard to do so (JOHN CASSIAN). Lies are harder to

defend than the truth (GREGORY THE GREAT). Sweet words intended to deceive are as violent as arrows, as evidenced by Judas's sweet words of betrayal (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA).

9:1-3 Weep for the Slain of Jerusalem

WEEP WHOLESOMELY BY REPENTING. AUGUSTINE: You exclaim, "How fitting it was for Jeremiah, with the chorus of the prophets and all the saints, to cry out, 'Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes,' that he might bewail the sins of the foolish people, because the church of Christ expelled the teachers of the Pelagian error." If you wish to weep wholesomely, weep for this, that you are involved in that error, and let your tears wash you clean of the new plague. Are you ignorant, or have you forgotten or do you wish not to know that the holy, the one, the Catholic church was also signified by the word *Paradise*? AGAINST JULIAN 5.6.24.¹

AN APPROPRIATE TIME FOR LAMENTATION. CHRYSOSTOM: Let us collect ourselves, I exhort you. There are daily wars, submersions of towns, innumerable destructions all around us, and on every side the wrath of God is enclosing us as in a net. As though we were well-pleasing to him, we are secure. We all make our hands ready for unjust gains and not for helping others. We are all ready to plunder, but no one is ready to protect. Each one of us has much anxiety over how he may add to his wealth. No one has anxiety over how he may save his own soul. One fear possesses all, that we should not become poor. No one is in anguish and trembling out of fear that we should fall into hell. These things call for lamentation, these call for accusation, for eternal damnation. I do not wish to speak of these things, but I am constrained by my grief. Forgive me. I am forced by sorrow to utter many things, even those that I do not wish to say. I see that our wound is grievous, that our calamity is beyond comfort, that woes have overtaken us that exceed the consolation. We are undone.

"O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears," that I might lament. Let us weep, beloved, let us groan. ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS 23.8-9.²

IGNORANCE OF GOD LEADS TO LAWLESSNESS. THEODORET OF CYR: They were fabricating deceit, engaging in blackmail, leveling false accusations against neighbors. For this is what he says, "Deceit, not faith, prevails over the land, for they proceed from evil to evil." Because of this he exposes their evil, which never changes as they move "from evil to evil," immediately adding the reason they neglect the divine law: because "they do not know me, says the Lord." ON JEREMIAH 3.9.³

9:4-6 Watch Out for Lying Neighbors

SILENCE CAN BE AS WICKED AS WORDS. JOHN CASSIAN: "For every brother will utterly supplant, and every friend will walk deceitfully. And a man shall mock his brother, and they will not speak the truth, for they have bent their tongue like a bow for lies and not for truth." But often a pretended patience excites to anger more keenly than words, and a spiteful silence exceeds the most awful insults in words. The wounds of enemies are more easily borne than the deceitful blandishment of mockers, as is well said by the prophet. CONFERENCE 2.16.18.⁴

MASTER THE TONGUE. AUGUSTINE: What do we do with such a useful member? With it we pray to God. With it we make amends. With it we utter praises. With it we sing with one voice in harmony to God. With it every day we show ourselves kind and considerate when we talk to others or give them advice. What are we doing at this very moment? This very tongue of mine is performing you a service. What are we to do, in order not to transgress with the tongue? Especially as it is written, "Death and life are in the

¹FC 35:267*. ²NPNF 1 14:472**. ³PG 81:560. ⁴NPNF 2 1:456**.

hands of the tongue,"⁵ and again it is written, "I saw many fall by the edge of the sword, but not like those who fell by the tongue."⁶ Again it is written, "And the tongue is established among our members, as something that defiles our whole body."⁷ And yet again the same Lord says, "They have taught their tongues to speak lies." SERMON 16A.2.⁸

SOME WORK HARD TO DO EVIL. JOHN CASSIAN: Everyone is so inflamed by the love of sin and desire to carry out what they like, that they look out with watchful care for an opportunity to commit wickedness. They are afraid of being too slow to enjoy their lusts, even glorying in their shame and the great number of their crimes, as the apostle says in censure.⁹ They seek credit for themselves out of their own confusion. The prophet Jeremiah also maintains that they commit their heinous crimes not only willingly and with ease of heart and body but with laborious efforts to such an extent that they come to toil to carry them out. They are even impeded from their deadly quest of sin by the burdensome effort the actualizing of their evil desires requires, as he says: "They have labored to do wickedly." CONFERENCE 3.23.1.¹⁰

LYING IS HARD WORK. GREGORY THE GREAT: The insincere are to be admonished to learn how heavy is the labor of deception. They endure it with guilt. They are afraid of being found out. They are ever seeking dishonest defenses. They are agitated by fearful suspicions. But there is nothing safer to defend than sincerity, nothing easier to say than truth. For, when obliged to defend its deceit, the heart is wearied with hard labor. For it is written, "The labor of their own lips shall cover them."¹¹ For what now fills them then covers them, since it then presses down with sharp retribution one whose soul it now elevates with a mild uneasiness. It is said through Jeremiah, "They have taught their tongue to

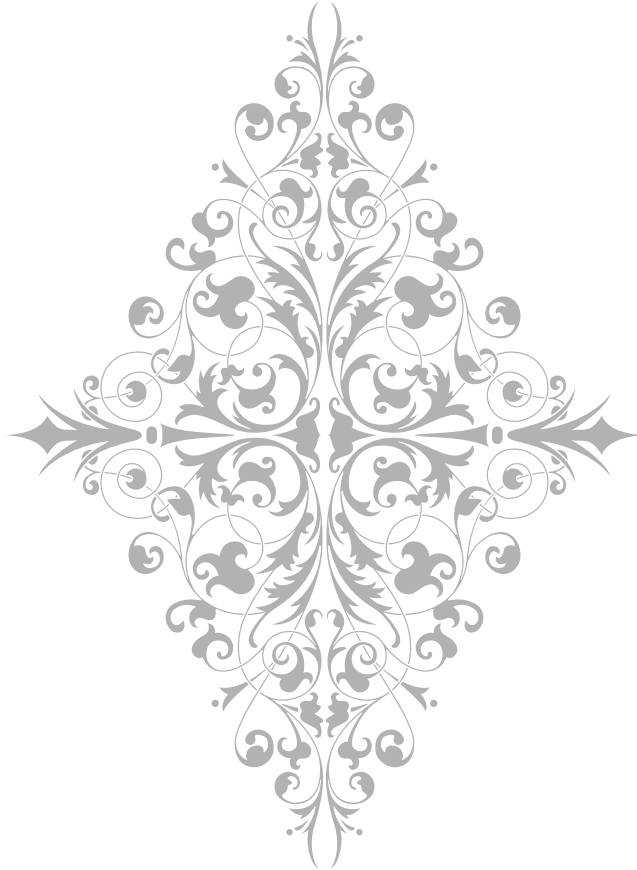
speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity." Said more plainly: "They who might have been friends of truth without labor, labor to sin." PASTORAL RULE 3.II.¹²

9:7-11 *The Lord Will Punish Them*

BEWARE OF DELIBERATELY DECEPTIVE WORDS. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: A most base pest, my beloved, is double dealing and hypocrisy in our actions and conduct, by which a person uses the pretense of pleasant-spoken words and of a tongue anointed, so to speak, with the honey of deception, while the heart is full of utter bitterness. Of such we say, in the words of one of the holy prophets, "Their tongue is a piercing arrow; the words of their mouth are deceitful. He speaks peacefully to his neighbor, and enmity is in his heart." And again, "Their words are smoother than oil, yet are they arrows."¹³ By which is meant that they have the force of darts falling violently and shot forth from bows. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 68.¹⁴

THE TONGUE AS A DEADLY ARROW. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Matthew says that when the traitor drew near to Christ, our common Savior, he kissed him and added, "Hail, Master."¹⁵ How can you say "Hail" to him who by means of your word and deed is made the prey of death? How could such a word possibly be true? We thus see that, inasmuch as that false one, Satan, was within him, he used falsehood even in saying "Hail." Because of deeds like this, the prophet says, "Their tongue is a piercing spearhead. The words of their mouth are deceitful. To his neighbor he speaks things of peace, but in his soul there is enmity." COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 148.¹⁶

⁵Prov 18:21. ⁶Sir 28:18. ⁷Jas 3:6b. ⁸WSA 3 1:348**. ⁹Phil 3:19. ¹⁰NPWF 2 11:519**. ¹¹Ps 140:9. ¹²NPWF 2 12:333**. ¹³Ps 55:21 (54:22 LXX). ¹⁴CGSL 287**. ¹⁵Mt 26:49. ¹⁶CGSL 588**.



IGNORANCE OF THE LORD
DESTROYS THE LAND
JEREMIAH 9:12-26

OVERVIEW: God punishes those who reject his gospel (PATRICK). The prophets and the women of Jerusalem wept because God's people rejected his exhortation (CHRYSOSTOM), allowing death to enter into their lives through the windows of their senses that they have not restrained (THEODORET, AMBROSE, JEROME, ORIGEN, EPIPHANIUS). Do not boast in your knowledge or despise others (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, BRAULIO). Wisdom and strength are gifts from God (ORIGEN). God turns us toward him. So boast in God alone (AUGUSTINE), and put your trust and glory in him alone (CYPRIAN). Humanity's greatest dignity is to know what is truly great and cling to it (BASIL). Therefore, we should lay aside pride and live humbly according to God's word (CLEMENT OF ROME). Let us boast in the Lord and rejoice in our salvation. We thank him because he saved us by his grace (AUGUSTINE). Blessed is the one who renounces all boasts (ORIGEN). His heart is with God and shows that it has been spiritually circumcised in its humility (ORIGEN). This is what distinguishes true Israel, not bodily circumcision (THEODORET).

9:12-16 *Forsaking God's Laws*

GOD'S WRATH CALLS FORTH REPENTANCE. PATRICK: I was then about sixteen years of age. I did not know the true God. I was taken as a captive to Ireland with many thousands of people, and deservedly so, because we had turned away from God¹ and did not keep his commandments² and did not obey our priests, who used to remind us of our salvation. The Lord brought over us the wrath of his anger³ and scattered us among many nations,⁴ even unto the utmost part of the earth,⁵ where now my insignificance is

placed among strangers. CONFESSIO I.I.⁶

9:17-20 *Let the Mourning Women Come*

LET US LAMENT AND MOURN. CHRYSOSTOM: Because they had not been enlightened by the many exhortations he had delivered in Jerusalem, he wept for their blindness. The prophets also did this. Let us now do so as well. Now is the time to mourn and weep and lament. It is timely also for us to say now, "Call for the mourning women, and send to them that are wise women, and let them speak." Perhaps we shall thus be able to drive the disease of avarice from those who are building elaborate homes, from those who are securing fields for themselves by fraud. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 64.⁷

9:21-22 *Windows of Death*

SENSES SERVE AS WINDOWS TO THE SOUL. THEODORET OF CYR: By "windows" he refers to the error of their thinking: through them they gave entrance to the error and the blow inflicted by it. You would not be wide of the mark to call the body's senses "windows"—sight, taste, smell, hearing and touch. Both life and death can enter through these. For example, the person who looks with restraint reaps life, while the one looking immoderately gains death. The truthful tongue procures salvation for the soul, while the lying one brings about ruin; and likewise with the rest, as you can easily learn. ON JEREMIAH 3.9.21.⁸

¹See, e.g., Is 59:13; Dan 9:5; Bar 3:8. ²See, e.g., Gen 26:5; Ezek 44:24. ³See Is 42:25. ⁴See Jer 9:16 (9:15 LXX); Tob 13:4. ⁵See Acts 13:47. ⁶ACW 17:21**. ⁷FC 41:203**. ⁸PG 81:561-64.

IF YOU LUST, DEATH HAS COME. AMBROSE: Amid so many passions of this body of ours, amid so many enticements of this world, who indeed can keep his footstep safe and undefiled? The eye looks back and leads the mind's perception astray, the ear hears and turns one's attention away, a whiff of fragrance hinders thought, a kiss of the mouth introduces guilt, a touch kindles the fire of passion. "Death has entered in through the window," the prophet said. Your eye is your window. If you look at a woman to lust after her, death has entered in;⁹ if you listen to the harlot's words, death has entered in; if licentiousness takes hold of your senses, death has gone in. FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD 1.3.¹⁰

FIVE WINDOWS OF TEMPTATION. JEROME: O Lord, keep watch over my mouth, for it is written, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."¹¹ Again, you have declared, "I tell you, that of every idle word people speak, they shall give account on the day of judgment."¹² The prophet prays, therefore, that his words may not be vain but holy and pleasing to God. "Set a guard at the door of my lips."¹³ He is asking for a guard around his lips like the rampart of a castle, that he may never capitulate to sin. It is Jeremiah who says, "Death has come up through our windows." A person has five windows: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. If I look at a woman to lust after her, I have already committed adultery in my heart, and death has come through my window of sight. If the sound of the harp, organ or flute unnerves me, death has entered my soul through the sense of hearing. Again, if I touch something soft and supple, and wantonness breaks down the resistance of my flesh, death has entered through touch, and so down the line. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 51 (PS 140).¹⁴

LUST LEADS TO DEATH. ORIGEN: One window is one of our senses. The Bridegroom looks out through it. Another window is another sense. Through it he gazes with active concern for our well-being. For what senses are there through

which the Word of God does not look out? The following example teaches us what "looking out through the windows" means and in what way the Bridegroom sees through them. Where he does not look out, there is death found coming up, as we read in Jeremiah: "See, death is come up through your windows." When you look on a woman to lust after her,¹⁵ death comes up through your windows. HOMILIES ON THE SONG OF SONGS 2.12.¹⁶

DEATH ENTERS THROUGH WINDOWS OF THE SENSES. ORIGEN: We can take the windows as meaning the bodily sense through which life or death gains entrance to the soul. That is what the prophet Jeremiah means when, speaking of sinners, he says, "Death is coming up through your windows."¹⁷ How does death come up through windows? If the eyes of a sinner should "look on a woman to lust after her." He who has looked on a woman thus "has committed adultery with her in his heart."¹⁸ Then death has gained entrance to that soul through the windows of the eyes. COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS 3.13.¹⁹

THE WINDOWS THROUGH WHICH DEATH COMES. EPIPHANIUS: The prophet says, "Death is come up through the windows." Surely he does not mean actual windows—otherwise we could shut our windows and never die. But the bodily senses—sight, hearing, and so on—are windows to us and death enters us through them if we sin with them. PANARION 1.9.4.10.²⁰

9:23-24 Boast in Knowing the Lord

FLEE PHILOSOPHY THAT TRUSTS IN HUMAN-KIND. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: What is the philosophy that the apostle bids us shun? This, then, "the wisdom of the world is foolishness

⁹See Mt 5:28. ¹⁰FC 65:282. ¹¹Prov 18:21. ¹²Mt 12:36. ¹³Ps 141:3 (140:3 LXX). ¹⁴FC 48:366-67**. ¹⁵See Mt 5:28. ¹⁶ACW 26:301**. ¹⁷Jer 9:21 (9:20 LXX). ¹⁸Mt 5:28. ¹⁹ACW 26:233-34. ²⁰NHMS 35:33.

with God.”²¹ “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”²² Let no one therefore glory on account of pre-eminence in human thought. For it is written well in Jeremiah, “Let not the wise person glory in his wisdom, and let not the mighty person glory in his might, and let not the rich person glory in his riches. But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows that I am the Lord, that executes mercy and judgment and righteousness on the earth: for in these things is my delight, say the Lord.” STROMATEIS I.II.²³

DO NOT GLORY IN KNOWLEDGE. BRAULIO OF SARAGOSSA: “Each one looking not to his own interests but to those of others,”²⁴ “that one may not glory in his prudence,” for the virtue of the humble is not to boast of their knowledge, since it is common to all. In repressing the mind’s audacity, it is helpful not to despise others or to assume a special knowledge or holiness ourselves. LETTER 42.²⁵

WISDOM AND STRENGTH ARE GIFTS FROM GOD. ORIGEN: “Let not the wise person glory in his wisdom or the strong person in his strength,” for that which is worth boasting about is not ours but is the gift of God. The wisdom is from him, and the strength is from him and so with the rest. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 10.19.²⁶

GOD TURNS US TO HIM. AUGUSTINE: Our turning away from God is our own act, and this is evil will. But our turning to God is not possible, except he rouses and helps us, and this is good will. What do we have that we have not received? But if we received, why do we glory as if we had not received? Therefore, “he that glories must glory in the Lord.”²⁷ ON THE MERITS AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND ON INFANT BAPTISM 2.31.²⁸

TRUST IN GOD ONLY. CYPRIAN: We must trust in God only, and in him we must glory.

In Jeremiah: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the strong man glory in his strength, nor let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows that I am the Lord, who does mercy, and judgment, and righteousness upon the earth, because in them is my pleasure, says the Lord.” TO QUIRINUS: TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE JEWS 3.10.²⁹

LET US BOAST ONLY IN THE LORD. BASIL THE GREAT: No sensible person, then, will be proud of his wisdom or of possessing the other goods I have mentioned but will follow the excellent advice of blessed Anna and of the prophet Jeremiah: “Let not the wise person glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong person glory in his strength, and let not the rich person glory in his riches.”³⁰ But what is true glory, and what makes a person great? “In this,” says the prophet, “let him that glories, glory that he understands and knows that I am the Lord.” This constitutes the highest dignity of humankind, this is his glory and greatness. Truly it is to know what is great and to cleave to it, and to seek after glory from the Lord of glory. HOMILY 20, ON HUMILITY.³¹

BE HUMBLE. CLEMENT OF ROME: Let us therefore be of humble mind, laying aside all haughtiness, pride and foolishness, and all angry feelings. Let us act according to that which is written, for the Holy Spirit says, “Let not the wise person glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty person glory in his might, neither let the rich person glory in his riches. But let him that glories glory in the Lord, in diligently seeking him, and doing judgment and righteousness.”³² Let us be especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus that he spoke, teaching us meekness and patient endurance. For thus he spoke: “Be merciful, that you may obtain

²¹1 Cor 3:19. ²²1 Cor 3:20. ²³ANF 2:311**. ²⁴Phil 2:4. ²⁵FC 63:90**. ²⁶ANF 9:427. ²⁷1 Cor 1:31; cf. Is 45:25. ²⁸NPNF 1 5:56. ²⁹ANF 5:535*. ³⁰Cf. 1 Sam 2:3. ³¹FC 9:478-79. ³²See 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17.

mercy. Forgive, that it may be forgiven to you. As you do, so shall it be done to you. As you judge, so shall you be judged. As you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you. With what measure you measure, with the same it shall be measured to you."³³ I CLEMENT 13.³⁴

LET US BOAST IN THE LORD. AUGUSTINE: Let us celebrate joyfully the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the feast day, on which the great and eternal Day came from the great and eternal Day into this so brief and temporal day of ours. He it is who was made for us justice and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts should boast in the Lord."³⁵ SERMON 185.2.³⁶

SALVATION IS BY GRACE. AUGUSTINE: Thanks must be given because many in absolute number are delivered freely by grace, although few compared with those who perish, so that no one may be lifted up as if he deserved it, but that every mouth may be stopped,³⁷ and one who glories may glory in the Lord. ON REBUKE AND GRACE 28.³⁸

THE ONLY TRUE SALVATION IS CHRIST. ORIGEN: The only true salvation is if Christ saves me, for then I will be saved. The horse is a false hope for deliverance. False also are all others besides God for salvation. On account of this I might say to him, "Save me, Lord, and I will be saved," and I say this if I can say also the next words after every boast that is renounced. For you are my boast or when I fulfill the commandment that says, "Let not the wise person boast in his wisdom, and let not the strong person boast in his strength, or the rich person in his riches; let him who boasts boast in this, to understand and know that I am Lord." Blessed is one who has renounced every boast here below, such as in so-called noble birth and in beauty and in cor-

poreal things, in riches, in vainglory, since he is content with one boast, that he may say, For you are my boast. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 17.5.³⁹

9:25-26 *Circumcision of the Flesh Only*

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART IS CRUCIAL.

ORIGEN: The novelty of the expression may perhaps deter not only the Jews but even some of our brothers. For Paul, who introduces "circumcision of the heart," seems to assume things that are impossible. For how shall it be possible that a member be circumcised that, covered by the internal viscera, lies hidden even from the view of people? Let us return, therefore, to the words of the prophets that, with the aid of your prayers, these matters about which we are inquiring might become clear. Ezekiel the prophet says, "No stranger uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh shall enter my sanctuary."⁴⁰ Likewise elsewhere no less the prophet, reproaching, says, "All strangers are uncircumcised in the flesh, but the sons of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." It is pointed out, therefore, that unless one has been circumcised in the heart and the flesh, "he shall not enter the sanctuary" of God. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 3.⁴¹

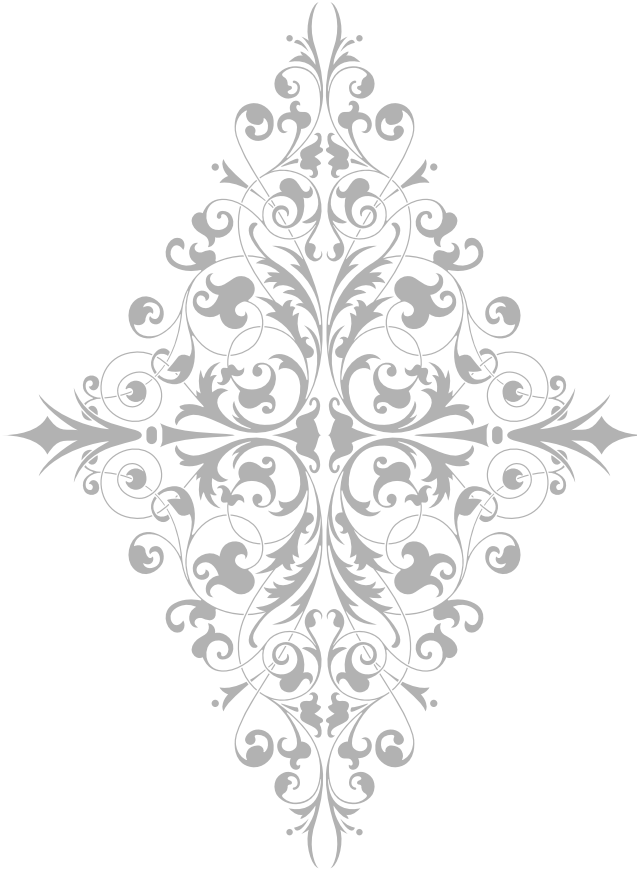
NOT THE DISTINGUISHING MARK.

THEODORET OF CYR: The ancient Scriptures therefore teach the benefit of spiritual circumcision and that bodily circumcision makes no difference.⁴² For it is not the Gentiles who are accused of being uncircumcised but the Jews, who were physically circumcised but whose heart was uncircumcised. ON JEREMIAH 3.9.⁴³

³³See Mt 6:12-15; 7:2; Lk 6:36-38. ³⁴ANF 1:8**. ³⁵1 Cor 1:31.

³⁶WSA 3 6:21-22. ³⁷Rom 3:19. ³⁸NPNF 1 5:483**. ³⁹FC 97:186*.

⁴⁰Ezek 44:9. ⁴¹FC 71:94-95*. ⁴²Lit., "the indifference of bodily circumcision." ⁴³PG 81:565.



IGNORE THE NATION'S EMPTY IDOLS
JEREMIAH 10:1-14

OVERVIEW: In contrast to the idols of the nations, God is good, eternal, perfect and almighty (AMBROSE). God made the heavens and the earth

(AMBROSE). The idols have already begun to perish, remaining only in the hearts of the pagans. Idols are not gods, although they are called such

(AUGUSTINE, CHRYSOSTOM). Who can understand God by looking at the things of this world (AMBROSE)? God raises up those who had fallen before idols (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). We should admit our ignorance before God (JEROME). We are foolish in comparison with the full knowledge of heaven (ORIGEN).

10:6 *None Like the Lord*

GOD IS GOOD, ETERNAL, PERFECT, ALMIGHTY. AMBROSE: Therefore we ought to believe that God is good, eternal, perfect, almighty and true, such as we find him in the Law and the Prophets and the rest of the Holy Scriptures,¹ for otherwise there is no God. For he who is God must be good, seeing that fullness of goodness is of the nature of God.² God, who made time, cannot be in time. Again, God cannot be imperfect, for a lesser being is plainly imperfect, seeing that it lacks somewhat whereby it could be made equal to a greater. This, then, is the teaching of our faith—that God is not evil, that with God nothing is impossible, that God does not exist in time, that God is beneath no being. If I am in error, let my adversaries prove it.³ ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 1.2.14.⁴

GOD IS TRUE. AMBROSE: You may know both that the Father is eternal and that the Son is not different from him. The source of his generation is he who is,⁵ and he is begotten of the Eternal. He is God, coming forth from the Father. He is the Son.⁶ He is from God. He is the Word. He is the radiance of the Father's glory, the expression of his substance,⁷ the counterpart of God, the image of his majesty. He is the bounty of him who is bountiful, the wisdom of him who is wise, the power of the mighty One, the truth of him who is true,⁸ the life of the living One.⁹ ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 2.INTRO.3.¹⁰

10:11-14 *Do Not Ignore God, Who Made the Heavens*

GOD ALONE MADE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. AMBROSE: But if heretics deny that either the heavens or the earth were made by you, O Lord, let them take heed of the abyss into which they are hurling themselves by their own madness. The prophet writes, "Perish the gods that have not made heaven and earth." Shall he then perish, O Arian, who had found and saved that which had perished? ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 4.4.48.¹¹

THE IDOLS WILL PERISH. AUGUSTINE: He said, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, let them perish from the earth and from under the heaven." He did not say, "The gods that have not made the heaven and from the earth," because they never were in heaven. What did he say? He said, "Let them perish from the earth and from under the heaven," as if, while the word *earth* was repeated, "heaven" did not need to be (because they never were in heaven). He repeats "earth" twice, since it is under heaven. "Let them perish from the earth and from under the heaven," from their temples. Consider whether this is not now taking place, whether in a great measure it has not already happened. For what, or how much, has remained? The idols remained rather in the hearts of the pagans than in the niches of the temples. EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 99.2.¹²

THE FALSE GODS ARE PERISHING. AUGUSTINE: In reading what is said in this psalm of Christ and of the church, one would find that what is there foretold is fulfilled in the present state of the world. He would see the idols of the nations perishing from off the earth, and he would find that this is predicted by the prophets, as in Jeremiah: "Then shall you say to them,

¹Ps 25:8 (24.8 LXX); Jer 10:10; Jas 1:17-18; Dan 9:9-10; Lk 1:37.

²Dan 9:7; Ezek 34:6. ³See Jas 1:13; Lk 18:27; Ps 89:6; 90:2-4.

⁴NPNF 2 10:203**. ⁵Ex 3:14; cf. Jn 8:58; 18:6; Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8.

⁶Jn 8:42; 16:27-28. ⁷Heb 1:3. ⁸Jer 10:10; Jn 14:6; 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20.

⁹Deut 5:26; Rom 14:11; Jn 11:25; 5:26; 1 Jn 1:2; 5:20. ¹⁰NPNF 2 10:223**. ¹¹NPNF 2 10:268**. ¹²NPNF 1 8:483**.

“The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth, and from under heaven,” and again, “O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to you from the ends of the earth and shall say, ‘Surely our ancestors have inherited lies, vanity and things in which there is no profit. Shall a person make gods for himself, and they are not gods?’ Therefore, behold, I will at that time cause them to know, I will cause them to know my hand and my might, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”¹³ Hearing these prophecies and seeing their fulfillment, I need not say that he would be affected. We know from experience how the hearts of believers are confirmed by seeing ancient predictions now being fulfilled. **REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN 13.7.**¹⁴

ONE TRUE GOD. AUGUSTINE: Because they can be called gods, though they cannot be so, for a time they are even called so. What does the prophet say, or what warning does he give them? The prophet is told to say this to them: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from those that are under the heavens.” He is not such a god, for our God is above all gods. Above all what gods? “For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.”¹⁵ **EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 48.14.**¹⁶

ONLY GOD IS GOD. CHRYSOSTOM: Next, he adduces what indeed is the greatest token of divinity, “of whom are all things.”¹⁷ For this implies also that those others are not gods. For it is said, “Let the gods who made not the heaven and the earth perish.” Then he adds at the end nothing less than this, “and we to him.”¹⁸ For when he says, “of whom are all things,” he means the creation and the bringing of things out of nothing into existence. **HOMILIES ON I CORINTHIANS 20.5.**¹⁹

GOD’S WISDOM SURPASSES ALL HUMAN

KNOWING. AMBROSE: “Who has understood the sense of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor or has taught him?”²⁰ Of him we also read elsewhere: “For he holds the circuit of the earth and made the earth as nothing.”²¹ And Jeremiah says, “The gods that have not made heaven and earth will perish from the earth and from among those places that are under heaven. He that made the earth by his power and prepared the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens at his knowledge and a multitude of waters in the heaven.” And he adds, “Humankind is become a fool for knowledge.” How can one who pursues the corruptible things of the world and thinks that from these things he can comprehend the truth of divine nature not become a fool as he makes use of the artifices of sophistry? **SIX DAYS OF CREATION 1.3.9.**²²

THE EMPTINESS OF IDOLS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Jeremiah the prophet, gifted with consummate wisdom, or rather the Holy Spirit in Jeremiah, exhibits God. “Am I a God at hand,” he says, “and not a God afar off? Can a person hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.”²³ . . . For “the Lord who created the earth by his power,” as Jeremiah says, “has raised up the world by his wisdom.” For wisdom, which is his word, raises us up to the truth. It raises us who have fallen prostrate before idols. And this raising through the word is itself the first resurrection from our fall. **EXHORTATION TO THE GREEKS 8.**²⁴

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. JEROME: The psalmist writes, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high; I cannot attain unto it.”²⁵ In another: “When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God and considered their latter

¹³Jer 16:19-21. ¹⁴NPNF 1 4:202**. ¹⁵Ps 96:5 (95:5 LXX). ¹⁶NPNF 1 8:168**. ¹⁷1 Cor 8:6; cf. Heb 2:10. ¹⁸1 Cor 8:6. ¹⁹NPNF 1 12:113**. ²⁰Is 40:13-14. ²¹Is 40:22-23. ²²FC 42:9*. ²³Jer 23:23. ²⁴ANF 2:194-95**. ²⁵Ps 139:6 (138:6 LXX).

end.”²⁶ And later in the same psalm, “I was as a beast before you; nevertheless I am continually with you.”²⁷ And Jeremiah says, “Every person is become brutish and without knowledge.”

AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 1.15.²⁸

PAUL IS FOOLISH BECAUSE HE KNOWS IN

PART. ORIGEN: If “everyone has become foolish from knowledge,” and Paul is a man, Paul has become foolish from knowledge because he knows in part, prophecies in part, has become foolish from knowledge because he sees through a mirror, sees dimly, sees and comprehends matters in small part and—if one can say—an infinitely tiny part. And seen from the opposite, you will understand that everyone has become foolish from knowledge. There are sins of Jerusalem, sins also of Sodom, but in comparison with the worse sins

of Jerusalem, the sins of Sodom are righteousness. For Sodom, he said, was justified due to you. Thus, as the sins of Sodom are not righteousness but injustice, and as there arises righteousness when compared with a greater injustice, so this is understood as knowledge seen from the opposite. The knowledge that is in Paul, with respect to that knowledge that is in the heavens, is as foolishness compared with the mature knowledge. Hence, everyone was made foolish by knowledge. In considering I think something such as this, the Preacher said, I have said, “I will become wise.” And it was made far from me, beyond what was, and deep, so deep; who will discover it? HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 8.7.²⁹

²⁶Ps 73:16-17 (72:16-17 LXX). ²⁷Ps 73:22-23 (72:22-23 LXX).

²⁸NPNF 2 6:456. ²⁹FC 97:82-83.





PREPARE FOR EXILE
JEREMIAH 10:15-25

OVERVIEW: Human shepherds—priests as well as kings—scatter the sheep (THEODORET). But we are under Christ, the chief Shepherd (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Priest, kings and those who seek to follow God should know that they do not find their own way on the road to virtue but that God leads them (JOHN CASSIAN). He holds the tiller of the universe in his hand without subjecting our wills to nature’s enslavement or our affairs to an ordained necessity (THEODORET). Christians know that every decision they make is aided by the Lord (JEROME). Without God’s help, nothing good can come of our decisions. He is the one who converts hearts to faith in him (PROSPER) and creates understanding through discipline for those who seek him (THEODORET).

10:21 Ignorant Shepherds

SHEPHERDS FAILED THEIR PEOPLE. THEODORET OF CYR: He refers to the kings and priests as [stupid] shepherds because they were the guardians of this wandering people. ON JEREMIAH 3.10.¹

CHRIST IS THE TRUE SHEPHERD. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The Lord protested against their wickedness through the voice of the prophet, saying, “Alas for the shepherds, who destroy and scatter the sheep of my inheritance,”² and again, “The shepherds have become foolish and have not sought the Lord. Therefore did none of the flock understand and were scattered.”

Such, then, was their state. But we are under the rule of the chief Shepherd of all, even Christ, by whom and with whom to God the Father be praise and dominion, with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 126.³

10:23-25 Jeremiah Prays for the Destruction of the Nations

THE LORD GUIDES OUR LIVES. JOHN CASSIAN: The saints have never claimed that their own efforts would have enabled them to find their way along the road they were traveling to perfect virtue. Rather, they sought it from the Lord, praying, “Direct me in your truth”⁴ and “direct the road I take in your sight.”⁵ And someone else asserts that he grasped this not only through faith but also through direct experience of how things are: “I learned, Lord, that a person is no master of the road he takes, nor is it in man’s power as he goes his way to control his steps.” The Lord had this to say to Israel: “I will lead him on, like a greening fir tree, and the fruit you bear comes from me.”⁶ CONFERENCE 1.3.13.⁷

GOD IS IN CONTROL OF THE UNIVERSE.

THEODORET OF CYR: It is clear, therefore, from what was said at first and what was added, that the verse “I know, Lord, that the people’s way is

¹PG 81:569. ²Jer 23:1. ³CGSL 501**. ⁴Ps 25:5 (Ps 24:5 LXX). ⁵Ps 5:8 (5:9 LXX). ⁶Hos 14:9. ⁷NPNF 2 11:326**.

not their own," neither subjects our free will to nature's enslavement nor submits our affairs to an ordained necessity. Instead, it expressly teaches us that the Lord God keeps his hand on the tiller of the universe and wisely directs it. He provides blessings but also corrects with justice whenever he perceives that despite his extended long-suffering we persist in evildoing. ON JEREMIAH 3.10.23-25.⁸

ONLY GOD CAN BESTOW HIS GIFTS. JEROME: "All are governed by their own free choice." What Christian can bear to hear this? For if not one, or a few or many, but all of us are governed by our own free choice, what becomes of the help of God? How do you explain the proverb that "A person's goings are ordered by the Lord?"⁹ Or "A person's way is not in himself"? Or "No one can receive anything, unless it be given him from above"?¹⁰ And elsewhere, "What do you have that you did not receive?"¹¹ AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 1.27.¹²

ALL GOOD COMES FROM GOD. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE: Unless God works in us, we cannot be partakers of any virtue. For indeed, without this Good, nothing is good. Without this Light, nothing is bright. Without this Wisdom, nothing is wise. Without this Justice, nothing is right. For the Lord says through the mouth of Isaiah, "I am, I am the Lord, and there is no one besides me who saves,"¹³ and through Jeremiah, "I know, O Lord, that the way of a person is not in him. Neither is it in a person to direct his way." THE CALL OF ALL NATIONS 1.8.¹⁴

GOD BESTOWS TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND VIRTUE. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE: Jeremiah, explaining that humankind receives wisdom from God, states, "I know, O Lord, that the way of a person is not his. Neither is it of a person . . . to direct his way." Again the Lord proclaims through the same prophet that God effects the conversion of a heart to him and says, "I will bring them again into this land. And I will build them up again and not pull them down. And I will plant them and pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. And they shall be my people and I will be their God, because they shall return to me with whole heart."¹⁵ THE CALL OF ALL NATIONS 1.24.¹⁶

THE USEFULNESS OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE. THEODORET OF CYR: The inspired author knows the usefulness of discipline and understands that the Lord is exercising loving-kindness in applying it to human beings. This is the reason he asks to have a share in it. God exercises goodness in applying correction, and correction produces knowledge. Likewise the prophet Jeremiah begs, "Correct us, O Lord, but in just measure, not in anger, lest you make us few." Thus, a sick person who longs for health goes in search of a cure through cutting by steel and burning. COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS 119.34.¹⁷

⁸PG 81:572. ⁹Prov 20:24. ¹⁰Jn 3:27. ¹¹1 Cor 4:7. ¹²NPNF 2:6:462**. ¹³Is 43:11. ¹⁴ACW 14:36*. ¹⁵Jer 24:6-7. ¹⁶ACW 14:79-80**. ¹⁷FC 102:259**.





JEREMIAH REMINDS JUDAH
OF THE COVENANT
JEREMIAH 11:1-8

OVERVIEW: The same Word of God that was with the prophets is with us now. God promises that he will be our God and we will be his people. Israel rejected him as their God, but the church has accepted Christ as God and Savior (ORIGEN). Jeremiah still demonstrated his loyalty to this disobedient people that God had called him to serve. He freely joined them in exile when he could have remained in the comfort of his own home (CHRYSOSTOM). They, for their part, continued in disobedience, following their own heart instead of God's (THEODORET).

11:1 *The Word That Came to Jeremiah*

THE SAME WORD OF GOD. ORIGEN: Who is the word that came from the Lord to Jeremiah or to Isaiah or to Ezekiel or anyone except the one "in the beginning with God"?¹ I do not know any *word* of the Lord other than the one about which the Evangelist spoke. . . . And I could say that Christ was with Moses, with Jeremiah, with Isaiah, with each of the righteous. . . . How can they have spoken the word of God if the Word of God did not dwell in them? But these things

must be understood especially with respect to us of the church, who want the God of the law and the gospel to be the same, Christ to be the same both then and now and for all of the ages. For there will be those who will cut in two, in their opinion, the divinity previous to the dwelling of the Savior and the divinity proclaimed by Jesus Christ, but we know one God both then and now, one Christ both then and now. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 9.1.1-2.²

11:3 *Heeding the Words of the Covenant*

WHO TRULY HEARS THE WORDS OF THE COVENANT? ORIGEN: Who hears the words of the covenant that God commanded to the ancestors? Is it those who believe in him, or is it those who have proven that they do not believe Moses from their having not believed in the Lord? For the Savior said to them, "If you believe in Moses, you would have believed in me. For he wrote about me. But if you do not believe in what he wrote, how can you believe in my words?"³ And

¹Jn 1:1. ²FC 97:85-86**. ³Jn 5:46-47.

so they have not believed in Moses, but we who believe in Christ believe in the covenant through Moses, and it is said to us, lest we become accursed, "Cursed is the one who does not hear the words of the covenant, which I commanded to the ancestors." *HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 9.2.2.*⁴

11:4 You Shall Be My People

A PEOPLE BORN TO THE WORD OF GOD. ORIGEN: Not everyone who says they are a people of God is a people of God. These people who were proclaimed to be the people of God heard it said to them, "You are not my people."⁵ . . . For "they have provoked me to jealousy with what is not God, . . . they have provoked me with their idols. So I will provoke them to jealousy with those who are not a people."⁶

We were thus made into a people for God. The righteousness of God was proclaimed to the people who will be born, to a people from the pagan nations. For this people is born suddenly, yet in the prophet it also is said, "Has a nation been born all at once?" But a nation was born all at once when the Savior dwelled among them, and five thousand believed in one day, and three thousand were added in another day, and we see that a whole people is born to the Word of God, and it is said to the barren woman who suddenly bears, who formerly could not give birth before: "Be glad, O barren woman who did not bear, break forth and cry in joy you who have not had birth pains, for the children of the deserted woman are much more than she who has a husband." She was deserted from the law, deserted from God, but that synagogue is spoken of as one who has the law as a husband. What then does God promise me? "You will be my people, and I will be your God." He is the God of none except those whom he favors, as he favors the patriarch to whom he said, "I am your God," and again to another, "I will be your God," and for others, "I will be their God." *HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 9.2.4-3.2.*⁷

11:5 So Be It

GOD'S SERVANTS SHOW COMPASSION. CHRYSOSTOM: Not only did God send Jeremiah into Egypt, but also Ezekiel into Babylon. They did not refuse to go. When they found their Master loved the people exceedingly, they continued themselves to do so as well. It is as if a right-minded servant were to take compassion on an intractable son when he saw the father grieving and lamenting about him. What was there that they did not suffer for them? They were sawn asunder, they were driven out, they were reproached, they were stoned, and they underwent numberless grievances. After all of this, they would run back to them. . . . For the people of the Jews, Jeremiah has composed Lamentations in writing. And when the general of the Persians had given him liberty to dwell securely and with perfect freedom, wherever he pleased, he preferred the affliction of the people and their hard endurance in a strange land above living at home. *HOMILIES ON ROMANS 14.*⁸

11:8 They Did Not Obey

JUDAH FOLLOWS ITS OWN HEART. THEODORET OF CYR: When he was giving the law, he added this to the law, for he said, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the law, to do them," and he also promises there and again here how he will deem worthy of all care those who keep the divine commandments. And he reminds them also of the things spoken to their ancestors and of their ancestors' disobedience. For they turned their ear away, he says, and every one went in the direction of his own evil heart. And he says here "direction" not as meaning "uprightness" but rather the evil that arises immediately in their malice. For they have not turned from this evil but have journeyed constantly in it. "And I

⁴FC 97:87-88**. ⁵See Hos 1:9. ⁶Deut 32:21. ⁷FC 97:88-89.

⁸NPNF 1 11:448.

brought on them all the words of this covenant that I commanded them to do, and yet they did not do." He gave them over to noteworthy punishments; sometimes they served the Ammonites, other times the Moabites and still other times other foreigners. . . .

The phrase "a band has been found" means "they have banded themselves together and joined themselves with their ancestors and they travel down the road of their ancestors' wickedness." He indicates as much also through the

things that are brought against them. "And behold, they go after foreign gods, in order to serve them." They do these things in transgression of the covenant that was given to them. For this reason I will surround them with misfortunes of all kinds, and those who weep I will not deem worthy to be spared. They will not even enjoy any help from the gods who are revered by them. ON JEREMIAH 3.11.⁹

⁹PG 81:572-73.



BREAKING THE COVENANT JEREMIAH 11:9-17

OVERVIEW: We, as the New Testament people of Judah, should repent of our conspiracy to commit sin as Jeremiah called Judah to do (ORIGEN). Mercy will not be given to those who do not repent of their sins. Yet Jeremiah prays for Judah anyway, knowing God longs for their sal-

vation (CHRYSOSTOM). Those who do not repent, however, will be like the green olive tree that is consumed by fire, which Jeremiah prophesies will happen to the house of Judah (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). God will not listen to them and demons cannot save them (ORIGEN).

11:9-13 *Revolt Among Judah*

REPENTING OF CONSPIRACY TO SIN. ORIGEN:

Do we intend to repent for the sin mentioned concerning the people of Judah, since we know that *we* are the people of Judah because of Christ, who was prophesied and called Judah? For perhaps it is because there are some sinners among us who act contrary to right reason that the prophet says, “A conspiracy¹ was found among the people of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” For whenever a conspiracy of unrighteousness and a conspiracy to commit sin was found in any who in name come from the church—with the result that one can apply to the sinner the statement that “each is caught in the snares of his sins”—God could say, “A conspiracy was found in the people of Judah.” But may no conspiracy be found in us. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 9.4.2.²

DEMONS ARE UNABLE TO SAVE. ORIGEN:

Though God justly does not hear those who do not hear him, the demons will be unable to save the just in those who burn incense to them, whenever the time of troubles arrives. Thus, whenever God does not listen, it is dangerous to seek help from demons. But one must depend on God, who has turned away from us due to sins, yet who does not disregard the great and lasting refuge in himself. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 7.³

11:14 *Do Not Pray for This People*

HARDENED REBELLION DOES NOT RECEIVE MERCY. CHRYSOSTOM:

They ask for a mercy it is impossible for them to receive since they have sins for which they have not repented. They cannot receive this mercy—not if they ask for it themselves, or even if the request is made by others who are stronger in their relationship with God. When Jeremiah was praying for the Jews, the Lord in fact said, “Do not pray for this people, because I will not hear you.” HOMILIES

ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 60.2.⁴

ON INEXPEDIENT PRAYER. CHRYSOSTOM:

“Why do not Christians obtain all things in prayer?” Because they fail for many causes. They often ask things inexpedient. Why are you surprised, if this is the case with some, when even Paul heard: “My grace is sufficient for you, because my strength is perfected in weakness”⁵ . . . What if they pray against people who have hurt them, seeking for compensation and vengeance? This kind of thing is forbidden, for, “pray,” he said, “for your enemies.” . . . To Jeremiah he also said, “Do not pray for this people, for I will not hear you,” not wishing to stop Jeremiah from praying (for he earnestly longs for our salvation) but to terrify them. Thus the prophet, seeing this, did not cease praying. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 60.2.⁶

11:16 *The Green Olive Tree Is Consumed*

IN THE TRADITION OF THE PROPHETS. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: It is probable, therefore, that Jesus compares the synagogue of the Jews with a fig tree, for the sacred Scripture also compares them with various plants: the vine, for instance, and the olive, and even a forest.⁷ . . . Jeremiah says, “The Lord called you a beautiful olive tree, well shaded in appearance. At its pruning time, a fire was kindled in it. Great tribulation came to it. Its branches were destroyed.” And another of the holy prophets, comparing it with Mount Lebanon, thus speaks: “Open your doors, O Lebanon, and the fire shall devour your cedars.”⁸ For the forest that was in Jerusalem, even the people there, many as they were and innumerable, were destroyed as by fire. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 96.⁹

¹Gk *syndesmos*, which RSV translates “revolt.” FC has “bond,” but the meaning is not clear. ²FC 97:91. ³FC 97:282. ⁴NPNF 1 10:374*. ⁵2 Cor 12:9. ⁶NPNF 1 11:374*. ⁷See, e.g., Hos 10:1a. ⁸Zech 11:1. ⁹CGSL 388.



PEOPLE OF JUDAH PLOT AGAINST JEREMIAH JEREMIAH 11:18-23

OVERVIEW: It is the consensus of the church that these words were spoken by Christ through Jeremiah (JEROME). Christ, through Jeremiah, prophesies the coming of the Lamb of God (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, ORIGEN) and his sacrifice on the cross (LACTANTIUS, CYPRIAN, RUFINUS), which God, as all-knowing, knew ahead of time would happen (BEDE). But here, Jeremiah is also speaking of himself as the lamb who would experience unjust suffering at the hands of his own people. This suffering, however, would prove to strengthen his trust in God (THEODORET). There are also parallels between Jesus' life and that of Jeremiah. Like Jeremiah, and the prophets in general, Jesus was not welcomed in his home town (EPHREM).

11:18-19 A Lamb Led to Slaughter

CHRIST SPOKE THROUGH JEREMIAH ABOUT THE FUTURE. JEROME: It is the consensus of all the church that these words are spoken by Christ through the person of Jeremiah. For the Father made it known to him how he should speak and revealed to him the zealotry¹ of the Jews—he who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth and not knowing.² But the word *sin* is implicitly added to this last phrase, in agreement with what was said by the apostle: “When he did not know sin, he was made to be sin on our account.”³ And they said, “Let us put wood on his bread,”⁴ clearly referring to the cross on the body

¹Lat *studia* = “evil deeds” (RSV). ²See Is 53:7; Acts 8:32. ³2 Cor 5:21. ⁴“Put wood on his bread” is from Douay-Rheims translation of Jer 11:19 LXX, Vulgate. ESV has “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit.” The Hebrew seems to be the source of the latter. Justin Martyr,

of the Savior, for he is the one who said, "I am the bread that descended from heaven."⁵

They also said "let us destroy (or eradicate) him from the land of the living." And they conceived the evil in their soul that they would delete his name forever. In response to this, from the sacrament of the assumed body, the Son speaks to the Father and invokes his judgment while praising his justice and acknowledging him as the God who inspects the interior and the heart.⁶ He asks that the Father would return to the people what they deserve, saying, "Let me see your vengeance on them," obviously referring only to those who continue in sin, not to those who repent. Concerning the latter, he said on the cross: "Father forgive them, for they do not realize what they are doing."⁷ He also "disclosed his cause" to the Father, that he was crucified not because he deserved it but for the sins of the people, as he declared: "Behold, the prince of the world came and found nothing against me."⁸ The Jews and our Judaizers believe that all of this was said only by Jeremiah, arguing from prophecy that the people have sustained these evils in their captivity. But I fail to see how they hope to prove that Jeremiah was the one crucified, since such an event is nowhere recorded in Scripture. Perhaps it is just a figment of their imagination. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 2.110.2-4.⁹

THE LAMB OF GOD FORETOLD. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Listen to Jeremiah and be convinced: "I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim. Did I not know it?"¹⁰ (Read it thus as a question, as I have put it. For he who said, "You know that after two days the Passover shall be here, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified,"¹¹ did he not know?) "I was a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim. Did I not know it?" (What sort of lamb? Let John the Baptist interpret, when he says, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!"¹²) "They devised a wicked counsel against me, saying (Was it that he who knew the counsels did not know their result? And what did they say?): "Come, and let us put

wood on his bread."¹³ (If the Lord shall count you worthy, hereafter you shall learn that his body, according to the Gospel, bore the figure of bread.) "Come, and let us put wood on his bread, and cut him off from the land of the living (Life is not cut off. Why do you toil to no purpose?) And let his name be remembered no more."¹⁴ CATECHETICAL LECTURES 13.19.¹⁵

JESUS IS THE LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER.

ORIGEN: In Jeremiah, too, he likens himself to a lamb, as thus: "I was as a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter." These and other similar sayings he applies to himself. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 1.23.¹⁶

JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD. ORIGEN: If we examine the declaration about Jesus who is pointed out by John in the words, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,"¹⁷ from the standpoint of the dispensation itself of the bodily sojourn of the Son of God in the life of people, we will assume that the lamb is none other than his humanity. For he was "led as a sheep to the slaughter and was dumb as a lamb before its shearer,"¹⁸ saying, "I was as an innocent lamb being led to be sacrificed." COMMENTARY ON ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.273.¹⁹

EXPLAINING THE PROPHECY OF THE CROSS.

LACTANTIUS: Jeremiah, too, said, "Show me, O Lord, and I shall know. Then I saw their plots. And I was carried as a meek lamb to be the victim. They devised counsels against me, saying, 'Let us put wood on his bread and cut him off from the land of the living, and his name shall be remembered no more.'²⁰ Now the wood signifies the cross and the bread his body, because he

Dialogue with Trypho 72, understood this to be a prophecy of the crucifixion, inferring that the bread of the Lord's Supper is Christ's body. ⁵Jn 6:51. ⁶See Prov 24:12; Acts 15:8. ⁷Lk 23:34. ⁸Jn 14:30. ⁹CCL 74:117-18. ¹⁰Cf. Jer 11:19 (LXX). ¹¹Mt 26:2. ¹²Jn 1:29. ¹³Jer 11:19 (LXX). ¹⁴Jer 11:19 (LXX). ¹⁵FC 64:17. ¹⁶ANF 9:309. ¹⁷Jn 1:29. ¹⁸Is 53:7b. ¹⁹FC 80:242. ²⁰Jer 11:18-19 (LXX).

is himself the food and life of all who believe in the flesh that he put on and by which he hung on the cross. DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.14.²¹

THE CROSS FORETOLD. CYPRIAN: That the Jews would fasten Christ to the cross. . . . Also in Jeremiah: “Come, let us cast the tree into his bread, and let us blot out his life from the earth.”²² To QUIRINUS: TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE JEWS 2.20.²³

JEREMIAH SPEAKS OF CRUCIFIXION. RUFINUS: He was led to the cross, and the life of the whole world hung suspended from its wood. Would you care to have this, too, confirmed by the testimony of prophets? Listen to what Jeremiah has to say about it: “Come, and let us put wood on his bread, and let us cut him off from the land of the living.”²⁴ Moses again, lamenting over them, remarked, “And your life shall be hanging suspended before your eyes, and you shall fear by day and by night, neither shall you trust your life.”²⁵ COMMENTARY ON THE APOSTLES’ CREED 22.²⁶

11:20 *Let Me See Your Vengeance*

GOD ALONE KNOWS THE HEART. BEDE: Hence they rightly believed and confessed that as God he knew all things and that as the Son of God He had come from God. It is a clear indication of divinity to know the secret things of another’s thoughts, as Solomon affirmed when he said in supplication to God, “For you alone know the hearts of all the children of human beings.”²⁷

Hence, Jeremiah too said, “You, O Lord of Sabaoth, are the one who judges righteously and probes the loins and hearts of human beings.” HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.12.²⁸

THE TESTING OF INNER THOUGHTS AND TROUBLES. THEODORET OF CYR: There was a reason that God allowed the prophet to be tested by troubles. Since Jeremiah had often tried to offer intercession for the transgressors—in his desire to convince Jeremiah that God was not compassionate but the harsh treasury of goodness—he allowed the rebellion to occur. In his deep grief, however, Jeremiah implores God to judge justly and exact penalties from the unholy. The Lord accepts his petition, gives a reply, threatens punishment and notes that some will be slaughtered in war and others destroyed by famine. ON JEREMIAH 3.11.20.²⁹

11:21 *Anathoth*

JESUS NOT RECEIVED IN HIS OWN TOWN. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: For Anathoth did not receive Jeremiah, or the Tishbites Elijah, or Abelmeholah Elisha, or Ramah Samuel,³⁰ or the synagogue Moses, or Israel our Lord Jesus in Nazareth. COMMENTARY ON TATIAN’S DIATESARON 11.24.³¹

²¹FC 49:294-95. ²²Jer 11:19 (LXX). ²³ANF 5:524. ²⁴Jer 11:19b (LXX). ²⁵Deut 28:66 (Vg), according to Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 13.19. ²⁶ACW 20:58*. ²⁷1 Kings 8:39b. ²⁸CS 111:115. ²⁹PG 81:577. ³⁰See 1 Sam 8:1-22. ³¹ECTD 186.





GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THE WICKED

JEREMIAH 12:1-4

OVERVIEW: The prophet, uncharacteristically, begins a dispute with God about why the wicked prosper while he languishes in pain and disappointment. This is a question the righteous often ask (EPHREM). The land itself either mourns or rejoices, depending on the evil or goodness of its inhabitants (ORIGEN).

12:1 *Why Do the Wicked Prosper?*

GOD HOPES FOR REPENTANCE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all those who do evil things thrive?” Here the prophet steps out from his usual discourse. On other occasions he brings before God prayers and sorrow about sinners. But it seems here that he is beginning a dispute with God: Why is God merciful to them when they certainly do not deserve his mercy because their hearts are hard and stubborn? Truly, Jeremiah is not the only one who asks this question. Many righteous people wanted to know, as if they debated with God about his multitude of mercies to sinners. Job¹ and David² and Habakkuk³ wondered in this way about the mystery of God’s extended patience. But they all had one

goal—to call sinners to repentance. This is why they explained this mystery of [divine] extended patience, and tried to reveal to sinners all the benefits that the Lord promised to those who repent. For he is good, and slow to anger to the sons of Adam, and as a hospitable Father, showers them with his gifts. But at the same time, righteous people let them know beforehand the punishment that they can expect if they remain hardened in their hearts and will not stop their wicked stubbornness. Jeremiah had the same goal: by fear and promises to wake up and to call Israel to serve their God. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 12.1.⁴

12:4 *The Mourning of the Abused Land*

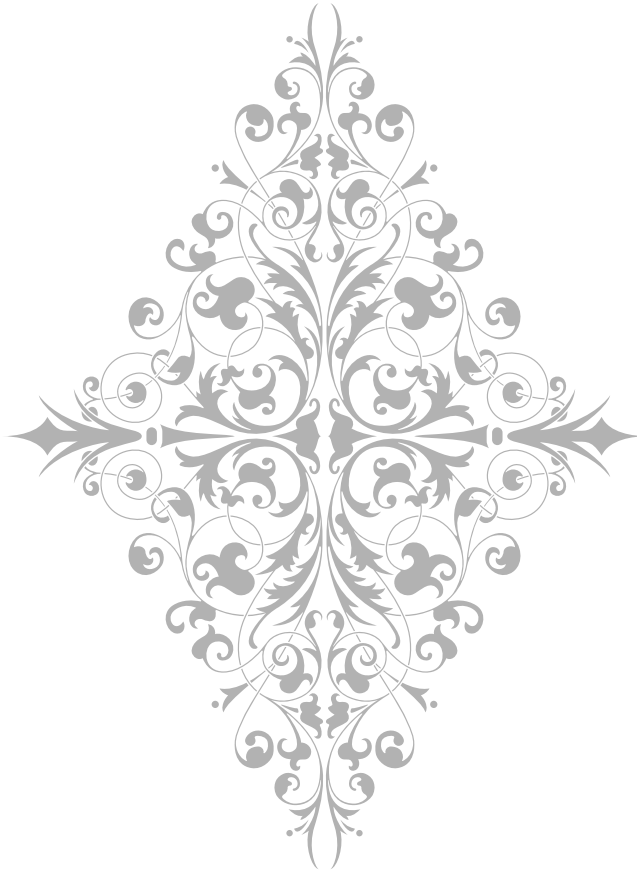
THE ANGEL OF EARTH MOURNS. ORIGEN: “How long will the earth mourn and the grass of the field be dried up from the evil of the inhabitants in it?”⁵ The prophet here again talks as if the earth is alive when he says that the earth mourns on account of the evil of those who

¹Job 21:7. ²Psa 73:3 (72:3 LXX). ³Hab 1:13. ⁴ESW 5:460-61. ⁵Jer 12:4.

walk on it. For each of us, then, the earth either mourns or rejoices. For either it mourns from the evil of those who inhabit it or it rejoices from the virtue of those who inhabit it. For each of us, then, the element itself either rejoices or mourns.

If earth does so, perhaps also the rest of the elements do also . . . including water. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 10.6.⁶

⁶FC 97:99-100*.





JEREMIAH'S WICKED NEIGHBORS JEREMIAH 12:5-17

OVERVIEW: God's people have rejected Christ. For this reason, God rejected them and gave their inheritance to the Gentiles (LACTANTIUS). Jeremiah predicted the cries of the crowd before Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus (RUFINUS). The Jews are heirs without property, led to their master by their tutor, the law (AMBROSE). The temple has been turned into a hyena's den, filled with animals that come out only at night (JEROME). Do not fall into temptation, so that thorns do not grow in God's garden (AUGUSTINE). Clergy status will not save those who live sinful lives (EPIPHANIUS). Do not seek to grow rich as a clergyman, but welcome the poor to your table as if they were Christ (JEROME). Israel did not enjoy such a welcoming attitude from its neighbors such as Edom, Moab and Ammon (THEODORET).

12:7-8 *Jeremiah Abandons His Heritage*

ISRAEL HAS REJECTED THE LORD. LACTANTIUS: As the prophet Jeremiah testifies when he speaks such things . . . "I have forsaken my house, I have given up my heritage into the hand

of its enemies. My heritage has become to me as a lion in the forest. It has cried out against me, therefore have I hated it." Since the inheritance is his heavenly kingdom, it is evident that he does not say that he hates the inheritance itself, but the heirs, who have been ungrateful toward him and impious. "My heritage," he says, "has become to me as a lion," that is, I have become prey and something to devour to my heirs, who have slaughtered me as a sheep. "It cried out against me," that is, they have pronounced against me the sentence of death and the cross. For that which he said . . . that he would make a new testament to the house of Judah, shows that the old testament that was given by Moses was not perfect, but that that which was to be given by Christ would be complete. But it is plain that the house of Judah does not signify the Jews, whom he casts off, but us, who have been called by him out of the Gentiles and have by adoption, succeeded to their place, and are called children. DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.20.¹

¹ANF 7:120**.

THE ADOPTION OF CHRISTIANS. LACTANTIUS: Now that the Jews were disinherited, because they rejected Christ, and that we, who are of the Gentiles, were adopted into their place is proved by the Scriptures. Jeremiah thus speaks, “I have forsaken my house. I have given my heritage into the hands of its enemies. My heritage has become to me as a lion in the forest. It has given forth its voice against me; therefore have I hated it.” DIVINE INSTITUTES 48.²

THE CRUCIFIXION FORETOLD BY JEREMIAH. RUFINUS: It is further related that when Pilate wanted to release him, the whole multitude shouted in uproar: “Crucify him, crucify him.”³ This was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the person of the Lord: “My inheritance,” he says, “has become to me as lion in the wood. It has cried out against me. Therefore have I hated it.” And therefore, he adds, “I have forsaken my house.” In yet another passage Isaiah says: “Upon whom have you opened your mouth wide, and against whom have you let loose your tongues?”⁴ COMMENTARY ON THE APOSTLES’ CREED 22.⁵

THE LAW BRINGS JEWS TO CHRIST THE MASTER. AMBROSE: Because the Lord said of the Jews in Jeremiah: “My inheritance has become to me like a lion,” Paul would not say they were not heirs. But there are heirs without property and those with property, and while the testator lives, those who are mentioned in the will are called heirs, though they are without property. . . . Just like children, so are the Jews also under a tutor. The law is our tutor. A tutor brings us to the master. Christ is our only master: “Do not say lord and master to yourselves, for one only is your master, the Christ.”⁶ LETTER 69.⁷

12:9-13 *Shepherds Destroying the Vineyard*

WHAT HAS THE TEMPLE BECOME? JEROME: The house of God has been made a den of thieves! This is the house of which Jeremiah says, “Has

not my house become for me the den of a hyena?”⁸ Here we have “you have made it a den of thieves,”⁹ in Jeremiah, “the den of a hyena.” We have to know the nature of this animal. Then from that, we shall be able to learn why the prophet called God’s house a hyena’s den. The hyena is never seen in the daytime but always at night. Never is it seen in the light but always in the darkness. HOMILIES ON MARK 83.II.15-17.¹⁰

FLEE FROM TEMPTATIONS. AUGUSTINE: “Pray that you do not enter into temptation”¹¹—that you enter not again into “contentions, envying, animosities, dissension, detractions, seditions, whispering.”¹² For we have not planted and watered¹³ the Lord’s garden in you only to reap these thorns from you. But if your weakness still stirs up a storm, pray that you may be delivered from temptation.¹⁴ Those among you who trouble you, whoever they may be, will incur judgment unless they amend their lives. LETTER 2II.¹⁵

CLERGY SHOULD NOT BE PRIDEFUL. EPIPHANIUS: Dearly beloved, it is fitting that we should not abuse our rank as clergy, so as to make it an occasion of pride, but diligently keep and observe God’s commandments, to be in reality what in name we profess to be. For if the Holy Scriptures say, “Their lots shall not profit them,”¹⁶ what pride in our clerical position will be able to help us who sin not only in thought and feeling but also in speech? LETTER 5I.I.¹⁷

WELCOME POOR PEOPLE AS CHRIST. JEROME: I beg you, therefore, and admonish you again and again: do not look to your military experience for a standard of clerical obligation. Under Christ’s banner, do not seek worldly gain, lest having more than when you first became a clergyman, you hear

²ANF 7:242*. ³Lk 23:21. ⁴Is 57:4. ⁵ACW 20:57*. ⁶Mt 23:10. ⁷FC 26:410-11. ⁸Jer 12:9 (LXX). ⁹Mk 11:17. ¹⁰FC 57:182. ¹¹Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38; Lk 22:46. ¹²2 Cor 12:20. ¹³1 Cor 3:6-8. ¹⁴Mt 26:41. ¹⁵FC 32:40. ¹⁶Jer 12:13 (LXX). ¹⁷NPNF 2 6:83**.

people say, to your shame, "Their portion shall not profit them."¹⁸ Welcome poor people and strangers to your homely table, that with them Christ may be your guest. LETTER 52.5.¹⁹

THE NATIONS REJOICED AT ISRAEL'S TROUBLE. THEODORET OF CYR: The Edomites and the Moabites and the Ammonites and the foreigners were always of a hateful and malicious disposition toward the Jews. When they saw the misfortunes brought against the Jews, they exulted over the Jews. For this reason he teaches them in advance

of the future calling again of the Jews. And he calls their rulers "shepherds." . . . Having foretold through these words [v. 15] of the return that would take place under Cyrus and Darius, he also teaches them in advance of the things that would take place after these things. . . .

He spoke also [vv.16-17] of the utter rejection of the nation of the Jews, for "I will remove that nation by destruction, says the Lord." ON JEREMIAH 3.12.²⁰

¹⁸Jer 12:13 (LXX). ¹⁹NPNF 2.6:91**. ²⁰PG 81:584.



THE BURIED LOINCLOTH JEREMIAH 13:1-11

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah lived simply, wearing only a loincloth, which is the simple kind of lifestyle God looks for among those who serve him (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). God sometimes asks his prophets and his ministers to go beyond the simple life and even experience

harsh conditions in order to bring a message to his people. He asked Jeremiah to buy a loincloth, which he then told the prophet to wear as a symbol of God's people who are called to be like this kind of garment that is worn close, next to the body (JEROME), but then he had

him remove it and cast it aside, hiding it by the Euphrates River as a symbol of Israel's sin (ORIGEN). As God's people who are called to remain close to him, we should be careful that we continually cling to him lest we become detached from him and find ourselves swimming in the river of heresy or sin and unfit as God's clothing (JEROME). The prophets and saints of God are called to be as close to him as a person's clothes are to his own body (JEROME).

13:1-2 *Buy a Linen Loincloth*

THE PROPHETS LIVED SIMPLY. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Furthermore, this Paul said strongly that "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking"—or abstinence from wine or meat—"but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."¹ Which of them goes around like Elijah wearing a sheepskin and a leather belt?² Which of them wears no shoes and nothing but a piece of sackcloth like Isaiah?³ Or with nothing on but a linen loincloth, like Jeremiah? STROMATEIS 3,6.53,4-5.⁴

THE SIMPLE LIFE OF THE PROPHET. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: The blessed John disdained sheep's wool because it savored of luxury; he preferred camel's hair and clothed himself in it, giving us an example of simple, frugal living. Incidentally, he also ate only honey and locusts, food that is sweet and with a spiritual significance. So it was that he prepared the way of the Lord and kept it humble and chaste.⁵ He fled from the false pretenses of the city and led a peaceful life in the desert with God, away from all vanity, boasting and servitude. How could he possibly have worn a purple mantle? Elijah used a sheepskin for his garment and girded it tight with a belt made of leather.⁶ Isaiah, another historic prophet, went "naked and without sandals"⁷ and often put on sackcloth as a garment of humility. If you protest and make mention of Jeremiah, he wore only a loincloth made of linen. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 10.112-13.⁸

13:3-7 *The Discarded Waistcloth Is Spoiled*

THE TRUTH CAN BE DIFFICULT. JEROME: Yet such is the order of nature. While truth is always bitter, pleasantness waits upon evildoing. Isaiah goes naked without blushing, as a type of the captivity to come.⁹ Jeremiah is sent from Jerusalem to the Euphrates (a river in Mesopotamia) and leaves his girdle to be marred in the Chaldaean camp, among the Assyrians hostile to his people. Ezekiel is told to eat bread made of mingled seeds and baked over the dung of people and cattle.¹⁰ He is commanded to experience the death of his wife without shedding a tear.¹¹ Amos is driven from Samaria.¹² Why is he driven from it? Surely in this case, as in the others, because he was a spiritual surgeon who cut away the parts diseased by sin and urged people to repentance. The apostle Paul says, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"¹³ And so the Savior found it, from whom many of the disciples turned back from following him because his sayings seemed hard.¹⁴ LETTER 40.1.¹⁵

THE FAITHFUL ARE THE GARMENT OF CHRIST. JEROME: We are the robe of Christ. When we have clothed him with our confession of faith, we, in turn, have put on Christ. It is the apostle who says that Christ is our robe, for when we are baptized, we put on Christ.¹⁶ We both clothe and are clothed. Would you like to know in what manner we clothe the Lord? We read in Jeremiah: "Go buy yourself a linen loincloth. Wear it on your loins, and go to the Euphrates. There hide it in a cleft of the rock. Obedient to the Lord's command, I went to the Euphrates and buried the loincloth. After a long interval, again I went to the Euphrates, and the loincloth was rotted, good for nothing. Then the message came to me from the Lord: 'Listen very

¹Rom 14:17. ²2 Kings 1:8. ³Is 20:2. ⁴FC 85:289**. ⁵See Mt 3:4. ⁶2 Kings 1:8. ⁷Is 20:2. ⁸FC 23:186**. ⁹Is 20:2. ¹⁰Ezek 4:9-16. ¹¹Ezek 24:15-18. ¹²Amos 7:12-13. ¹³Gal 4:16. ¹⁴Jn 6:60, 66. ¹⁵NPNF 2 6:54**. ¹⁶Gal 3:27.

carefully. As close as the loincloth clings to your loins, so had I made this people cling to me,' says the Lord." Why have I drawn this out to such length? To prove to you that the faithful are the garment of Christ. *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 45* (Ps 132).¹⁷

THE LINEN CAST ASIDE. ORIGEN: The linen waistcloth clings about his hips. Why? In order to make clear that the people are like a shelter of God. For against those who wish to accuse God, the people of God are placed, and they cover him like a shield and do not allow something wrong to be said in what concerns God. But whenever we sin, just as the prophet puts aside this loincloth and condemns it to the Euphrates River in order that it may perish there, so the sinner is thrown from the hips of God. And once banished, he is banished to the Euphrates River, the river of Mesopotamia, where there are Assyrians, enemies to Israel, where there are Babylonians, and there he is ruined. *HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH II.6.1.*¹⁸

CLINGING TO GOD. JEROME: The girdle, or loincloth, which is attached to the loins of God, is the people of Israel, who, like this piece of linen, were assumed from the earth unwashed and having no softness or beauty, yet were nevertheless joined to God through his mercy. When Israel sinned (which is why it was represented as a loincloth), it was led across the Euphrates and Assyria and there hidden, that is, absorbed, in a manner of speaking, into the crowd of larger and innumerable peoples and from captivity. Despite this, they did not observe the precepts of God after they were restored but went after other gods in the extreme, even raising their hand against the Son of God, and then they wasted away in everlasting perdition. God's loincloth is also every holy person who is assumed from the earth,¹⁹ even from the dust of the earth, and united to God as a companion, who, in a certain way, surrounds and covers with greater diligence the things that appear in God's church to be in-

decent, lest they become vulnerable to the stings of the pagans and heretics. Yet, as the loincloth was affected by the water of the Euphrates and was assimilated to the river's flow, so also Israel was imbued with the atmosphere of the Assyrian region, which destroyed its original strength and corrupted and dissolved it. Even though Israel returned to God's service, it was never able to regain its pristine beauty, though this was not due to any severity of God's part, but only to the Israelites' own wickedness, for they would not hear his word but did whatever seemed good to themselves and walked in the depravity of their own hearts. But this is also why the divine word itself made the following analogy, saying, "As the loincloth clings to the loins of a man, so I have fastened and joined all the house of Israel and the whole people of Judah [obviously the ten tribes and the two] to myself, that they may be a people for my name and my praise and my glory, but none of them would listen to me, following instead their own vices." Therefore, let the one who is able to say "it is good for me to cling to God,"²⁰ be careful lest, through negligence, he is separated from the loins of God and passes into the Euphrates and is given over to the power of the king of Assyria and becomes situated not on the most solid rock but in the cleft of that corrupt and decaying rock, which is the sordid life and the wickedness of heretics, and there encounters so grave a deterioration that he would be no longer able to return to the service and the loincloth of the Lord. *SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.14.5-9.*²¹

THE PROPHETS ARE THE GARMENTS OF CHRIST. JEROME: The reversed order, however, furnishes a clue for our exegesis. "The Lord is king, in splendor robed."²² The Lord is king, and he is robed in the splendor of patriarchs and prophets and a people that believes. He is robed in splendor. The patriarchs and prophets have

¹⁷FC 48:336*. ¹⁸FC 97:108. ¹⁹Gen 2:7. ²⁰Ps 73:28 (72:28 LXX).

²¹CCL 74:127-28. ²²See Ps 93:1 (92:1 LXX).

been as the garment of Christ. They are the loin-cloth mentioned in Jeremiah—the girdle that he wore about his loins. Do you know that the saints are like a girdle and the vestment of God? God says to Jeremiah, “As close as the loin-cloth clings to a man’s loins, so had I made my people

cling to me.”²³ God’s people are as close to him as person’s clothing is to his body. *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 26 (Ps 98)*.²⁴

²³Cf. *Commentary on Jeremiah 13.1-12 (PL 24:764 [931])*. ²⁴FC 48:204**.



THE SKINS FILLED WITH WINE JEREMIAH 13:12-14

OVERVIEW: Jesus uses illustrations in the same way the prophets use them (CHRYSOSTOM). The Lord pours wine in all wineskins—undiluted wine in evil skins and diluted wine in good skins (ORIGEN). Those who drink the wine of his wrath will be drunk with his punishment (THEODORET).

13:12 Every Jar Will Be Filled with Wine

JEREMIAH AND JESUS TEACH GENTLY WITH ILLUSTRATIONS. CHRYSOSTOM: And these things he said, setting laws and rules for his own disciples, that when they should have to receive as disciples those of all sorts that should come from the whole world, they might deal with them very gently. “Neither is new wine put into old wineskins.”¹ Consider how his illustrations are like those in the Old Testament. The garment? The wineskins? For Jeremiah, too, calls

the people “a waistcloth” and makes mention again of “jar” and of “wine.” Thus, the discourse being about gluttony and a table, he takes his illustrations from the same. *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 30.5*.²

WINE MAKES THE WINESKIN. ORIGEN: Understand these skins in terms of evil and virtue in order to envision how every skin is filled with wine. But if it is necessary to see the effects of evil and of virtue—punishments due to the evil, blessings and promises due to virtue—let us set down from the sacred Scriptures how the punishments and the promises are discussed as wine: “Take the cup of this undiluted wine, and give to all of the nations to which I have sent you to drink”—he says this to Jeremiah, and he adds to it—“and they will drink and vomit and go mad and fall.”

¹Mt 9:17. ²NPNF 1 10:202**.

Hence he has called the punishments here “undiluted wine,” which those deserving of “undiluted wine drink,” that is, an “undiluted” punishment. But there are others who drink a punishment that is not undiluted but that has been diluted. For “in the hand of the Lord is a cup filled with a mixture of undiluted wine, and he poured it from this into this. Though its lees were not emptied out, all of the sinners of the earth drink.” If you also wish to know the “cup of blessing” that the righteous drink, the text from Wisdom then also suffices, in which it says, “Drink the wine that I diluted for you.” But see with me the Savior on the Passover who goes up into “a large upper room furnished and ornamented” and who feasts with the disciples and gives to them a cup, about which it is not written that he diluted. For Jesus, who cheers up the disciples with undiluted wine, cheers them up and says to them, “Take, drink, this is my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink in memory of me,” and, “Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of this until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God.” You see the promise that is the cup of the new covenant. You see the punishments as the cup of the undiluted wine, and another form of punishment as the cup that has been diluted so that in

each person what he drinks is diluted according to the amount the worthwhile action mingles with the futile action. Notice that those who are strangers in every way to the worship of God and who do not commit themselves but live as it happens drink the undiluted wine—to which we apply the text from Jeremiah—while those who are not in every way apostates and sinners but are still unworthy of the cup of the new covenant, these people sometimes do better, sometimes the opposite acts, and drink wine of an undiluted mixture. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 12.2.2.³

JUDAH’S PUNISHMENT RESEMBLES DRUNKENNESS. THEODORET OF CYR: And showing the unchangeable nature of his wrath, God introduced these words: “I will not yearn after them, and I will not spare them, and I will not have pity on them because of their destruction,” rather than “[I will not have pity on] their destruction.” Then he calls their punishment drunkenness since those who fall into great misfortunes resemble those who are intoxicated inasmuch as they are not able even to mourn because they are suffering so much. ON JEREMIAH 3.13.⁴

³FC 97:112-13. ⁴PG 81:585.





CHANGE BEFORE DARKNESS COMES JEREMIAH 13:15-27

OVERVIEW: The Ethiopian eunuch coming to faith in Christ is as miraculous as if he had changed the color of his skin (BEDE, JEROME). The Arians would sooner change their views, however, than the leopard its spots (ATHANASIUS). Jeremiah did not mean the people could not change their ways, but that they did not want to (CHRYSOSTOM). And so we must ask, What will happen to those who have prostituted the members of the church of Christ (JEROME)? There must be repentance if we are to appease an angry judge (THEODORET).

13:23 *Can the Leopard Change Its Spots?*

THE CHANGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

BEDE: Also, he showed so much love in his religion that, leaving behind a queen's court,

he came from the farthest regions of the world to the Lord's temple. Hence, as a just reward, while he sought the interpretation of something that he was reading, he found Christ, whom he was seeking.¹ Furthermore, as Jerome says, he found the church's font there in the desert, rather than in the golden temple of the synagogue.² For there in the desert something happened that Jeremiah declared was to be wondered at, an Ethiopian changed his skin, that is, with the stain of his sins washed away by the waters of baptism, he went up, shining white,³ to Jesus. COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 8.27A.⁴

¹Jerome *Commentary on Ezekiel* 15.56.3 (CCL 73a:631.11/12). ²Jerome *Epistle* 53.5 (CSEL 54:452.2/3). ³The whiteness of a cleansed heart. ⁴CS 117:82.

THE PROPHETIC WORD CAN LEAD TO FAITH. JEROME: By the reading of the prophet the eunuch of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, is made ready for the baptism of Christ.⁵ Though it is against nature, the Ethiopian does change his skin, and the leopard his spots. LETTER 69.6.⁶

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE GOSPEL. JEROME: Then immediately quickening her pace, she began to move along the old road that leads to Gaza, that is, to the “power” or “wealth” of God, silently meditating on that type of the Gentiles, the Ethiopian eunuch, who, in spite of the prophet, changed his skin and, while he read the Old Testament, found the fountain of the gospel.⁷ LETTER 108.II.⁸

THE IRRELIGIOUS CANNOT EASILY CHANGE. ATHANASIUS: For as the prophet speaks, “If the Ethiopian changes his skin, or the leopard his spots,” then will they be willing to think religiously who have been instructed in irreligion. You, however, beloved, on receiving this, read it by yourself. If you approve of it, read it also to the brethren who happen to be present, that they, too, on hearing it, may welcome the council’s zeal for the truth and the exactness of its sense and may condemn that of Christ’s foes, the Arians, and the futile pretenses, which for the sake of their irreligious heresy they have been at the pains to frame among themselves. DEFENSE OF THE NICENE DEFINITION 7.32.⁹

SOME REFUSE TO PRACTICE VIRTUE. CHRYSOSTOM: Moreover, what did the prophet say? “If the Ethiopian changes his skin and the leopard its spots, this people will be able to do well, when it has learned evil.” He did not mean that it was impossible for them to practice virtue, but that they did not wish to do so; therefore, they could not. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 68.¹⁰

13:26-27 *Adulteries Exposed*

THE CENTRALITY OF A CHASTE LIFE. JEROME: But if even real virgins, when they have other failings, are not saved by their physical virginity, what shall become of those who have prostituted the members of Christ and have changed the temple of the Holy Spirit into a brothel? Immediately they should hear the words, “Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground—there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans. You shall no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstone and grind meal. Uncover your locks, make bare your legs, pass over the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered. Yes, your shame shall be seen.”¹¹ Shall she come to this after the bridal chamber of God the Son, after the kisses of him who is to her both kinsman and spouse?¹² Yes, she of whom the prophetic utterance once sang, “At your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir,”¹³ shall be made naked, and her skirts shall be discovered on her face. LETTER 22.6.¹⁴

THERE MUST BE REPENTANCE. THEODORET OF CYR: “After committing many transgressions,” he says, “you were not prepared to have recourse to repentance. I shall no longer demonstrate longsuffering. Instead, I will inflict punishment.” It is better, therefore, to live according to the divine laws. But since we who are human will most likely fall at some point, we ought to have recourse to the remedies of repentance, and through them placate the judge and escape the experience of the punishments he threatens. May we for our part continue to not experience them, thanks to the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ. ON JEREMIAH 3.13.27.¹⁵

⁵Acts 8:27-38. ⁶NPNF 2 6:146*. ⁷Acts 8:27-35. ⁸NPNF 2 6:200*. ⁹NPNF 2 4:172**. ¹⁰FC 41:239*. ¹¹Is 47:1-3a. ¹²Song 5:2 (LXX). ¹³Ps 45:9 (44:10 LXX). ¹⁴NPNF 2 6:24**. ¹⁵PG 81:589.



THE DROUGHT JEREMIAH 14:1-9

OVERVIEW: The drought on the land reflects the spiritual drought among Israel that continues among the heretics who cannot rain doctrine on God's people because God alone teaches his people (JEROME). Thus he sent his Son, the Word, to enlighten the prophets (ORIGEN). When the Scripture says that God sleeps, it means that he is patient with us (CHRYSOSTOM).

14:1-9 *Jeremiah Calls on God to Break the Drought*

GOD SHOWERS US WITH HIS GRACE AND DOCTRINE. JEROME: After many and various thoughts, he returns to the prophecy's title, in which it is written, "What the word of the Lord gave to Jeremiah concerning the drought." This is why he says, in effect: "Because the idols of de-

mons are unable to make it rain, and the heavens are unable to give showers in and of themselves, therefore give us rain, O Lord our God, on whom we always wait and toward whom we have turned our hope and devotion. For everything is yours, and whatever is good cannot be given without you, to whom it belongs."¹ Let us speak this word also against the heretics who are unable to grant rain showers of doctrine. Although they prefer themselves to be the heavens and thus glory in themselves, concerning what is written, "the heavens tell forth the glory of God,"² they are nonetheless incapable of providing rain showers of doctrine. For it is God alone who instructs people and grants a diversity of graces to those who wait on him. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.41.1-3.³

¹Cf. Jer 14:22. ²Ps 19:1 (18:1 LXX). ³CCL 74:144**.

THE WORD CAME TO THE PROPHETS. ORIGEN: It will serve us to remember that what is called the Word came to certain persons, as “the word of the Lord which came to Hosea, the son of Beeri,”⁴ and “the word which came to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and concerning Jerusalem,”⁵ and “the word that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought.” We must inquire how this Word came to Hosea, and how it came also to Isaiah the son of Amoz, and again to Jeremiah concerning the drought. The comparison may enable us to find out how the Word was with God. We will generalize by simply looking at what the prophets said, as if that were the Word of the Lord or the Word that came to them. May it not be . . . that . . . the Son, the Word, of whom we are now theologizing, came to Hosea, sent to him by the Father, historically, that is to say, to the son of Beeri, the prophet Hosea. . . . Similarly the Word comes also to Isaiah, teaching the things that are coming on Judea and Jerusalem in the last days. So also it comes to Jeremiah lifted up by a divine elation. . . . Thus to find out what is meant by the phrase “the Word was with God,” we have adduced the words used about the prophets, how he came to Hosea, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah.

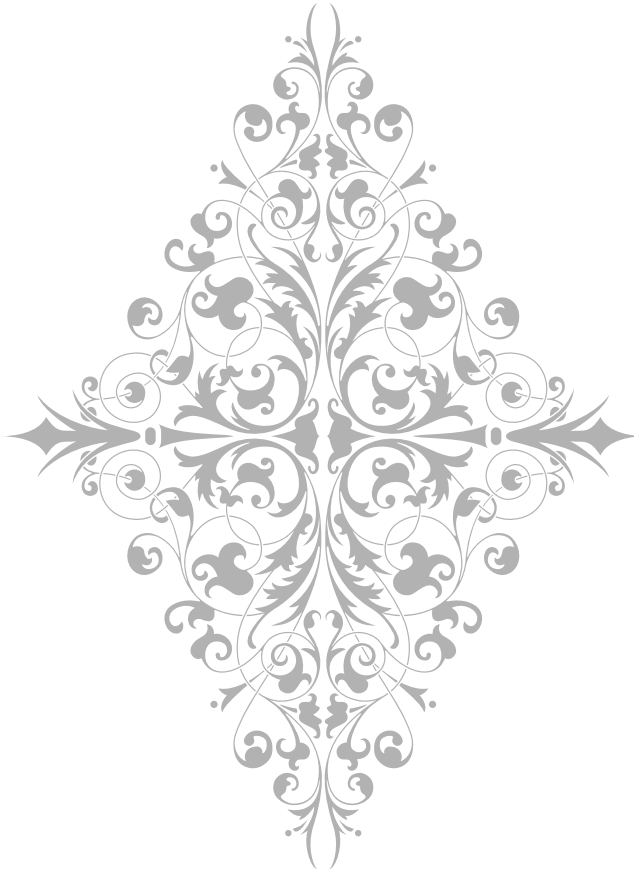
. . . We have to add that in his coming to the prophets he illuminates the prophets with the light of knowledge, causing them to see things that had been before them but that they had not understood until then. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 2.1.⁶

GOD’S PATIENCE IS DESCRIBED AS SLEEP.

CHRYSOSTOM: Again, the Scriptures speak of God as asleep when the psalmist says, “Arise! Why do you sleep, O Lord?”⁷ He does not say this to make us suspect that God sleeps. This would be the utmost madness. By the word *sleep* the psalm shows God’s patience and forbearance toward us. Another prophet has said, “You will not be like a person who sleeps, will you?”⁸ Do you not see that we need much help from our understanding and reason when we are searching into the treasure house of the divine Scriptures? If we listen to the words only, if we do not think but take the words as they come, not only will those absurdities follow, but many a conflict will be seen in what has been said. AGAINST THE ANOMOEANS 8.5.⁹

⁴Hos 1:1. ⁵Is 2:1. ⁶ANF 9:322*. ⁷Ps 44:23 (43:24 LXX). ⁸Jer 14:9 (LXX). ⁹FC 72:214-15.





ISRAEL'S WANDERINGS
JEREMIAH 14:10-22

OVERVIEW: Just like wandering Israel, the opponents of doctrine change their views to buy time and remain enemies of Christ (ATHANASIUS). As God forbade Jeremiah's prayer for the deliverance

of Jerusalem, so he prevented prayers for the deliverance of Rome (JEROME). God knows both how to heal and how to strike (TERTULLIAN). Praying, even if accompanied by fasting, is of no avail in

and of itself. The works that surround prayer and fasting determine their value (JOHN CASSIAN).

As a prophet, Jeremiah voluntarily shares in the misery of his people (THEODORET) while also encouraging them to acknowledge the corporate guilt of those and their descendants who continue to abandon God in favor of idols (JEROME). How can Christians turn back to idols when they know they cannot bring rain (ORIGEN)?

14:10-12 God Remembers His Wandering People

ENEMIES OF NICAEEA LOVE TO WANDER.

ATHANASIUS: Hence it is that they are always writing, and always altering their own previous statements, and thus they show an uncertain faith,¹ or rather a manifest unbelief and perverseness. And this, it appears to me, must be the case with them. Since they have fallen away from the truth and desire to overthrow that sound confession of faith that was drawn up at Nicaea, they have, in the language of Scripture, “loved to wander and have not restrained their feet.” Therefore, like Jerusalem of old, they labor and toil in their changes, sometimes writing one thing and sometimes another, but only for the sake of gaining time, and that they may continue enemies of Christ and deceivers of humankind. LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF EGYPT 1.6.²

WORDS THAT ALSO APPLY TO ROME. JEROME:

In the Gospel, the Savior commends the unjust steward because, although he defrauded his master, he acted wisely for his own interests.³ The heretics in this instance pursued the same course. When they saw how great a matter a little fire had kindled,⁴ and that the flames applied by them to the foundations had by this time reached the housetops and that the deception practiced on many could no longer be hid, they asked for and obtained letters of commendation from the church,⁵ so that it might appear that until the day of their departure they had continued in full communion with it. Shortly after-

ward⁶ the distinguished Anastasius succeeded to the pontificate. But he was soon taken away, for it was not fitting that the head of the world should be struck off⁷ during the episcopate of one so great. He was removed, no doubt, that he might not seek to turn away by his prayers the sentence of God passed once for all. For the words of the Lord to Jeremiah concerning Israel applied equally to Rome: “Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry. When they offer burnt offering and oblation, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence.” LETTER 127.10.⁸

GOD IS GOOD, YET ALSO JUST. TERTULLIAN:

Although God is by nature good, yet he is also just, and as the case requires. He knows how to heal but also how to strike.⁹ He brings peace, but he brings about evil.¹⁰ He desires repentance, yet he commands Jeremiah not to intercede for the sinful people, since, he says, even if they fast, I will not hear their prayer. ON PURITY 2.¹¹

FASTING DOES NOT ASSURE THE LORD’S

BLESSING. JOHN CASSIAN: You see, then, that fasting is certainly not considered by the Lord as a thing that is good in its own nature, because it becomes good and well-pleasing to God not by itself but by other works. Again, from the surrounding circumstances it may be regarded as not merely empty but hateful, as the Lord says: “When they fast, I will not hear their prayers.” CONFERENCE 3.21.14.¹²

14:17-20 “We Acknowledge Our Wickedness”

PROPHETS SHARE IN PEOPLE’S MISERY.

¹Cf. *Councils of Arminum and Seleucia* 3.6. ²NPNF 2 4:226*. ³Lk 16:8. ⁴Jas 3:5. ⁵Rufinus obtained such letters from Pope Siricius when he left Rome for Aquileia. See Jerome *Apology* 3.21. ⁶A.D. 398. ⁷The allusion is to the capture of Rome by Alaric in A.D. 410. ⁸NPNF 2 6:256. ⁹See Job 5:18; Deut 32:39. ¹⁰See Is 45:7. ¹¹ACW 28:57-58. ¹²NPNF 2 11:509**.

THEODORET OF CYR: And blessed Daniel the prophet, the divine Ezekiel (who was both prophet and priest) and many other priests in addition to them shared in these misfortunes. For God provided for those profane exiles and sent along also prophets that could be pedagogues and teachers so that the exiles might not incline entirely to godlessness. ON JEREMIAH 4.14.¹³

WE AND OUR ANCESTORS ARE GUILTY.

JEROME: He is saying, We and our ancestors have also neglected the precepts of God by the same insanity. The measure of our ancestors, therefore, is filled up in us,¹⁴ in such a way that whatever was coming due to them would be added to our measure. This is why it was said, concerning Judah: "May the Lord remember his fathers and may the sin of his mother not be forgotten! May they always be opposed to the Lord, and may their memory be eradicated from the earth!"¹⁵ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.39.I.¹⁶

14:21 Do Not Dishonor Your Glorious Throne

THE PENITENT IS GOD'S THRONE. JEROME: We should not think that the glorious throne of God is only the throne of the temple, which was

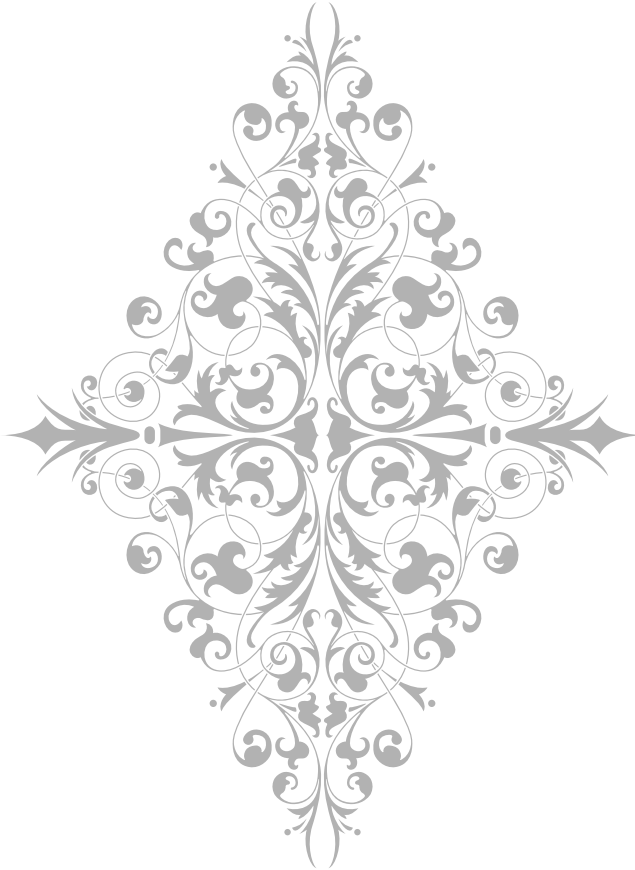
repeatedly destroyed, but that it is also every saint who is cast down and destroyed when he offends God by his multitude of sins, according to what is written: "You have cast his throne to the ground."¹⁷ Nevertheless, the one who perishes from his own guilt is sustained by the clemency of the Lord, whereby the severity of the sentence is altered, lest the Lord invalidate his covenant in which he promised to be our coming salvation. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.40.I.¹⁸

14:22 Idols Cannot Make It Rain

HOW TRAGIC TO ABANDON CHRIST FOR IDOLS. ORIGEN: What a state the person is in who has deserted the easy yoke and the light burden of Christ¹⁹ to subject himself once again to the yoke of demons and to bear the burden of the heaviest sin! How can this be after we have known that the heart of those who worship idols is ashes²⁰ and their life more worthless than clay,²¹ and after we have said, "Our ancestors possessed false idols, and none of them can bring rain"? EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM 32.²²

¹³PG 81:593. ¹⁴See Mt 23:32. ¹⁵Ps 109:14-15 (108:14-15 LXX).
¹⁶CCL 74:143. ¹⁷Ps 89:44 (88:45 LXX). ¹⁸CCL 74:144. ¹⁹Mt 11:30.
²⁰See Wis 15:10. ²¹See Jer 16:19; 19:11. ²²OSW 63.







JERUSALEM'S PUNISHMENT
AND CONFESSION
JEREMIAH 15:1-18

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah prophesies of Judah's unfortunate but deserved fate after returning from exile (THEODORET). Included in Jeremiah's prophecy is the darkening of the sun that would occur at noon during the crucifixion of Christ (IRENAEUS, CYPRIAN, LACTANTIUS). Much of Jeremiah's life, especially his suffering, prefigured the life of Christ (JEROME, ORIGEN). Jeremiah's suffering is almost too much for him. He regrets his life and blames his mother for giving birth to him (AMBROSE, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). Heretics are mistaken that the Old Testament's angry God is not the perfect God proclaimed by the Savior (ORIGEN). The saint does not look for rest but for tribulation. Thus, Jeremiah chose not to conform to the lying ways of the prophets of his time, even though this would have made life easier. He rather saw these persecutions and falsehood as passing waters that would soon go down stream and disappear (JEROME). When Christians are insulted, they are insulted for Christ's sake (ORIGEN). Local gods, too, and the false baptisms of those who have not remained faithful are passing waters that will not endure (CYPRIAN, ATHANASIUS).

15:4 Made a Horror

PARTNERS IN INIQUITY SHARE PUNISHMENT.

THEODORET OF CYR: He forecasts what would happen after the return, what would happen to them under the Macedonians and the destruction that would be inflicted on them by the Romans. He brings out that the first fate would happen to them owing to the impiety committed by Manasseh. Yet he is not an unjust judge, nor does he require an account of them for others' faults. He submits them to the evils prophesied as sharers in impiety and enthusiastic supporters of their wicked king. ON JEREMIAH 4.15.4.¹

15:9 The Light Quenched

JEREMIAH SAW THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED. IRENAEUS. "In that day, says the Lord, the sun shall go down at noon, and there shall be darkness over the earth in the clear day. I will turn your feast days into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation,"² plainly announced that obscuration of the sun that at the time of his crucifixion took place from the sixth hour onwards, and that after this event, those days that were their festivals according to the law, and their songs, should be changed into grief and lamentation when they were handed over to the Gentiles. Jeremiah too makes this point still

¹PG 81:596. ²Amos 8:9-10.

clearer when he thus speaks concerning Jerusalem: "She that has borne seven languishes. Her soul has become weary. Her sun has gone down while it was yet noon. She has been confounded and suffered reproach. The remainder of them will I give to the sword in the sight of their enemies." Those of them, again, who spoke of God's having slumbered and taken sleep, and of his having risen again because the Lord sustained him,³ and who enjoined the principalities of heaven to set open the everlasting doors, that the King of glory might go in,⁴ proclaimed beforehand his resurrection from the dead through the Father's power and his reception into heaven. *AGAINST HERESIES* 4.33.12-13.⁵

PROPHECY OF MID-DAY DARKNESS AT JESUS' DEATH.

CYPRIAN: The Scriptures prophesied that at noon in Christ's passion there should be darkness. In Amos it says, "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord, the sun shall set at noon, and the day of light shall be darkened. I will turn your feast days into grief and all your songs into lamentation."⁶ Also in Jeremiah: "She is frightened that has borne children, and her soul has grown weary. Her sun has gone down while as yet it was noon. She has been confounded and accursed. I will give the rest of them to the sword in the sight of their enemies." Also in the Gospel: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth even to the ninth hour."⁷ **TO QUIRINUS: TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE JEWS** 2.23.⁸

CHRIST'S DEATH PREDICTED.

LACTANTIUS: What more can now be said respecting the crime of the Jews, than that they were then blinded and seized with incurable madness, who read these things daily and yet neither understood them nor were able to be on their guard so as not to do them? Therefore, being lifted up and nailed to the cross, Jesus cried to the Lord with a loud voice and of his own accord gave up his spirit. At the same hour there was an earthquake. The veil of the temple, which separated

the two tabernacles, was torn into two parts. The sun suddenly withdrew its light, and there was darkness from the sixth even to the ninth hour. Of this event the prophet Amos testifies, "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord that the sun shall go down at noon, and the daylight shall be darkened. I will turn your feasts into mourning and your songs into lamentation."⁹ Also Jeremiah: "She who brings forth is afraid and vexed in spirit. Her sun is gone down while it was yet noon. She has been ashamed and confounded. The residue of them will I give to the sword in the sight of their enemies." *DIVINE INSTITUTES* 4.19.¹⁰

15:10 Jeremiah Laments His Birth

JEREMIAH'S WOE AND CHRIST'S WOE.

JEROME: This synecdoche can be understood concerning Jeremiah, who shall be judged only in the land of Judea, out of the entire world. He corresponds to the true Lord our Savior, who says in the Gospel: "I have come into this world for judgment, that those who do not see may see and those who see may be blinded,"¹¹ about whom it was also written: "Behold, this child is set for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign of contradiction."¹² For which of the philosophers and pagans and who among the heretics does not judge Christ by applying their laws to his birth and suffering and resurrection and substance? Nor is it strange for Christ to be saying, according to the truth of his assumed body, "Woe is me, my mother," when, in another location, it is obviously a speaker who corresponds to his person who says, "Woe is me, for I have become as one who gathers the stubble at harvest and as a cluster of the vine having no first fruit to eat."¹³ And lest we think that the weakness of these groans reflects on the Word of God, who is indeed the person that mourns, im-

³Ps 3:5 (3:6 lxx). ⁴Ps 24:7 (23:7 lxx). ⁵ANF 1:510. ⁶Amos 8:9-10 ⁷Mt 27:45. ⁸ANF 5:525*. ⁹Amos 8:9-10. ¹⁰ANF 7:122*. ¹¹Jn 9:39. ¹²Lk 2:34. ¹³Mic 7:1.

mediately he continues, "Woe is me, my soul that perishes from the earth in reverence."¹⁴ It is not that we wish to divide Christ into two persons, like the impious do, but rather that one and the same Son of God sometimes speaks according to the flesh and sometimes according to the Word of God. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.52.1-3.¹⁵

WHEN A CHRISTIAN IS JUDGED, CHRIST IS JUDGED. ORIGEN: "As what kind of man, judged and disputed over all of the earth, did you bear me?" If you see with me those martyrs who are judged in every place, those who submit to judges in each district, you will see in what way Jesus Christ is judged in each of the martyrs. For he is the one who is judged in those who testify to the truth, and you will be persuaded, he says, to accept this when you see that you are not in prison when you are in prison, but himself, you are not punished when you are punished, but himself, you do not thirst, but himself. "I was in prison and you visited me, hungry and you gave me something to eat, thirsty and you gave me drink."¹⁶ Hence, if a Christian is judged not for something else, not for his own sins but because he is a Christian, Christ is the one judged. Thus, over all the earth Jesus Christ is judged. And as often as a Christian then is judged, Christ is the one judged, not only before proceedings such as these. But suppose a Christian is slandered and accused unjustly for something, then too Christ is judged unjustly. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 14.7.¹⁷

BEYOND SUFFERING IS THE RESURRECTION. AMBROSE: Jeremiah also bewails his birth in these words: "Woe is me, my mother! Why have you borne me, a man of contention in all the earth? I have not benefited others, nor has anyone benefited me. My strength has failed."¹⁸ If, then, holy people shrink from life whose life, though profitable to us, they themselves consider unprofitable, what ought we to do who are not able to profit others and who feel that our lives, like money borrowed at interest, grow more heavily weighted every day with an increasing mass of sins? "I die

daily,"¹⁹ says the apostle. Better certainly is this saying than those who say that meditation on death is true philosophy, for while they praise the study, he exercises the practice of death. ON HIS BROTHER SATYRUS 2.34-35.²⁰

THE PRESENT WORLD IS FRAGILE. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Such is our life, we whose existence is so transitory. Such is the game we play on earth. We do not exist, and we are born, and being born, we disintegrate and disappear. We are a fleeting dream,²¹ an apparition without substance, the flight of a bird that passes,²² a ship that leaves no trace on the sea.²³ We are dust, a vapor, the morning dew, a flower growing but a moment and withering in a moment. "A person's days are as grass. As the flower of the field, so shall he flourish,"²⁴ beautifully, as described by holy David in meditating on our weakness. And again in these words: "Declare to me the fewness of my days."²⁵ And he defines the days of people as the measure of a span.²⁶ What would you say to Jeremiah, who, complaining about his birth, even blames his mother, and that, too, for the failings of others. I have seen all things,²⁷ says the Preacher, I have reviewed in thought all human things, wealth, pleasure, power, unstable glory, wisdom that evades us rather than is won; then pleasure again, wisdom again, often revolving the same objects, the pleasures of appetite, orchards, numbers of slaves, store of wealth, serving men and serving maids, singing men and singing women, arms, spearmen, subject nations, collected tributes, the pride of kings, all the necessities and superfluities of life, in which I surpassed all the kings that were before me. And what does he say after all these things? Vanity of vanities.²⁸ ON HIS BROTHER ST. CAESARIUS 19.²⁹

¹⁴Mic 7:1-2. ¹⁵CCL 74:147-48. ¹⁶Mt 25:35-36. ¹⁷FC 97:142-43. ¹⁸Jer 15:10 (LXX). ¹⁹1 Cor 15:31. ²⁰NPNF 2 10:179**. ²¹Job 20:8. ²²Wis 5:11. ²³Wis 5:10. ²⁴Ps 103:15 (102:15 LXX). ²⁵Ps 102:23 (101:24 LXX). ²⁶Ps 39:5 (38:6 LXX). ²⁷Eccl 1:14. ²⁸Eccl 12:8. ²⁹NPNF 2 7:236**.

15:15-16 *Your Words Became Joy to Me*

THE SAINT DOES NOT LOOK FOR REST.

JEROME: The saint does not look for rest but for tribulation. He knows “tribulation works out endurance, and endurance, tried virtue, and tried virtue, hope. And hope does not disappoint.”³⁰ This is parallel to what Jeremiah says: “I have called on tribulation and misery, for your bitter word was to me joy and gladness.” In this world I desire nothing but tribulation that I may have happiness and repose in the next. That is why, he says, “I now bear with bitterness, that afterwards I may have all sweetness.” The people of the Lord coming out of Egypt came to Mara, which means “bitter,” and from Mara into Sinai, which means “temptation.” Again, Jeremiah says, “I sat alone because I was filled with bitterness.”³¹ HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 39 (Ps 114).³²

INSULTED FOR CHRIST’S SAKE. ORIGEN: The wonderful apostles who were insulted many times for the truth say, “I am content with weaknesses, with insults and hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ.”³³ I know that the basis of hardships is Christ when I am insulted if I know that I am insulted only for nothing other than for Christ, when I am in hardships, when I am abused if I know that the cause of abuse is none other than that I am a champion for truth and an ambassador for the Scriptures so that everything happens according to the Word of God. For this I am blasphemed. And thus let all of us, as far as our ability allows, strive for the prophetic life, for the apostolic life, not avoiding what is troublesome. For if the athlete avoids what is troublesome about the contest, the sweetness of the crown will never be his. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 14.14.4-5.³⁴

15:18 *Failing Waters*

THE PROPHET WHO REFUSED TO CONFORM.

JEROME: This the Hebrews believe to be said in the person of Jerusalem, which sat alone

and was filled with bitterness and whose pain was unending and the word of whose prophets passed through it deceitfully, like flowing water. But it is better that we receive these words of a holy person as spoken from the person of a prophet, one who did not sit in the council or cabal of fools because he feared the impending hand of God but instead would glory in not having complicity with the evil ones. “I sat alone,” he said, in accordance with what was written: “I did not sit with the council of the boastful, and I did not enter into fellowship with evildoers; I hate the company of liars, and I will not sit with the impious,”³⁵ and, in another location: “I am alone until I pass away.”³⁶ He also says, effectively, “I sat alone in the presence of your hand, while fearing you and constantly expecting your impending hand to come on me. I refused to sit in the company of fools, but I swallowed my bitterness to prepare myself for future joy. Nor did I have any relief from my suffering, but I was being oppressed by the misery of this yoke, such that I would not have expected any remedy. For those who afflicted me prevailed, and my wound was made worse. Yet, in this I took consolation, that it was like deceitful and passing waters. For, just as flowing waters are seen once and then slip away, so also every attack of the enemy passes away with help from you.” Would that the Lord also grant to us not to sit in the council of fools and of those who fail to think of the future! Would that he grant us the ability not to yield to adversities but instead always to dread the sentence of God and to say with the prophet, “I sat alone, for I was filled with bitterness.” Those who sit in the council of the wise, therefore, shall not rejoice at all during the present time, but only those in the secret and hidden council of fools, for “it is good for me to cling to God, to put my hope in the Lord,”³⁷ to be filled with opprobrium and to await the sentence of the Judge,

³⁰Rom 5:3-5. ³¹Jer 15:17 (LXX). ³²FC 48:287-88*. ³³2 Cor 12:10. ³⁴FC 97:151. ³⁵Ps 26:4-5 (25:4-5 LXX). ³⁶Ps 141:10 (LXX). ³⁷Ps 73:28 (72:28 LXX).

one that, when the end arrives, will reveal that every sorrow and bitterness was like the passing of flowing water. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.58.2-5.³⁸

SOME ARE FALSELY BAPTIZED. CYPRIAN: How then can one who is baptized among them seem to have obtained remission of sins and the grace of the divine mercy by his faith, when he has not the truth of the faith itself? For if, as some suppose, one could receive anything abroad out of the church according to his faith, certainly he has received what he believed. If he believes what is false, he could not receive what is true. Rather, he has received things adulterous and profane, according to what he believed. Jeremiah, the prophet, censures in detail this subject of profane and adulterous baptism, saying, “Why do those who grieve me prevail? My wound is incurable. When shall I be healed? When this is done, it is become for me as treacherous water not having faith.” The Holy Spirit makes mention through the prophet of treacherous water also not having faith. What is this treacherous and faithless water? Assuredly it is that which asserts falsely the image of baptism and frus-

trates the grace of faith by its shadowy simulation. LETTER 72.5-6.³⁹

GOD IS TRULY FAITHFUL. ATHANASIUS: Now the so-called gods of the Greeks, unworthy of the name, are faithful neither in their essence nor in their promises, because they are not everywhere. The local deities amount to nothing over the course of time and undergo a natural extinction. For these reasons, the Word cries out against them, that “faith is not strong in them,” that they are “waters that fail” and “there is no faith in them.”⁴⁰ But the God of all, who is indeed truly faithful, who is ever the same, says, “See now that I, even I am he,”⁴¹ and “I change not.”⁴² Therefore, his Son is “faithful,” being ever the same and unchanging, deceiving neither in his essence nor in his promise, as is written by the apostle to the Thessalonians: “Faithful is he who calls you, who also will do it.”⁴³ For in doing what he promises, he is faithful to his words. DISCOURSE AGAINST THE ARIANS 2.14.10.⁴⁴

³⁸CCL 74:152-53. ³⁹ANF 5:381*. ⁴⁰See Deut 32:20. ⁴¹Deut 32:39. ⁴²Mal 3:6. ⁴³1 Thess 5:24. ⁴⁴NPNF 2 4:353**.



THE PENITENT IS GOD'S MOUTHPIECE
 JEREMIAH 15:19-21

OVERVIEW: Those who can separate what is worthy from what is vile have begun to imitate the ways of God. When we do so, speaking well of our neighbor instead of in a vile way, we attract others to God's way of dealing with the world in his church (CHRYSOSTOM). Sinners should be imitating Christians, not the other way around (JEROME).

15:19 *Speaking What Is Precious*

THE ONE WHO SEEKS OTHERS' SALVATION.

CHRYSOSTOM: Consider to what a dignity one exalts himself who esteems others' salvation to be of great importance. Such a person is imitating God as far as lies within the power of humankind. Hear what God says speaking through his prophet: "He who separates the worthy from the vile shall be as my mouth." What God says is that one who is eager to save a brother who has fallen into careless ways, one who hastens to snatch his brother from the jaws of the devil, that person imitates me as far as lies within human power. What could equal that? This is greater than all good deeds. This is the peak of all virtue. BAPTISMAL INSTRUCTIONS 6.19.¹

LET US WIN THEM BY OUR MODE OF LIFE.

CHRYSOSTOM: Let us catch them, then, by our mode of life; and by these souls let us build up the church, and of these let us amass our wealth. There is nothing to weigh against a soul, not even the whole world. Thus, although one may give countless treasure to the poor, in so doing he will not do such work as one who converts one soul. "For he who takes forth the precious from the vile shall be as my mouth," so God speaks. A great good it is, I grant, to have pity on the poor, but it is nothing equal to removing them from error. HOMILIES ON I CORINTHIANS 3.9.²

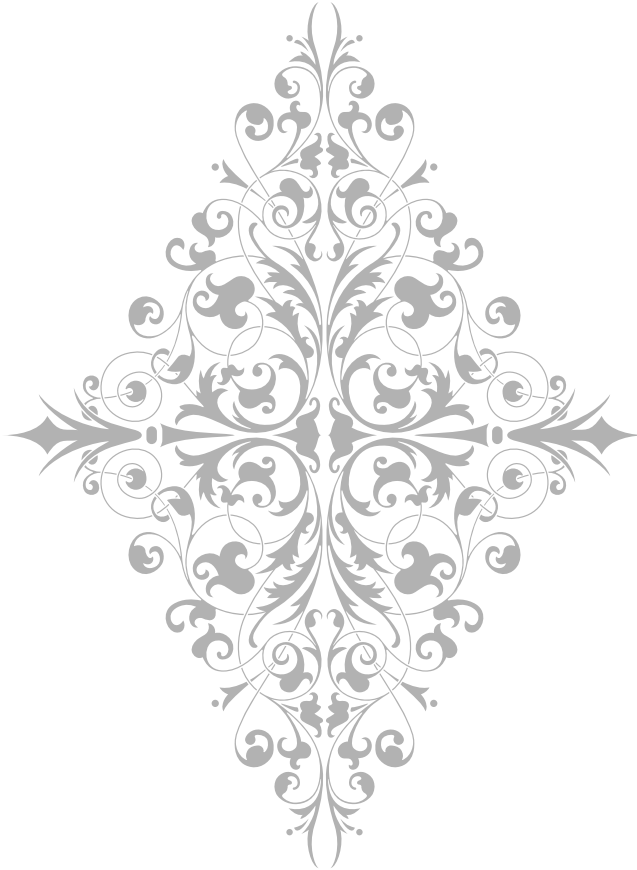
WINSOME WORDS ARE GOD'S WILL. CHRYSOSTOM:

Words full of gentleness and meekness,

even as Jesus also used to speak, saying to those who were insulting him, "I have not a devil,"³ and again, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong."⁴ If you also speak in this way, if you speak for your neighbor's betterment, you will obtain a tongue like that tongue. And these things God says: "For he that brings out the precious from the vile shall be like my mouth"; such are his words. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 78.3.⁵

LIBERATION THEOLOGY. JEROME: It is obvious that the text above was said not by Jerusalem but by a prophet. To him the Lord responds, "If you turn from the sins of the people, I likewise will turn you from tribulation toward joyfulness, and you will stand before my face like the angels stand in the presence of God daily, beholding his face."⁶ Also, if you separate the precious from the vile, you will become like my mouth. "Now should you think," he adds, "that there is no reward for good works,⁷ if you distinguish my saints from the crowd of sinners in your speech, you will be as my mouth, and you will be united to my precepts. For sinners need to be imitators of you, not you of them. Nor should you fear and ask: 'Why has my pain become perpetual and my wound worse (or incurable),' such that I lose all hope of being healed? For I have made you like a bronze and impregnable wall, so that you can withstand all the strength of your adversaries. Moreover, you have me as a helper, and I will liberate you from the hand of the most evil (or pestilent), and I will redeem you with my blood (or with the presence of my help)." May we consider just how great a reward the speech of the teacher will have if it is able to liberate from error and to rescue from among the number of sinners! SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.59.⁸

¹ACW 31:100**. ²NPNF 1 12:15**. ³Jn 8:49. ⁴Jn 18:23. ⁵NPNF 1 10:473**. ⁶Rev 8:2. ⁷See 2 Chron 15:7. ⁸CCL 74:153**.





A PROPHECY OF EXILE AND RESTORATION JEREMIAH 16:1-21

OVERVIEW: Many of the prophets were unmarried because they lived in dangerous times (JEROME). God sends forth fishers and hunters to catch the lost and bring them to faith (AMBROSE, AUGUSTINE, JEROME, BASIL). Try to catch the lost, even if you annoy them (AUGUSTINE). Hunt for grace that they might live (AMBROSE). God promises healing for them (JEROME). Hunt well to be sure to catch the lost (BASIL). When the fish are caught, their lives are transformed (ORIGEN). The church fulfills the prophecy that the Gentiles would come to God and reject the false gods of their ancestors (AUGUSTINE, CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, PATRICK). People should not make these false gods, which are really evil spirits imprisoned in idols (AUGUSTINE). The heretics not only make gods out of statues but also make gods out of their own imagination (ORIGEN).

16:2 You Shall Not Take a Wife

JEREMIAH REMAINS SINGLE. JEROME: Elijah lived a virgin life; so also did Elisha and many of the sons of the prophets. To Jeremiah the command came: "You will not take a wife." He had been sanctified in his mother's womb,¹ and now he was forbidden to take a wife because the captivity was near. The apostle gives the same

counsel in different words: "I think, therefore, that this is good by reason of the present distress, namely, that it is good for a person to be as he is."² What is this distress that does away with the joys of wedlock? The apostle tells us, in a later verse: "The time is short. It remains that those who have wives be as though they had none."³ LETTER 22.21.⁴

16:16 Fishers and Hunters

TO CATCH THE LOST. AUGUSTINE: The apostles were fishermen, and the Lord said to them, "I will make you fishers of people."⁵ Moreover, it is said by the prophet that God intended to send fishers at first, and afterwards hunters. At first, he did send fishers, and now, afterwards, he is sending hunters. Why fishers? Why hunters? Because, from the abyss and from the depth of the sea of idolatrous superstition, the believers fished with the nets of faith. But why have the hunters been sent? Because those people were wandering through the mountains and the hills, that is, through the pride of humankind, through the worldly obstacles. One mountain was Donatus, another Arius, a third was Plotinus and the last was Novatus. Through such mountains they were

¹Jer 1:5. ²1 Cor 7:26. ³1 Cor 7:29. ⁴NPNF 2.6:30*. ⁵Mt 4:19.

straying, and their wanderings called for hunters. Therefore, the duties of fishers and of hunters have been assigned, lest, by chance, they should say to us, “Why did the apostles force no one, urge no one?” Because one who is a fisher throws nets, calling out in this fashion: “Let it not go in that direction. Let it not go in this direction. Head it off there, strike it, terrify it. Do not let it get out, do not let it escape.” But our net is our life. Let love alone be preserved. Do not worry about how annoying you may be to him, but about how dear he is to you. What kind of devotion is it if you spare him and he perishes? **THE USEFULNESS OF FASTING** 9.⁶

GOD’S HUNTERS BESTOW GRACE. AMBROSE: Deceit should be far from your thoughts, and you should not indulge in slander against your neighbor. God has made you a hunter, not a harrier, for he says, “Behold, I will send you many hunters”—hunters not of crime but of absolution from it. Hunters certainly not of sin but of grace. You are a fisher of Christ, for whom it is said, “From now on, you shall make people live.”⁷ **SIX DAYS OF CREATION** 6.8.50.⁸

GOD’S HUNTERS BRING PROMISE OF HEALING. JEROME: “He rains on the wicked snares.”⁹ Without any doubt, it is the Lord who contrives snares for sinners, in order to entrap those who abuse their freedom and to compel them to tread the right path under his bridle, thereby making it possible for them to advance through him who says, “I am the way.”¹⁰ Wherefore, in Jeremiah, the Lord sends fishers and hunters to spread nets for the lost fish tossed about in whirlpools and to hunt down and save the beasts that wander through mountains and hills. This and the following verses do not promise punishment to sinners, as many believe, but rather give them promise of healing. **HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS** 60 (PS 10).¹¹

EACH IS CALLED TO EXCELLENCE. BASIL THE GREAT: In this great household of the church not

only are there vessels of every kind—gold, silver, wooden and earthen¹²—but also a great variety of pursuits. “The house of God, which is the church of the living God,”¹³ has hunters, travelers, architects, builders, farmers, shepherds, athletes, soldiers. To all of these this short admonition will be appropriate, for it will produce in each proficiency in action and energy of will. You are a hunter sent forth by the Lord, who says, “Behold, I send many hunters, and they shall hunt them on every mountain.” Take good care, therefore, that your prey does not elude you, so that, having captured them with the word of truth, you may bring back to the Savior those who have been made wild and savage by iniquity. **HOMILY ON THE WORDS “GIVE HEED TO THYSELF.”**¹⁴

TRANSFORMED FISH. ORIGEN: He who was caught by the fishers of Jesus and who comes up from the sea, he also dies, but he dies to the world. He dies to sin, and after having died to the world and to sin, he is made to live by the Word of God and receives another life. If you could apprehend hypothetically when the soul of the fish changed, after coming out from the fishly body, it became something better than the fish. . . . Having come up from the sea, falling into the nets of the disciples of Jesus, after you come out, you change the soul. You are no longer a fish that struggles in the salty waves of the sea, but your soul immediately changes and transforms itself and becomes better and more godly than what it was formerly. But that it does transform itself and change, hear Paul, who says, “And we all with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of God, are being transformed to the same image from glory into glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”¹⁵ And this transformed fish that was caught by the fishers of Jesus, after it has abandoned the way of life in the sea, makes his way in the mountains so

⁶FC 16:418-19*. ⁷See Lk 5:10. ⁸FC 42:263. ⁹See Ps 10:6 (LXX). ¹⁰Jn 14:6. ¹¹FC 57:11**. ¹²See 2 Tim 2:20. ¹³1 Tim 3:15. ¹⁴FC 9:437. ¹⁵2 Cor 3:18.

that he no longer needs the fishers who brought him. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 16.1.2.¹⁶

16:19 *Our Fathers Inherited Lies*

PEOPLE ARE COMING FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH TO THE TRUE GOD. AUGUSTINE:

So the shepherds came from nearby to see, and the Magi came from far away to worship. This is the humility for which the wild olive deserved to be grafted into the olive tree and against nature to produce olives,¹⁷ because it deserved to change nature through grace. They come, you see, from the uttermost bounds of the earth, saying, according to Jeremiah, "Truly our fathers worshipped lies."¹⁸ And they come, not just from one part of the world, but as the gospel according to Luke says, from East and West, from North and South,¹⁹ to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ SERMON 203.3.²¹

WHEN THE GENTILES COME TO WORSHIP

GOD. AUGUSTINE: As in the provocation and in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your ancestors put me to the test,²² let such no more be your ancestors: do not imitate them. They were your ancestors, but if you do not imitate them, they shall not be your ancestors. Yet as you were born of them, they were your ancestors. And if the heathen who came from the ends of the earth, in the words of Jeremiah, "To thee shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: 'Our fathers have inherited nought but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit,' " if the heathen forsook their idols to come to the God of Israel, ought Israel, whom their own God led from Egypt through the Red Sea, in which he overwhelmed their pursuing foes,²³ whom he led out into the wilderness, fed with manna,²⁴ never took his rod from correcting them, never deprived them of the blessings of his mercy, ought they to desert their own God, when the heathen have come to him? EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 95.II.²⁵

JESUS REVEALS THE VANITY OF IDOLS.

AUGUSTINE: Further, Jeremiah says of Christ, "Behold the days come, says the Lord, and I will raise up to David a just branch. A king shall reign and shall be wise. He shall execute justice and judgment in the earth. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell confidently. This is the name that they shall call him: The Lord our just one."²⁶ On the calling of the Gentiles that he foresaw and we today see as realized, the prophet had this to say: "O Lord, my might and my strength, and my refuge in the day of tribulation; to you the Gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth and shall say, 'Surely our ancestors have possessed lies, a vanity that has not profited them.'" CITY OF GOD 18.33.²⁷

THE FAITHFUL PLACE THEIR TRUST IN GOD.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Having been brought near, they make Christ their glorying. For again, God the Father has said of them, "And I will strengthen them in the Lord their God, and in his name shall they glory, says the Lord."²⁸ This also the blessed psalmist teaches, speaking as it were to Christ the Savior of all and saying, "Lord, they shall walk in the light of your countenance, and in your name shall they exult all the day, and in your righteousness shall they be exalted. For you are the glorying of their strength."²⁹ We shall find also the prophet Jeremiah calling out to God, "Lord, my strength and my help, and my refuge in the day of my evils, to You shall the heathen come from the ends of the earth, and say, 'Our fathers took for themselves false idols, in which there is no help.'"³⁰ COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 4.³¹

GOD'S GRACE TO ST. PATRICK. PATRICK: For I am very much God's debtor, who gave me such great grace that many people were reborn in God through me and afterwards confirmed, and that

¹⁶FC 97:167*. ¹⁷See Rom 11:17-25. ¹⁸See Jer 16:19 (LXX). ¹⁹Lk 13:29. ²⁰Mt 8:11. ²¹WSA 3 6:96. ²²Ps 95:8-9. ²³Ex 14:21-29. ²⁴Ex 16:13-35. ²⁵NPNF 1 8:469**. ²⁶Jer 23:5-6. ²⁷FC 24:135*. ²⁸Zech 10:12. ²⁹Ps 89:15-17. ³⁰See Jer 16:19 (LXX). ³¹CGSL 60*.

clerics were ordained for them everywhere, for a people just coming to the faith, whom the Lord took from the utmost parts of the earth, as he once had promised through His prophets: "To you the Gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth and shall say, 'How false are the idols that our ancestors got for themselves, and there is no profit in them.'"³² And again: "I have set you as a light among the Gentiles, that you may be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth."³³ CONFESSIO 38.³⁴

16:20 Can People Make Gods for Themselves?

MANUFACTURED GODS ARE NOT GODS. AUGUSTINE: Hermes Trismegistus lamented these vain, deceptive, pernicious, sacrilegious things because he foresaw that the time was coming when they would be abolished. He was as impudent in his grief as imprudent in his prophecy, since the Holy Spirit had made no revelation to him as to the holy prophets who exultantly proclaimed their inspired visions: "Shall a person make gods to himself, and they are not gods?" And again: "And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will destroy the names of idols out of the earth, and they shall be remembered no more."³⁵ It is relevant to recall that holy Isaiah uttered a particular prophecy concerning Egypt: "And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof"³⁶ and the rest. CITY OF GOD 8.23.³⁷

IF PEOPLE MAKE GODS. AUGUSTINE: Although Hermes calls these idols gods, he nevertheless admits that they were made by people whose

example we should not follow, and thus, willy-nilly, he proves that these idols should not be worshiped by people who are unlike the people who made them, that is, by wise, believing and religious people. Moreover, he implies that the fabricators brought on themselves the guilt of reckoning as gods things that are not gods. Very true is that prophecy: "Shall a person make gods to himself, and they are not gods?" This, then, is what Hermes means by fabricated gods. Such gods, made and adored by such people, are but evil spirits imprisoned by magic in idols and bound there by the chains of their own passions. CITY OF GOD 8.24.³⁸

HERETICS MAKE THEIR OWN GODS. ORIGEN: "If a person will make gods for himself." Not only do people make gods for themselves from statues, but you will also find people making gods for themselves from their imaginations. Such people can imagine another god and creator of the world other than the divine plan of the world recorded by the Spirit, other than the true world. These all have made gods for themselves, and they have worshiped the works of the hands. So, too, I believe is the case either among the Greeks, who generate opinions, so to speak, of this philosophy or that, or among the heretics, the first who generate opinions. These have made idols for themselves and figments of the soul, and by turning to them they worship the works of their hands, since they accept as truth their own fabrications. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 16.9.1.³⁹

³²Jer 16:19 (LXX). ³³Acts 13:47; Is 49:6. ³⁴ACW 17:32-33. ³⁵Zech 13:2. ³⁶Is 19:1. ³⁷FC 14:64. ³⁸FC 14:69*. ³⁹FC 97:177.



STRENGTH IS IN THE LORD

JEREMIAH 17:1-8

OVERVIEW: Nothing is more potent than the conscience rightly ordered (THEODORET). It enables us to trust in God's gift as that which brings us peace and happiness, as opposed to trusting in ourselves and our efforts (AUGUSTINE). Judah trusted in its own strength instead of in God, and it became like a desert shrub that produced no fruit (JEROME). Those who trust in themselves, rather than God, run the risk of departing from the Lord and becoming capable of only producing bad fruit (BEDE). They must realize that God is our only refuge. People who trust in humanity do not trust in God (BASIL). Those in the church

put their trust in Christ, who is the source of their perseverance in the faith. We are at war with our flesh, the devil and the world. Therefore we should pray that we do not enter into temptation, relying on God, not on our own strength (AUGUSTINE). When we hope in Christ, we hope in more than a man (ORIGEN).

When we rely on God instead of ourselves or another human being, we become a fruitful tree rooted in the waters of baptism, instead of a desert shrub (JEROME). Thus we deny ourselves (CAESARIUS) and do not seek the praise of others, seeking instead only the praise of God

(TERTULLIAN). If we succeed in doing this, we will not be ashamed of our hope (AUGUSTINE). Our hope is only in the Son of God who can forgive sins (CYPRIAN). The saints of the Old Testament, too, were freed from sin by the blood of the Redeemer (AUGUSTINE). Those who trust in Christ do not trust in a mere human being but in the one who is both God and human, Jesus Christ (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, NOVATIAN).

17:1 *A Pen of Iron*

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE. THEODORET OF CYR: Nothing is more potent than the conscience: letters inscribed on it are indelible. I mean, even if everyone mounted a case to his or her conscience supported by favorable evidence, the conscience itself cannot tolerate the wickedness of falsehood. It is pricked and goaded and delivers its verdict incorruptibly. He says this here, too: The facts accuse you, and the conscience joins in testimony against you. He reminds them also of the groves, the altars and what was done on them, and he threatens to give to the enemy all their wealth along with the idols. ON JEREMIAH 4.17.1-3.¹

17:5 *Do Not Trust in Your Own Strength*

TRUST IN THE LORD FOR PEACE AND SATISFACTION. AUGUSTINE: "What is your own opinion? What people do you call happy?" He [the psalmist] would not say, "Happy is the people whose strength is in their own mind." If he had said this, he would, it is true, distinguish that people from the former that made happiness consist in that visible and bodily good fortune, but he would not yet have passed beyond all the vanities and lying follies, for the same Scriptures teach elsewhere: "Cursed be everyone that places his hope in humankind." Therefore, he ought not to place it in himself, because he himself is human. Thus, in order to pass beyond the boundaries of all vanities and lying follies and to place happiness where it truly exists, he says,

"Happy is the people whose God is the Lord."² LETTER 155.³

THE GIFT OF GOD IS BLESSEDNESS IN CHRIST.

AUGUSTINE: The Stoics, when questioned about where they place the efficient cause of the happy life that is the thing in people that makes life happy, answer that it is not bodily pleasure but a virtuous mind. What says the apostle? Does he agree? If he agrees, let us agree, too. But he does not agree, because Scripture reproves those who trust in their own virtue. And so the Epicurean who places a person's supreme good in the body is placing his hopes in himself. But after all, the Stoic who places a person's supreme good in the mind has indeed placed it in a person's better part. But even he has placed it in himself. Now the Stoic is a human just as much as the Epicurean. Cursed therefore is everyone who places his hope in humankind. So what now? Here we have three people set before our eyes: an Epicurean, a Stoic, a Christian. Let us question them one by one. "Tell us, Epicurean, what thing makes one blessed?" "Bodily pleasure," he replies. "Tell us, Stoic." "A virtuous mind." "Tell us, Christian." "The gift of God." SERMON 150.8.⁴

ALL GOOD COMES FROM THE LORD. AUGUSTINE: But of these matters, all of which are true objects of faith, those only pertain to hope that are embraced in the Lord's Prayer. For "cursed is the one that trusts in humankind" is the testimony of Holy Scripture. Consequently, this curse attaches also to the person who trusts in himself. Therefore, we ought to ask for nothing that we either hope to do well or hope to obtain as a reward for our good works except from God the Lord. ENCHIRIDION 114.⁵

TRUST COMPLETELY IN THE LORD. AUGUSTINE: Out of that confession of faith that is briefly contained in the creed and that, pondered

¹PG 81:604. ²Ps 144:15. ³FC 20:311. ⁴WSA 3 5:35**. ⁵NPNF 1 3:274**.

according to the flesh, is the milk of babes but spiritually considered and studied is the food of the strong, arises the good hope of believers, which holy charity accompanies. But of all those things that are to be believed by faith, only those pertain to hope that are contained in the Lord's Prayer. For "cursed is everyone who puts hope in humankind," as the divine Scriptures testify; and, consequently, one who puts hope in himself is also ensnared in the chain of this curse. Therefore, we ought to make petition only of the Lord God, whatever it is that we hope to do well or to obtain as a reward for good works. ENCHIRIDION 30.114.⁶

TRUST IN THE LORD. AUGUSTINE: Blessed are all who trust in God.⁷ If the blessed are those who trust in him, then the wretched are those who trust in themselves. Cursed, you see, is everyone who puts his hopes in humankind, so do not put them even in yourself, because you too are human. If you put your hopes in another person, that is the wrong kind of humility. But if you put your hopes in yourself, that is dangerous pride. What is the difference, anyway? Each is pernicious, neither is to be chosen. Humble in the wrong way, you cannot lift yourself up; dangerously proud, you are heading for a fall. SERMON 13.2.⁸

THE LORD WILL BE YOUR STRENGTH.

AUGUSTINE: Take care not to let trust in your own strength steal on you, for you are human, and "cursed is everyone who puts his hope in humankind." But put your trust fully and with your whole heart in God, and he will be your strength. Trust him lovingly and gratefully and say to him humbly and faithfully, "Trust in the Lord with your whole heart; he will be your strength."⁹ LETTER 218.¹⁰

THE LORD IS OUR ONLY TRUE HOPE. AUGUSTINE: People who despise being in need before God, lest they receive true perseverance from him, glory in their own false endurance and seek to "confound the counsel of the poor, because the

Lord is his hope."¹¹ Nor do they regard, seeing they are human and attribute so much to their own, that is, to the human will, that they run into that which is written, "Cursed is everyone who puts his hope in humankind." ON PATIENCE 12.¹²

CHRIST MORE THAN A MAN. ORIGEN: From this statement we will refute those who suppose that the Savior was a man but not also the Son of God. For they dared with many human evils to say even this, that the Only-begotten, the firstborn of all creation, could not be God. For "cursed is one who has hope in humankind." It is evident that cursed are those who have hope in humankind. I may say that I do not have hope in people. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 15.6.1.¹³

17:6-7 Like a Shrub in the Desert¹⁴

FAITHLESS BEGETS FRUITLESS. JEROME: It is not only the one who puts his hope in humankind that is accursed, but also the one who uses the flesh of his arm, that is, his strength and all that he does, not for the Lord of mercy but so that power will be thought to have come from him. For whoever does this withdraws his heart from the Lord by claiming himself to be capable when he is not capable. He will also be like the tamarisk in the desert, which, in Hebrew, is called an *aroker*, or, as translated by Symmacus, a fruitless plant, nor will he see goodness when it arrives and is seen by the multitude of nations, but he will live in a wasteland. All this is said about the Jewish people, who live in a desert and do not bear fruit and are located in an uninhabited salt land that produces no fruit and is a host neither to God, nor to the army of angels, nor to the grace of the Holy Spirit nor to the knowledge of teachers. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.72.4-5.¹⁵

TRUST IN GOD. BASIL THE GREAT: A person

⁶FC 2:465*. ⁷Ps 2:12. ⁸WSA 3 1:309**. ⁹Ps 18:1. ¹⁰FC 32:97. ¹¹Ps 13:6 (LXX). ¹²NPNF 1 3:531**. ¹³FC 97:163-64. ¹⁴Also referred to as a tamarisk. ¹⁵CCL 74:164.

who relies on himself, however, or even on the person whose duty it is to provide for his needs, and thinks that his own activity or that of his associate is a sufficient resource for his livelihood runs the risk, as he places his hope in humankind, of falling under the curse that reads, “Cursed is the one that trusts in humankind and makes flesh his arm and whose soul departs from the Lord.” Now, by the words “that trusts in humankind” the Scripture forbids a person to place his hope in another, and by the words “and makes flesh his arm” it forbids him to trust in himself. Either course is termed a defection from the Lord. Further, in adding the final issue of both, “He shall be like tamarisk in the desert, and he shall not see when good shall come,” the Scripture declares that for anyone to place his trust either in himself or in anyone else is to alienate himself from the Lord. *THE LONG RULES* 42.¹⁶

LET US AVOID PRODUCING BAD FRUIT. BEDE: But let us see what kind of fruits a bad tree produces, and let us avoid bearing such fruits. The prophet Jeremiah says, “Cursed is the one who puts his trust in human beings and makes his flesh his support, and whose heart turns away from the Lord; such a person will be like a tamarisk in the desert.” *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS* 2.25.¹⁷

THERE IS ONE REFUGE: GOD. BASIL THE GREAT: One thing you must flee, sin. One refuge from evil must be sought, God. Do not trust in princes. Do not be exalted in the uncertainty of wealth. Do not be proud of bodily strength. Do not pursue the splendor of human glory. None of these things save you. All are transient. All are deceptive. There is one refuge: God. “Cursed is the one who trusts in humankind” or in any human thing. *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS* 18.1 (Ps 45).¹⁸

TRUST IN AND WORSHIP GOD. BASIL THE GREAT: One who puts his trust in humankind or is buoyed up by some other concerns of life,

such as power or possessions or any of the things considered by the many to be glorious, is not able to say, “O Lord my God, in you have I put my trust.” In fact, there is a command that we should not put our trust in rulers, and “cursed is the one who trusts in humankind.” As it is proper not to worship anything else besides God, so also is it proper not to trust in any other except God the Lord of all things. “The Lord,” it is said, “is my hope and my praise.” *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS* 11.2 (Ps 7).¹⁹

HOPE IN GOD ALONE. AUGUSTINE: It is said, “It is by his own fault that anyone deserts the faith, when he yields and consents to the temptation that is the cause of his desertion of the faith.” Who denies it? Because of this, perseverance in the faith is to be said to be a gift of God. For a person daily asks for this when he says, “Lead us not into temptation.”²⁰ If he is heard, it is this that he receives. Thus, as he daily asks for perseverance, he assuredly places the hope of his perseverance not in himself but in God. I, however, am loath to exaggerate the case with my words, but I rather leave it to them to consider and see what it is of which they have persuaded themselves—“that by the preaching of predestination, more despair than exhortation is impressed on the hearers.” For this is to say that a person then despairs of his salvation when he has learned to place his hope not in himself but in God, although the prophet cries, “Cursed is one who has his hope in humankind.” *PREDESTINATION OF THE SAINTS* 2.46.²¹

LET US NOT TRUST IN OUR OWN WILL. AUGUSTINE: We must find out from what source true perseverance, worthy of the name, is to be had. There are those who attribute it to the powers of human will, not those that people have from divine assistance, but from their own

¹⁶FC 9:318. ¹⁷CS 111:258*. ¹⁸FC 46:299. ¹⁹FC 46:166-67*. ²⁰Mt 6:13. ²¹NPNF 1 5:544**.

free will. But that is an arrogant error. It is the error of the rich about whom the psalm speaks: “a reproach to the rich, and contempt to the proud.”²² Glorifying in their own false endurance, they wish “to confound the counsel of the poor person, but the Lord is his hope.”²³ Since they are people and attribute so much to themselves, that is, to their human will, they do not tend to apply to themselves the words of Scripture: “Cursed is everyone who trusts in humankind.” ON PATIENCE 15.12.²⁴

LET US NOT RELY ON OUR OWN STRENGTH.

AUGUSTINE: This is the combat we are challenged to, this the struggle with the flesh, this the struggle with the devil, this the struggle with the world. But let us be wary of confidence, because the one who instituted this contest does not watch his own champions, nor does he encourage us to rely on our own strength. Anyone relying on his own strength, you see, is relying, being clearly human, on the strength of a person; and accursed is everyone who rests his hope in humankind. SERMON 344.1.²⁵

TRUST IN THE LORD, NOT IN SELF. AUGUSTINE: We have recognized ourselves, seen ourselves and taken a thorough look at ourselves. Let us groan and sigh in ourselves, pour out prayers, that we enter not into temptations. We must not rely on our own powers to overcome all these things. Blessed, after all, is the one whose helper is the God of Jacob, his hope in the Lord his God,²⁶ not in himself, because he is a mere mortal. But cursed is everyone who places his hope in humankind. SERMON 335B.5.²⁷

TRUST NOT IN SELF OR IN PEOPLE. AUGUSTINE: In order that we fall not away from the virtue of the soul, we ought to watch especially against those snares of the suggestions of the devil that we presume not of our own strength. For “cursed is everyone who places his hope in humankind.” And who is he, but mortal? We cannot therefore truly say that the person who

places his hope in humankind places it in himself. For this also is to “live after humankind,” what is it but to “live after the flesh”? Whoever therefore is tempted by such a suggestion, let him hear, and if he has any Christian feeling, let him tremble. Let him hear, I say, “If you live after the flesh, you shall die.” ON CONTINENCE 10.²⁸

NOT BEING ASHAMED. AUGUSTINE: “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.”²⁹ In the day of trouble, in the day of distress, they shall not be “ashamed,” as one is ashamed whose hope deceives him. Who is the person who is “ashamed”? The one who says, “I have not found that which I was in hope of.” Nor undeservedly either. You hoped for it from yourself or from a person, your friend. But “cursed is one who puts his trust in humankind.” You are ashamed because your hope has deceived you; your hope that was based on a lie. EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 37.8.³⁰

17:7-8 The Fruitful Tree

FOREVER FRUITFUL. JEROME: It may be said both of the Jews and of the heretics that they put their hope in humankind, for the messiah whom they believe to be coming is clearly not the Son of God but a mere man. The person of the church, in contrast, who puts faith in the Lord, hears this: “Know that the Lord himself is God.”³¹ Because he trusts in the Lord, he will be compared with a tree and will be the one of whom the first psalm sings: “He is like a tree that is planted by flowing waters, bearing its fruit in season; and its leaf does not wither.”³² Being transplanted on (or by) the waters refers to the various graces of the Holy Spirit. And sending its roots into the water (or by the stream) means that one receives abundance from

²²Ps 122:4 (LXX). ²³Ps 13:6 (LXX). ²⁴FC 16:249**. See also Augustine *On the Gift of Perseverance* 62; *On Grace and Free Will* 4.6. ²⁵WSA 3 10:49**. ²⁶Ps 146:5. ²⁷WSA 3 9:219. ²⁸NPNF 1 3:383**. ²⁹Ps 37:19. ³⁰NPNF 1 8:96**. ³¹Ps 100:3 (99:3 LXX). ³²Ps 1:3.

the Lord. But we can also say that it may be us who were transplanted from the aridity of Judea into the eternal grace of baptism. It goes on to say that he will not fear when the heat comes, meaning either a time of persecution or the day of judgment, and that his leaf will remain green (or that his branches will remain leafy), such that he should never fear aridity, for the grace of all the virtues will germinate. Thus, when a dry spell arrives, when the Lord of wrath commands the clouds not to send any rain on Israel,³³ this person will not fear. And the following line, "nor will he cease to bear fruit," can help explain the passage in the Gospel of Mark where the Lord comes to a fig tree and finds no fruit on it, since it was not yet the season, and then curses it that it would never bear fruit again.³⁴ For anyone "who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord" will have no fear in a time of Judaic aridity, but he will always bear fruit who believes in him who died for us and will die no more,³⁵ in him who said "I am the life."³⁶ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.73.2-5.³⁷

LOVE AND TRUST GOD, NOT THINGS. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: You have begun to love what is outside of yourself. You have gone outside of yourself. When a person's love goes away from him toward things that are outside of him, he begins to become vain along with useless goods, and somehow to spend his substance like the prodigal son. He is emptied. He is poured forth. He becomes a beggar. However, we must not despair even of such people when they begin to repent. May God grant this to them: "He came to himself."³⁸ Now if he came to himself, he had gone outside of himself. Just as he remained in himself when he fell away, so he should not remain in himself when he fell away, so he should not remain in himself when he returns. Therefore, let him keep himself close to God. Let him deny himself so he will not fall again. What does to deny oneself mean? Let him not confide in his own strength, let him realize that he is human, and let him look to the prophetic word: "Cursed

is the one who trusts in human beings." SERMON 159.3.³⁹

TRUST IN GOD ALONE. TERTULLIAN: For as it says in the psalm, "Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy,"⁴⁰ so also in the gospel, those who sow in laughter, that is, because of joy, shall reap in tears. Long ago did the Creator set these things side by side: Christ, by not changing them but only giving them emphasis, has made them new. "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you."⁴¹ That is what their ancestors used to do to the false prophets.⁴² No less does the Creator, by Isaiah, censure those who seek after the blessing and praise of people: "My people, those who call you blessed, lead you astray and upset the paths of your feet."⁴³ And in other terms he even forbids them to have any confidence in a person, and consequently not in human praise, as by Jeremiah, "Cursed is the one who trusts in humankind." AGAINST MARCION 4.16.⁴⁴

ONLY GOD CAN FORGIVE SINS. CYPRIAN: Let no one deceive himself. Let none be misled. Only the Lord can grant mercy. Sins committed against him can be cancelled by him alone who bore our sins and suffered for us, by him whom God delivered up for our sins. People cannot be above God, nor can the servant by any indulgence of his own remit or condone the graver sort of crime committed against his Lord, for that would make the apostate liable to this further charge, he knows not the words of the prophet: "Cursed is the one who puts his hope in humankind." It is our Lord we must pray to, it is our Lord we must win over by our penitence. For he has said he will deny the person who denies him,⁴⁵ and he alone has received all power of judgment from his Father.⁴⁶ THE LAPSED 17.⁴⁷

³³See Is 5:6. ³⁴See Mk 11:13-14. ³⁵See Rom 6:8-10. ³⁶Jn 14:6.

³⁷CCL 74:165. ³⁸Lk 15:17. ³⁹FC 47:367**. ⁴⁰Ps 126:5. ⁴¹Lk 6:26.

⁴²Lk 6:26. ⁴³Is 3:12 (LXX). ⁴⁴TAM 2:337**. ⁴⁵Mt 10:33. ⁴⁶Jn 5:22.

⁴⁷ACW 25:27*.

THE SAINTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ARE FORGIVEN IN CHRIST. AUGUSTINE: No, I say that either before the law, or in the time of the Old Testament, they were freed from sins, not by their own power, because “cursed is everyone who has put his hope in humankind,” and without any doubt those are under this curse whom also the sacred psalm notifies, “who trust in their own strength,”⁴⁸ nor by the old covenant that gives birth to bondage⁴⁹ . . . but I say that they were freed by the blood of the Redeemer, who is the one Mediator of God and people, the Christ Jesus.⁵⁰ **AGAINST TWO LETTERS OF THE PELAGIANS 1.12.**⁵¹

CONFESS CHRIST AS TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: He said to him, “Yes, sir. The long duration of my illness makes me desire health. But, desire it as I may, I have no one.” Do not lose heart, my good fellow, because you “have no one.” You have God standing by you. One who is at once man and God under different aspects, for both must be confessed. The confession of the humanity without the confession of the divinity is unavailing, or rather earns a curse. For “cursed is one who puts his trust in humankind.” **SERMON ON THE PARALYTIC 6.**⁵²

CHRIST IS NO MERE MAN. NOVATIAN: If

Christ is only man, how is it that he says, “And whoever sees and believes in me shall never die”⁵³ Whereas one who trusts in a mere man is said to be accursed, one who believes in Christ is not accursed. On the contrary, it is stated that he will never die. **ON THE TRINITY 16.1.**⁵⁴

CHRIST IS MORE THAN A MAN. NOVATIAN: If Christ is only man, how is he present wherever he is invoked⁵⁵—since it is not people’s nature but God’s to be able to be present everywhere? If Christ is only man, why is a man called on in prayer as a mediator, when calling on a mortal to grant salvation is considered useless? If Christ is only man, why is hope put in him,⁵⁶ when hope in humankind is declared to be accursed? If Christ is only man, why cannot he be denied without ruin to one’s soul,⁵⁷ when it is declared that an offense against people can be forgiven?⁵⁸ If Christ is only man, how does John the Baptist bear witness of him when he says, “He who comes after me was made before me, for he was before me”?⁵⁹ If Christ were only man, then, being born after John, he could not be before John, unless he preceded him as God. **ON THE TRINITY 14.7-11.**⁶⁰

⁴⁸See Ps 44:6. ⁴⁹Gal 4:24. ⁵⁰1 Tim 2:5. ⁵¹NPNF 1 5:381*. ⁵²FC 64:213**. ⁵³Jn 11:26; cf. Jn 6:40. ⁵⁴FC 67:61. ⁵⁵See Mt 18:20. ⁵⁶See 1 Cor 15:19; 1 Tim 1:1. ⁵⁷See Mt 10:33. ⁵⁸Mk 11:25; cf. 1 Sam 2:25; Mt 6:14-15; 18:35. ⁵⁹Jn 1:15 (LXX). ⁶⁰FC 67:56.



SEARCHING THE HEART JEREMIAH 17:9-13

OVERVIEW: This passage, which speaks about God being the only one capable of searching the heart, can also be understood, according to the Septuagint, as a reference to Christ (JEROME) who was born in the flesh but not recognized as God by those who saw him (AMBROSE). He is both God and man so that he might heal the hard-hearted (AUGUSTINE, LACTANTIUS, TERTULLIAN, IRENAEUS). Strangers correctly recognized him as a man but did not know him, since they did not understand that he was also God (AUGUSTINE, TERTULLIAN, EPIPHANIUS). God alone knows the heart (CHRYSOSTOM, TERTULLIAN, AUGUSTINE). He tests the heart to reward people according to their deeds (ATHANASIUS). Christ is endurance itself, and no one can endure without him (ORIGEN).

The throne of God is our sanctuary and safe haven from those who persecute us (EPHREM). It is found in the church, our sanctuary here on earth, which is a glorious high throne because God dwells there (AUGUSTINE, APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). There are those like Judas, however, who choose to forsake this throne and its safety and are thus ultimately put to shame. Those like Judas, who try to deceive us, will fail and find only shame for their actions (JOHN CASSIAN).

17:9 Who Can Know It?

JESUS KNOWS OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

JEROME: Symmacus translates this passage thus: "The heart of everyone is inscrutable. Yet, who

is the man who can find it?"¹ It is customary by our own good wish, therefore, but not according to objective knowledge, to use this passage to argue against the Jews that the man in question is the Lord and Savior, according to the dispensation of the assumed flesh, and that no one shall be able to know the mystery of his nativity, according to what is written: "Who will explain his generation?"² except God alone, who probes the secrets and returns to each one according to his works.³ But it is better that we simply accept that no one knows the secrets of another's thoughts except God alone,⁴ for it says above, "Accursed is the person who trusts in human-kind"⁵ and, "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord."⁶ Hence, lest we think ourselves to be sure of human judgment, the psalmist implies that almost every heart is perverse, saying, "Cleanse me from hidden thoughts, O Lord, and spare your servant from foreigners,"⁷ without doubt meaning foreign thoughts. Also in Genesis, it is written, "God saw how great human malice was on the earth and that every thought of the human heart was intent on evil continuously";⁸ and again, "The senses and the thoughts of a person's heart are prone to evil from his adolescence."⁹ Through these texts, we learn that God alone

¹The Septuagint reads, "He is man, and who shall know him?" Many of the Fathers picked up on this phrase as a prophecy of Christ's incarnation, the reality of which was not recognized by many. Jerome offers Symmacus's variant that is closer to the RSV and Hebrew. ²Is 53:8. ³Cf. Ps 62:12 (61:13 LXX); Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6; Rev 2:23. ⁴See Ps 44:21 (43:22 LXX). ⁵Jer 17:5. ⁶Jer 17:7. ⁷Ps 19:12-13 (18:13-14 LXX). ⁸Gen 6:5. ⁹Gen 8:21.

knows a person's thoughts. Yet, if it is said of the Savior that "Jesus saw what they were thinking,"¹⁰ and if no one is able to see one's thoughts except God alone, then Christ is God, "who examines hearts and probes the mind and gives to each one according to his works." **SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 3.74.2-5.**¹¹

CHRIST WAS TRUE MAN. AMBROSE: The apostle says, "For God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."¹² He does not say "in the likeness of flesh," for Christ took on himself the reality, not the likeness, of flesh. Nor does he say in the likeness of sin, for he did not sin but was made sin for us. Yet he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." That is, he took on him the likeness of sinful flesh, the likeness, because it is written, "He is man, and who shall know him?"¹³ He was man in the flesh, according to his human nature that he might be recognized, but in power he was above humanity, that he might not be recognized, so he has our flesh but has not the failings of this flesh. **CONCERNING REPENTANCE 1.3.12.**¹⁴

CHRIST IS FULLY HUMAN. AUGUSTINE: The inquirer, then, might say that the prophet says only that Christ is God, without any reference to his human nature. Yet, in our apostolic doctrine, Christ is not only God in whom we may safely trust but also the mediator between God and humankind—the man Jesus. The prophet explains this in the words in which he seems to check himself, and to supply the omission: "The heart," he says "is inscrutable above all things, and he is man, and who shall know him?"¹⁵ He is man in order that, in the form of a servant, he might heal the hard in heart and that they might acknowledge as God him who became man for their sakes, that their trust might be not in humankind, but in God—man. **REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN 13.8.**¹⁶

JESUS WAS MAN AS WELL AS GOD. LACTAN-

TIUS: David also said in the forty-fourth psalm, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. You have loved righteousness. You have hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness."¹⁷ By this word he also shows his name, since (as I have shown above) he has called Christ from his anointing. Then, that he was also man, Jeremiah teaches, saying, "And he is a man, and who shall know him?"¹⁸ Also Isaiah: "And God shall send to them a man who shall save them, shall save them by judging."¹⁹ **DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.13.**²⁰

JESUS CHRIST IS TRUE MAN. TERTULLIAN: For it is of him that Isaiah writes: "A man of suffering and acquainted with the bearing of weakness."²¹ Jeremiah writes: "He is man, and who has known him?"²² And Daniel writes: "On the clouds he came as the son of man."²³ The apostle Paul likewise says: "The man Christ Jesus is the one mediator between God and humankind."²⁴ **ON THE FLESH OF CHRIST 15.**²⁵

CHRIST IS GOD AND MAN. IRENAEUS: For this reason it is said, "Who shall declare his generation?"²⁶ since "he is man, and who shall recognize him?"²⁷ But one to whom the Father who is in heaven has revealed him²⁸ knows him, so that he understands that he who "was not born either by the will of the flesh or by the will of man"²⁹ is the Son of man, that is, Christ, the Son of the living God. For I have shown from the Scriptures that no one of the children of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God or named Lord. But that he is himself in his own right, beyond all people who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King eternal and the incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles

¹⁰See Mt 9:4; Mt 12:25; Lk 5:22; Lk 9:47. ¹¹CCL 74:166-67. ¹²Rom 8:3b-4. ¹³Jer 17:9 (LXX). ¹⁴NPNF 2 10:331. ¹⁵Jer 17:9 (LXX).

¹⁶NPNF 1 4:203**. ¹⁷Ps 44:7-8 (LXX). ¹⁸Jer 17:9 (LXX). ¹⁹Is 19:20 (LXX). ²⁰ANF 7:112**. ²¹Is 53:3 (LXX). ²²Jer 17:9 (LXX). ²³Dan 7:13 (LXX). ²⁴1 Tim 2:5. ²⁵ANF 3:534. ²⁶Is 53:8 (LXX). ²⁷Jer 17:9 (LXX). ²⁸Mt 16:17. ²⁹Jn 1:13.

and by the Spirit, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of him, if, like others, he had been a mere man. But that he had, beyond all others, in himself that pre-eminent birth that is from the most high Father, and also experienced that pre-eminent generation that is from the Virgin,³⁰ the divine Scriptures do in both respects testify of him. *AGAINST HERESIES* 3.19.2.³¹

JESUS' MANHOOD IS CLEAR IN JEREMIAH.

AUGUSTINE: His manhood was much more plainly and readily recognized by strangers, who, indeed, were not wrong in believing him to be man, but they did not understand his being God as well as man. Hence Jeremiah says, "He is man, and who shall know him?"³² He is a man, for it is made manifest that he is a brother. And who shall know him? For it is concealed that he is a husband [to the church]. This must suffice as a defense of our father Abraham against Faustus's imprudence and ignorance and malice. *REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN* 22.40.³³

CHRIST IS FULLY HUMAN. **TERTULLIAN:** The Father, now that he has made him a little lower than the angels, will crown him with glory and honor and will put all things beneath his feet.³⁴ Then those who pierced him will know who he is and will strike their breasts, tribe to tribe—because in fact they formerly failed to recognize him in the humility of human condition. "And he is man," says Jeremiah, "and who shall know him?"³⁵ Because also, Isaiah says, "His nativity, who shall tell of it?"³⁶ *AGAINST MARCION* 3.7.³⁷

FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE. **EPIPHANIUS:**

How can they declare the Savior a mere man, conceived of a man's seed? How will he "not be known," as Jeremiah says of him, "he is man, but who shall know him?"³⁸ For the prophet, describing him, said, "Who shall know him?" But

if he meant a mere man, surely his father would know him, and his mother, his relatives and neighbors, those who lived with him and his fellow townspeople. But that which came to birth is born of Mary, while the divine Word came from above. He was truly begotten not in time and without a beginning, not of a man's seed but of the Father on high. But in the last days³⁹ he consented to enter a virgin's womb and fashion his flesh from her, patterned after himself. This is why Jeremiah says, "And he is man, but who shall know him?" He came from above as God, the only-begotten, divine Word. *PANARION* 30.20.5-7.⁴⁰

17:10 I Search the Heart

GOD ALONE KNOWS THE HEART. **CHRYSOSTOM:** That it belongs to God alone to know people's secrets, hear what the prophet says: "You alone know the heart,"⁴¹ and again, "God examines the heart and the seat of emotions,"⁴² and Jeremiah, too, says, "The heart is inscrutable above all things, and he is man, and who shall know him?"⁴³ and, "People shall look on the face but God on the heart."⁴⁴ *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW* 29.2.⁴⁵

GOD KNOWS THE HEART. **TERTULLIAN:** God has promised that Christ will be a light⁴⁶ and has declared that he himself is a lantern, searching the hearts and seats of affections.⁴⁷ *AGAINST MARCION* 5.7.⁴⁸

TRUST IN GOD, WHO SEARCHES THE HEART.

TERTULLIAN: The Pharisees, by justifying themselves before people, were placing in people their hope of reward. His rebuke to them⁴⁹ had the same bearing as that of the prophet Jeremiah, "Cursed is the one who

³⁰Is 7:14. ³¹ANF 1:449*. ³²Jer 17:9 (LXX). ³³NPNF 1 4:288*.

³⁴Heb 2:7-8. ³⁵Jer 17:9 (LXX). ³⁶Is 53:8 (LXX). ³⁷TAM 1:189. ³⁸Jer 17:9 (LXX). ³⁹Heb 1:2. ⁴⁰NHMS 25:136. ⁴¹2 Chron 6:30b (LXX). ⁴²Ps 7:10b (LXX); cf. Jer 17:10 (LXX). ⁴³Jer 17:9 (LXX). ⁴⁴1 Sam 16:7 (LXX). ⁴⁵NPNF 1 10:196*. ⁴⁶Is 42:6. ⁴⁷Jer 17:10 (LXX). ⁴⁸TAM 2:549. ⁴⁹Lk 16:14-15.

trusts in humankind.”⁵⁰ He says next, “But God knows your hearts.”⁵¹ This was a reference to the power of that God who declared himself a shining light, “searching the hearts and the seats of emotions.”⁵² If he turns with hostility toward their pride, “what is exalted among people is an abomination in the sight of God,” he sets Isaiah in front of their eyes, “For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high.”⁵³ **AGAINST MARCION** 4.33.⁵⁴

HEART AND DESIRE. **AUGUSTINE:** God searches our heart and perceives that it is there where our treasure is, that is, in heaven. . . . He alone perceives what in our inward conscience each of us thinks and delights in. Delight is the end of care because our whole goal in life is to reach what we think and care about most and attain it. God, who searches the heart, therefore sees our cares. . . . And when he finds that our cares incline neither to the lust of the flesh, nor to the lust of the eyes, nor to the pride of life . . . but to the joys of things eternal, which are spoiled by no change, he provides direction for the righteous. **EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS** 7.9.⁵⁵

GOD TESTS THE HEART. **ATHANASIUS:** For such things as these serve for exercise and trial, so that, having proved ourselves zealous and chosen servants of Christ, we may be fellow heirs with the saints.⁵⁶ For thus Job: “The whole world is a place of trial to people on the earth.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, they are proved in this world by afflictions, labors and sorrows, to the end that each one may receive of God such reward as is appropriate for him, as he said by the prophet, “I am the LORD who tries the hearts and searches the reins, to give to everyone according to his ways.” **FESTAL LETTERS** 13.1.⁵⁸

17:12 A Glorious High Throne

OPPRESSORS WILL FIND RETRIBUTION. **EPHREM THE SYRIAN:** “The glorious throne,

exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.” Again the prophet denounces the wicked who put their hope in their riches. He exhorts them to think about the household of God, he who sits in the sacred place in the Jerusalem temple, the throne of his glory, and from there God penetrates and tests everything around him. Thus, the prophet says, “Let them know that Babylon and all the glorious kings seated on its throne were exalted and raised there by God, who dwells in our sanctuary.” Therefore, kings do not have reason to hope in their own strength, and no one should be afraid of princes, because their treasures will be taken away by the judgment of truth. For the oppression of the oppressed, oppressors will perish as the result of their own oppressive actions. **COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH** 17.12.⁵⁹

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS VISIBLE. **AUGUSTINE:** As if anticipating that the inquirer would ask next by what plain mark a young disciple, not yet able to distinguish the truth among so many errors, might find the true church of Christ, since the clear fulfillment of so many predictions compelled him to believe in Christ, the prophet answers this question in what follows and teaches that the church of Christ, which he describes prophetically, is conspicuously visible. His words are, “A glorious high throne is our sanctuary.” This glorious throne is the church, of which the apostle says, “The temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”⁶⁰ **REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN** 13.13.⁶¹

CHRIST’S CHURCH WILL BE EXALTED. **APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS:** He has taken away from the ungodly the Holy Spirit and the prophetic rain and has replenished his church with spiritual grace, as the “river of Egypt in the time of firstfruits,”⁶² and has advanced the same as a

⁵⁰Jer 17:5. ⁵¹Lk 16:15. ⁵²Jer 17:10; 20:12 (LXX). ⁵³Is 2:12. ⁵⁴TAM 2:447. ⁵⁵NPNF 1 8:24**. ⁵⁶See Col 1:12. ⁵⁷Job 7:1. ⁵⁸NPNF 2 4:539**. ⁵⁹ESOO 2:131. ⁶⁰1 Cor 3:17. ⁶¹NPNF 1 4:204.

house on a hill or as a high mountain, as a mountain fruitful for milk and fatness, where God is pleased to dwell. "For the Lord will dwell there to the end."⁶³ And he says in Jeremiah: "A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." And he says in Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord shall be glorious, and the house of the Lord shall be on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills."⁶⁴ CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 6.2.5.⁶⁵

17:13 *Those Who Forsake God*

JUDAS FORSOOK GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION. JOHN CASSIAN: We must therefore not doubt that at the time when he was chosen by Christ and obtained a place in the apostolate, the name of Judas was written in the book of the living, and then he heard as well as the rest the words, "Rejoice not because the devils are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."⁶⁶ But because he was corrupted by the plague of covetousness and had his name struck out from that heavenly list, it is appropriately said of him and of people like him by the prophet: "O Lord, let all those who forsake you be confounded. Let them who depart from you be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters." And elsewhere, "They shall not be in the counsel of my people,

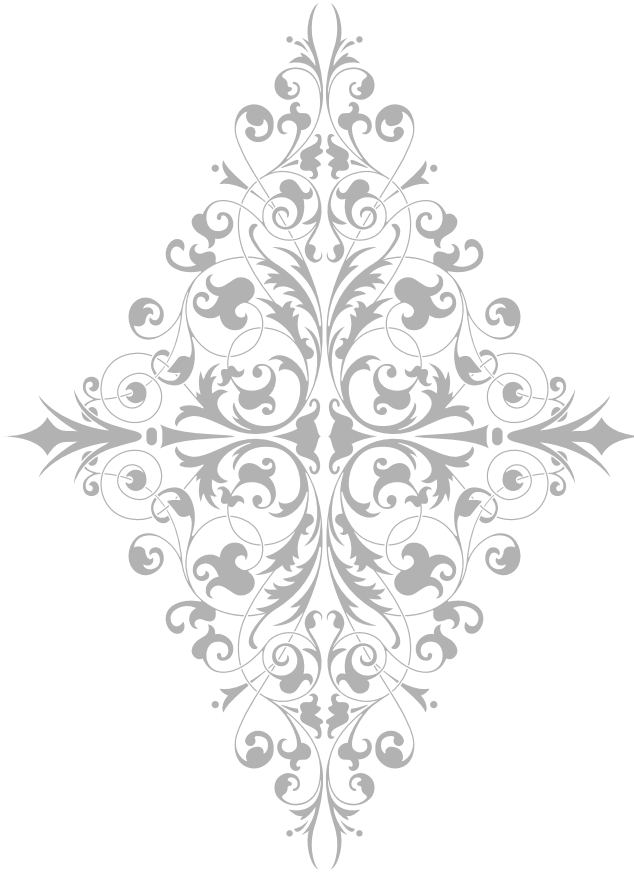
nor shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel."⁶⁷ CONFERENCE 2.17.25.⁶⁸

THE DEVILS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DECEIVE US. JOHN CASSIAN: And again when all their efforts are exhausted and they have failed to deceive us, they must "be confounded and be ashamed" at the failure of their efforts, "who seek our souls to destroy them. Let them be covered with shame and confusion who desire evil against us."⁶⁹ Jeremiah also says, "Let them be confounded, and let not me be confounded; let them be afraid, and let not me be afraid; bring on them the fury of your wrath, and with a double destruction destroy them." CONFERENCE 1.7.21.⁷⁰

CHRIST IS ENDURANCE. ORIGEN: The "endurance of Israel"⁷¹ is our next subject. Just as the Savior is righteousness, truth, sanctification, so is he endurance. And there can be no way to be just without Christ, or to be holy without him or to endure without having Christ, for he is the endurance of Israel. And even if you apply these words to God, you will not in this way be impious. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 17.4.2.⁷²

⁶²See Sir 24:25-27. ⁶³See Ps 68:16 (67:17 LXX). ⁶⁴Is 2:2 (LXX).
⁶⁵ANF 7:451-52*. ⁶⁶Lk 10:20. ⁶⁷Ezek 13:9b. ⁶⁸NPNF 2 11:472.
⁶⁹See Ps 35:4, 26 (34:4, 26 LXX); 40:14 (39:15 LXX); 70:2 (69:3 LXX).
⁷⁰NPNF 2 11:369*. ⁷¹Jer 17:13. ⁷²FC 97:183.





HOPE FOR REPENTANT JUDAH
JEREMIAH 17:14-27

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah speaks to the great Physician, the only one who can heal (JEROME). He, as the one who is eternally good, can cure even an evil person (JEROME, AUGUSTINE). Therefore let us not grow weary in following him but realize that he will heal us from the stresses and strains of this world (AMBROSE). No one grows weary from following Jesus (ORIGEN). God

provides for the just and the unjust (AUGUSTINE). Give thanks to God, who is our shield and crown (JEROME), protecting us and serving us as we daily deny the world (JOHN CASSIAN). We can then look forward to the ultimate rest we have in him as we keep the sabbath knowing that God's mercy will rest on us (EPISTLE OF BARNABAS).

17:14 *Heal Me*

ONLY HOPE IN GOD. JEROME: He says to him who alone is the true physician, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved. You are my praise and my hope.” *AGAINST THE PELAGIANS* 2.27.¹

ONLY THE LORD CAN SAVE AND HEAL. AUGUSTINE: No evil person does good. And if no evil person does good, how could an evil person make himself good? He who is eternally good can make an evil person good. “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved.” *SERMON* 61.2.²

ONLY GOD CAN MAKE US GOOD. AUGUSTINE: So, the reason that we, being bad, have a good Father is in order that we may not always remain bad. No bad person can make a good one. If no bad person can make a good one, how can a bad person make himself good? The only one who can make a good person out of a bad one is the one who is always good. “Heal me, Lord,” he says, “and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” *SERMON* 61.2.³

17:16 *I Have Not Become Weary Following You*⁴

LET US NOT GROW WEARY IN FOLLOWING JESUS. AMBROSE: I dearly love those priests and deacons who, once they have finished a duty, do not allow themselves to remain away any longer. As the prophet says, “I am not weary following after you.”⁵ Who can be weary following Jesus, for he says, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”⁶ Let us, then, always follow Jesus and never falter, for if we follow him, we never fail, because he gives his strength to his followers. The nearer you are to this strength, the stronger you will be. Sometimes, while we follow him, our adversaries say to us, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.” Let us

not grow weary of following him, and let us not be turned aside when confronted by a crafty question. It was said to the prophet when he was being sent to prison and cast into a pit of mire, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.” But he followed it the more and therefore reached the goal and received the crown, because he was not weary following Jesus. “There is no weariness in Jacob, nor will sorrow be seen in Israel.”⁷ *LETTER* 30.⁸

FOLLOWING JESUS IS NOT WORK. ORIGEN: “Behold, they say to me, ‘Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.’ But I have not been weary of following you.” Jesus says to you, “Take up your cross, and follow me,”⁹ and, “Leave everything, and follow me,”¹⁰ and, “He who does not leave behind father and mother and follow me is not worthy to be my disciple.”¹¹ If, then, you become such a person so as to follow Jesus in every way, and you will follow, and to the extent you do follow, you will not be weary. “For there is no hardship in Jacob, nor will distress be seen in Israel.” There is no toil in following Jesus. The following itself takes away the toil. In order that we may no longer be weary, since we are weary before beginning to follow him, that is why he says, “Come to me, all who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”¹² *HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH* 17.6.1.¹³

THE LORD GIVES GOOD DAYS. AUGUSTINE: The Lord has indeed made every day—not only has made but also continues to make. I mean, he makes every day as follows: he makes his sun rise on the good and the bad and sends rain on the just and the unjust.¹⁴ So we are not to imagine that this ordinary kind of day, which is common to good and bad alike, is meant in this place, where we heard, “This is the day that the Lord has made.”¹⁵ What particular sort of

¹FC 53:341. ²FC 11:276. ³WSA 3 3:142**. ⁴LXX. ⁵Jer 17:16 (LXX). ⁶Mt 11:28. ⁷Num 23:21 (LXX). ⁸FC 26:151. ⁹Mt 16:24. ¹⁰Mt 19:27. ¹¹Mt 10:37-38. ¹²Mt 11:28. ¹³FC 97:186-87. ¹⁴Mt 5:45.

day can it be when it says, "Let us exult and be joyful in it"?¹⁶ What sort, but a good one? What sort, but a very choice, lovable, desirable one, the sort about which Jeremiah said, "And I have not yearned for the day of men, you know it well"?¹⁷ SERMON 229B.2.¹⁸

OUR SHIELD AND CROWN. JEROME: Let us give thanks to God, and let us ask him in his good will to be our shield and crown, that we may never depart from him and that we may follow him and declare with Jeremiah, "I was not weary of following you."¹⁹ To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 2 (Ps 5).²⁰

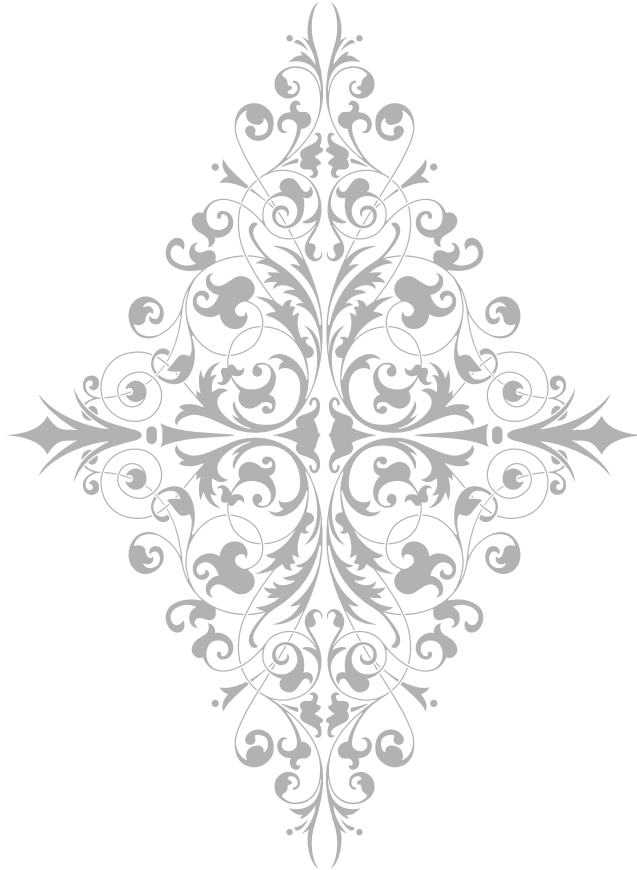
RENOUNCING THE WORLD. JOHN CASSIAN: For it is but little for a monk to have once made his renunciation, that is, in the early days of his conversion to have disregarded the present world, unless he continues to renounce it daily.

For to the very end of this life we must with the prophet say this: "And I have not desired the day of man, you know it well."²¹ Wherefore also the Lord says in the Gospel: "If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."²² CONFERENCE 3.24.2.²³

KEEP THE SABBATH. EPISTLE OF BARNABAS: It is also written concerning the sabbath in the Decalogue that the Lord spoke, face to face, to Moses on Mount Sinai, "And sanctify the sabbath of the Lord with clean hands and a pure heart."²⁴ And he says in another place, "If my children keep the sabbath, then will I cause my mercy to rest on them." EPISTLE OF BARNABAS 15.1-2.²⁵

¹⁵Ps 118:24. ¹⁶Ps 118:24. ¹⁷Jer 17:16 (LXX). ¹⁸WSA 3 6:273. ¹⁹Jer 17:16 (LXX). ²⁰FC 48:24. ²¹Jer 17:16 (LXX). ²²Lk 9:23. ²³NPNF 2 11:533. ²⁴See Ex 20:8; Deut 5:12. ²⁵ANF 1:146*.







THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

JEREMIAH 18:1-23

OVERVIEW: We have a parable here about a potter that is meant to call Israel to repentance and hold out hope for restoration (EPHREM). If a potter has power to remake something out of the clay he destroyed, cannot God do so with human beings (JEROME)? Therefore God did not leave his creation broken by sin but remade it (METHODIUS). Christ is the potter who remade human flesh by the power of his incarnation and resurrection (RUFINUS). Thus, when we have sinned, we should not despair of salvation (THEODORET) but take heart in God's restoration through the waters of baptism as he molds our wet clay into the form he wants us to take (CHRYSOSTOM).

God is ready to change his sentence of condemnation if the sinner repents (CAESARIUS, JEROME, TERTULLIAN). God does not repent, yet he is described as ready to repent. Just as we use simple language when we speak to children, God speaks to us as if he were one of us (ORIGEN). Yet even though God loved Israel, his wife, she loved others (BASIL). She followed after false teachers who slander holy people, including the prophets and even our Lord (JEROME).

18:1-2 *The Potter's House*

CALL TO REPENTANCE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Get up and go to the potter's house, and there you will hear my words." Here we have a parable about a potter meant to call Israel to repen-

tance. As the potter makes from clay any vessel he likes, so God can easily change their state of events, turning disaster into joy. If Israel does not give up its hypocrisy, the Lord will frighten them with great calamities. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 18.1.¹

18:3-6 *Clay in the Potter's Hand*

THE PARABLE OF THE POTTER. JEROME: Whatever is discerned by the eyes arrives to the judgment and understanding of the soul through every other sense, through hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, but is retained even more so by the mind. Thus, the prophet was commanded to go to the potter's house and there to hear the instructions of the Lord. "When," he says, "I arose and went down to the potter's house, he was making something on the wheel," which the Seventy translated with the ambiguous and misleading word "stones," for *abanim* and *organum*,² both meaning "potter's wheel," are sometimes called stones, depending on the region and local dialect. "When," he continues, "I discerned that the vessel that he was making out of clay suddenly fell apart," this occurred by the providential agency of God, that the artisan's hand, unwittingly, would create a parable by its mistake. Then the potter who had destroyed his clay vessel on the turning wheel made of it

¹ESOO 2:131. ²Transliterated Hebrew.

something else, as seemed to him the thing to do. And immediately the Lord said to the prophet, "If this potter has such power that he can remake something out of the same clay that disintegrated, am I not able to do the same for you who seem to have perished?" Moreover, that he might signify thereby the freedom of the will, the Lord said that he would announce punishments and rewards to the nations and to this king or that king. It was not that these events that he had predicted were to happen, but rather that good may be brought out of evil if they repented, or evil brought out of good if, after their resolutions, they returned to sin. Our point here is not that God was ignorant of what the nations and kings would do, but rather that he had endowed the human person with his own will, so that he would receive either a reward or a punishment on the basis of his own merit. Yet, what happens is not entirely dependent on a person, but also the grace that God has bestowed on all, for the freedom of the will must be restrained so that the grace of the Giver would excel in all things,³ according to the prophecy: "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor for nothing; unless the Lord keeps the city, do the guards watch over it in vain."⁴ For "it is not of the one who wills or of the one who runs, but of the God who has mercy."⁵ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.2.4-7.⁶

IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, HUMANITY IS REMADE. METHODIUS: The prophet Jeremiah addresses the Jews in these words: "And I went down to the potter's house. Behold, he made a work on the stones. The vessel that he made in his hands was broken. Again he made another vessel, as it pleased him to make it. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Cannot I do to you as this potter, O house of Israel? Behold, you are like the clay of the potter in my hands.'" For I call your attention to this, that, as I said, after human transgression the great Hand was not content to leave as a trophy of victory its own work, debased by the evil one, who wickedly injured it from motives of envy, but moist-

ened and reduced it to clay, as a potter breaks up a vessel, that by the remodeling of it all the blemishes and bruises in it may disappear, and it may be made afresh faultless and pleasing. ON THE RESURRECTION 1.6-7.⁷

CHRIST HAS RESTORED OUR FLESH. RUFINUS: By his passion, therefore, Christ made perfect that human flesh that had been brought down to death by the first man's sin and restored it by the power of his resurrection. Sitting on God's right hand, he placed it in the highest heavens. In view of this, the apostle says, "Who has raised us up together and has made us sit together in the heavenly places."⁸ It was he, you see, who was the potter mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah: "The vessel that had fallen from his hand and was broken, he again raised up with his hands and formed anew, as it seemed good in his eyes." So it seemed good to him to raise the mortal and corruptible body he had assumed from the rocky tomb, and, rendering it immortal and incorruptible, to place it no longer in an earthly environment but in heaven at his Father's right hand. COMMENTARY ON THE APOSTLES' CREED 29.⁹

DO NOT DESPAIR OF SALVATION. THEODORET OF CYR: Do not despair of salvation, God is saying. Even if I condemn a nation and threaten ultimate punishment, if I see their repentance, I extend mercy instead of inflicting punishment. If I promise an abundance of blessings, but they scorn me and embrace wickedness, I shall not fulfill the promise of blessings. Knowing this, then, do not despair of better things, but apply repentance and reap salvation. ON JEREMIAH 4.18.7-8.¹⁰

GOD CAN RESTORE THE BROKEN PEOPLE. CHRYSOSTOM: When, therefore, God speaks of an irremediable calamity, he does not say vessels of the potter, but an earthen vessel. When, for

³See 2 Cor 8:7. ⁴Ps 127:1 (126:1 LXX). ⁵Rom 9:16. ⁶CCL 74:176-77. ⁷ANF 6:365*. ⁸Eph 2:6. ⁹ACW 20:63*. ¹⁰PG 81:608.

instance, he wished to teach the prophet and the Jews that he delivered up the city to an irreparable calamity, he bade him take an earthen wine vessel, and crush it before all the people and say, "Thus shall this city be destroyed, be broken in pieces." But when he wishes to hold out good hopes to them, he brings the prophet to a pottery and does not show him an earthen vessel but shows him a vessel of clay, which was in the hands of the potter, falling to the ground. He brings him to saying, "If this potter has taken up and remodeled his vessel that has fallen, shall I not much rather be able to restore you when you have fallen?" It is possible therefore for God not only to restore those who are made of clay, through the washing of regeneration, but also to bring back again to their original state, on their careful repentance, those who have received the power of the Spirit and have fallen from grace into ruin. INSTRUCTIONS TO CATECHUMENS I.4.¹¹

GOD IS THE POTTER. CHRYSOSTOM: What do you mean, Paul? Am I to be subject to God in the same way the clay is to the potter? Yes, Paul says.¹² For the distance between God and man is as great as the distance between the potter and the clay. Rather the distance is not merely as great but much greater. The potter and the clay are of one and the same substance. It is just as Job said: "I admit it as for those who dwell in houses of clay, because we are ourselves formed from the same clay."¹³ If a man seems more beautiful to look upon than clay, this difference was not produced by a change of nature but by the wisdom of the craftsman. Why? Because you are no different from the clay. If you refuse to believe this, let the coffins and the cremation urn convince you. And you will know that this is the truth if you have gone to visit the tombs of your ancestors. Therefore, there is no difference between the clay and the potter. AGAINST THE ANOMOEANS 2.35-36.¹⁴

18:7-8 To Pluck Up and Pull Down

GOD IS MERCIFUL TO THE PENITENT.

CAESARIUS OF ARLES: If only the sinner would have recourse to repentance as quickly as God is willing to change that fixed sentence. Listen to the Lord through the prophet promise the greatest hope to the human race: "Finally I shall speak against a nation and against a kingdom, to root out and destroy them. If that nation shall turn from all of their evil deeds, I also shall repent of the evil that I thought to do to them."¹⁵ Behold how great is our God's goodness to us, and learn whether he will refuse his mercy, since he longs to change his sentence if we are converted. Therefore, let us turn to him, dearly beloved, and not wish to defer the amendment of our ways until the end of our life. SERMON 109.2.¹⁶

GOD WILL PUNISH THOSE WHO CHALLENGE HIM.

JEROME: You may as well accuse God of falsehood because he said by the mouth of Jonah: "Yet three days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."¹⁷ But God will reply by the mouth of Jeremiah, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it does evil in my sight, that it obeys not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." Jonah, on a certain occasion, was indignant because, at God's command, he had spoken falsely; but his sorrow was proved to be ill founded, since he would rather speak truth and have a countless multitude perish than speak falsely and have them saved. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 3.6.¹⁸

18:10 God Will Repent

¹¹NPNF 1 9:162**. ¹²Rom 9:20-21. ¹³See Job 4:19 (LXX). ¹⁴FC 72:85**. ¹⁵Jer 18:7-8 (LXX). ¹⁶FC 47:141**. ¹⁷Jon 3:4. ¹⁸NPNF 2 6:475**.

ON THE REPENTANCE OF GOD. ORIGEN: God, who does not repent, is said to repent according to the Scripture. . . . Concerning the repentance of God, we are demanded to defend ourselves. To repent seems to be culpable and unworthy not only of God but also of the wise person. For I cannot conceive of a wise person repenting. Rather, when a person repents, supposing the customary use of the word, he repents for not having decided to be good. But God, who knows in advance what happens in the future, is unable not to have decided to be good and to repent for this. How, then, has the Scripture brought forth this phrase that says, “I will repent”? . . . Whenever the Scriptures speak theologically about God in relation to himself and do not involve his plan for human matters, they say that he is “not as a human.” . . . But whenever the divine plan involves human matters, it carries the human intellect and manners and way of speaking. If we are talking with a two-year-old child, we speak inarticulately because of the child. . . . Something of this sort also seems to me the case with God, whenever he manages the race of humankind and especially those still infants. . . . If any of us should hear those who talk to children, will he say that this old person has become senseless, this man has forgotten his beard, the age of a person? Or is it granted that out of consideration when he converses with the child he does not speak in an elderly or adult language but in a childlike language? HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 18.6.2-4.¹⁹

GOD PRETENDS. ORIGEN: Since we really do repent, when he talks with us who repent God says, “I repent,” and when he threatens us, he does not pretend to know in advance, but he threatens as one speaking to babes. He does not pretend that he knows all things before their generation, but as one who, so to speak, plays the part of a babe, he pretends not to know the future. And he threatens the nation on account of its sins and says, “If the nation repents, I will repent.” O God, when you were threatening, did you not know in advance whether the nation

will or will not repent? When you were promising, did you not know whether the person or the nation to whom the word is directed does not remain worthy of the promises? Yes, of course, but he pretends. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 18.6.5.²⁰

18:11 *Preparing a Disaster*

GOD SENDS JUSTICE. TERTULLIAN: I affirm that “wickedness” in this context does not signify something that can be referred to the Creator’s nature, as though he were evil, but to his authority, because he is a judge. It was in view of this that he declared, “It is I who create evils,”²¹ and, “Behold, I send evils against you.” These are not evils of ill doing but evils of vengeance—and I have already cleared away the ill repute of these by showing them to be fit and proper for a judge. As then, though described as evils, they are no matter of disrepute in a judge, nor by being so described do they stigmatize the judge as evil, so also “wickedness” in this context must now be understood as that which, deriving from those judiciary evils, is along with them proper to a judge. . . . As then his purpose, being a just one, was not evil, he had decided on it for justice’s sake, not from wickedness. Yet the Scripture has described the punishment itself as “wickedness” because of the well-deserved evil of what they were to suffer. AGAINST MARCION 2.24.²²

18:13 *Who Has Heard Such Things?*

THE INFIDELITY OF ISRAEL. BASIL THE GREAT: Who would not grieve over such things and say, “How is the faithful city become a harlot?”²³ How would not the Lord say to some of those who are now walking in the spirit of Jeremiah, “Have you seen what the virgin of Israel has done to me?” I betrothed her to me in trust, in purity, in righteousness, in judgment, in pity, and in mercy; as I promised her through Ho-

¹⁹FC 97:197-99*. ²⁰FC 97:200*. ²¹See Is 45:7. ²²TAM 1:151-53**. ²³Is 1:21a.

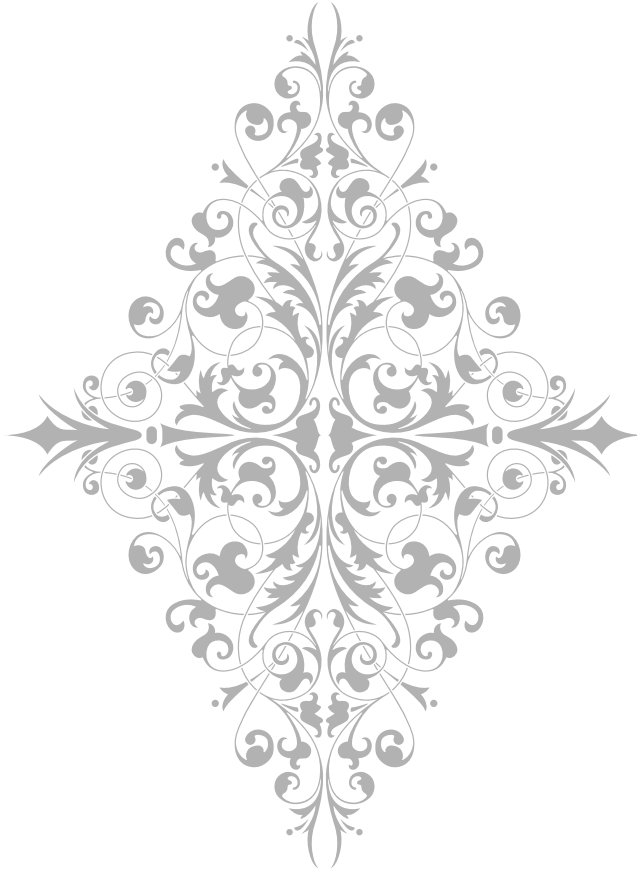
sea the prophet.²⁴ But she loved strangers, and while I, her husband, was yet alive, she is called adulteress and is not afraid to belong to another husband. *LETTER 46.3.*²⁵

18:18 Devising Plans Against Jeremiah

FALSE TEACHERS HAVE NO TRUTH. JEROME: This expresses the thought both of the Jews at that time against Jeremiah, or the Lord our Savior, and of the heretics today against the Lord's servants. They seek to spread slander and to pre-

cede holy people with an accusation, nor do they think about the truthfulness of what they say but only of the lies that they disseminate. For they boast that the law and the counsel and the speech of God remain in their priests and wise people and false prophets, even though Scripture says, "Wisdom will not enter a deceptive soul."²⁶ *SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.8.2.*²⁷

²⁴Hos 2:19. ²⁵NPNF 2 8:150. ²⁶Wis 1:4; cf. Jer 18:18. ²⁷CCL 74:180.



ISRAEL WILL BE BROKEN INTO PIECES

JEREMIAH 19:1-15

OVERVIEW: Evils can chasten the soul and bring about an ultimate greater good (JOHN CASSIAN). Therefore, the evil that God promises will happen to Israel should be a wake up call for them to enter a guilty plea and throw themselves on the mercy of the judge (AUGUSTINE). God has made vessels of wrath as well as vessels of mercy, both of which continue together until the judgment (ORIGEN).

19:3 *I Will Bring Evil*

EVILS FOR OUR ULTIMATE GOOD. JOHN CASSIAN: Sometimes Holy Scripture may, by an improper use of terms, employ the term “evils” in place of “affliction”—not that these are properly and in their nature evils, but because they are imagined to be evils by those on whom they are brought for their good. For when divine judgment is reasoning with human beings, it must speak with human language and feelings. For when a doctor for the sake of health with good reason either cuts or cauterizes those who are suffering from the inflammation of ulcers, it is considered an evil by those who have to bear it. Nor are the spur and the whip pleasant to a restive horse. Moreover, all chastisement seems at the moment to be a bitter thing to those who are chastised, as the apostle says: “Now all chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield the most peaceful fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised by it,” and “whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives; for what son is there whom the father does not correct?”¹ And so evils are sometimes used to stand for afflictions, as where we read, “And God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do to them and did it not.”² And again: “For you, Lord, are gracious

and merciful, patient and very merciful and ready to repent of the evil,”³ that is, of the sufferings and losses that you are forced to bring on us as the reward of our sins.

And another prophet, knowing that these are profitable to some, and certainly not through any jealousy for their safety but with an eye to their good, prays thus: “Add evils to them, O Lord, add evils to the proud of the earth”;⁴ and the Lord says, “See, I will bring evils on them,”⁵ that is, sorrows and losses, with which they shall for the present be chastened for their soul’s health, and so they shall at length be driven to return and hurry back to me whom in their prosperity they scorned. And so we cannot in any way assert that these afflictions were originally evil, for they are good for many and ultimately offer occasions for eternal bliss. Therefore (to return to the question raised), all those things that are thought to be brought on us as evils by our enemies or by any other people should not be counted as evils but as things indifferent. For in the end they will not be what he thinks who brought them on us in his rage and fury, but what *he* makes them who endures them. And so when death has been brought on a saint, we ought not to think that an evil has happened to him but something indifferent. It is an evil to a wicked person, while to the good it is rest and freedom from evils. “For death is rest to one whose way is hidden.”⁶ And so a good person does not suffer any loss from these evils because he suffers nothing strange, but by the crime of an enemy he only receives (and not without the reward of eternal life) that which would have happened to him in the course of nature and pays the debt of human death, which must be

¹Heb 12:6-11. ²Jon 3:10 (LXX). ³Joel 2:13 (LXX). ⁴Is 26:15 (LXX).
⁵Jer 19:3. ⁶Job 3:23 (LXX).

paid by an inevitable law, with the interest of a most fruitful suffering and the recompense of a great reward. CONFERENCE 1.6.6.⁷

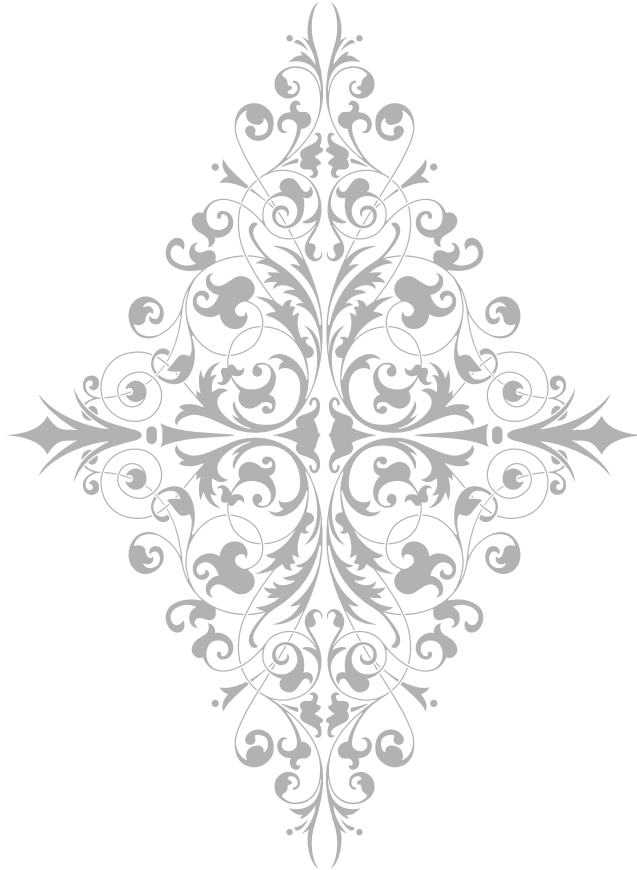
19:11 I Will Break This People in Pieces⁸

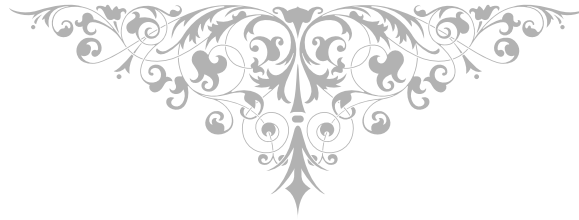
IMPENDING CALAMITY SHOULD ELICIT A GUILTY PLEA. AUGUSTINE: Notice here “the rod of direction” that is described. “You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” Draw near to that “rod.” Let Christ be your King: let him rule you with that rod, not crush you with it. For that rod is “a rod of iron,” an inflexible rod. “You shall rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Some he rules; others he “breaks in pieces.” He “rules” those who are spiritual; he “breaks in pieces” those who are concerned about earthly desires. . . . Would he so loudly declare that he was about to strike you if he really wanted to strike you? He is, then, holding back his hand from the punishment of your offenses; but you dare not hold back. Turn around and face the punishment for your offenses, for there can be no unpunished offenses. Punishment therefore must be executed either by you or by him. You should plead guilty then in order that he may grant you a reprieve. EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 45.16.⁹

VESSELS OF WRATH IN THE CHURCH. ORIGEN: The apostle also knows vessels of wrath “made for destruction so that he might make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy.”¹⁰ God has divided all people into these two vessels, those of wrath, those of mercy, those like Pharaoh and the Egyptians, those like Paul and those who have believed. But what is the treasury of the Lord in which are the vessels of wrath? Perhaps it is the church, in which such often go unnoticed. But there will be a time when he opens the church. For now they have been shut up, and the vessels of wrath share space with the vessels of mercy, and the chaff are with the wheat.¹¹ In one net are the worthless and the chosen fish.¹² The Lord opens up his treasury in the time of the judgment, when the vessels of wrath are thrown out. He who is a vessel of mercy may reasonably say, “They have gone out from us, for they were not from us.”¹³ Outside the treasury the vessels who sin are not yet the vessels of wrath, but inferior. For they are servants who did not know the will of their Lord and did not do it. So they are vessels who are simply kept for other purposes. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 31.¹⁴

⁷NPNF 2 11:354**. ⁸LXX. ⁹NPNF 1 8:150**. ¹⁰Rom 9:22-23. ¹¹Mt 3:12. ¹²Mt 13:47-49. ¹³1 Jn 2:19. ¹⁴FC 97:297-98.







JEREMIAH RAILS AGAINST
GOD'S DECEPTION
JEREMIAH 20:1-18

OVERVIEW: It seems strange that God would practice deception. This deception, however, was similar to the deception a parent visits on a child who would not willingly undergo discipline or a surgeon practices on a patient who would not otherwise receive treatment. God's deception, unlike that of the serpent, is for our good, although it is also a mystery beyond our comprehension since God's deceit is not like our deceit. God deceived Jeremiah because Jeremiah would not have wanted to pronounce the judgment of bringing God's cup of wrath on Jerusalem along with all the nations (ORIGEN). Jeremiah also believed the Lord deceived him because the promised exile did not immediately materialize. For this reason, he tried to remain silent. Yet he could not because God's Word burned within him (JEROME) even when, because of his weakness, he tried to squelch it (CHRYSOSTOM, ORIGEN). The spiritually sick turned on Jeremiah their physician, attacking him because they rejected his cure (ORIGEN). The burning of God's Word within Jeremiah was the Holy Spirit, a divine love that penetrated Jeremiah to the bone. The Spirit comes upon a

prophet like a torrent or a fire (AMBROSE) in one who knows he will soon be in the presence of God's glory (ISAAC). Therefore, as Scripture says, do not try to quench the fire of the Holy Spirit (ATHANASIUS). The just person should trust God to be just (JEROME). God is eager to save those who repent (TERTULLIAN). God's love saves us from his wrath (AUGUSTINE). The saints look toward the life to come (AMBROSE).

20:7 *You Have Deceived Me*

THE GUIDING DECEPTION OF PARENTS. ORIGEN: How then does the prophet say, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived"? Can God deceive? I am at a loss how I can accommodate the word. For if through God and his Word I do see something in it, what will be said requires suitable accommodation. . . .

It suffices to express a single useful example for what has been presented. When guiding children, we speak to children; and we do not speak to them as we do to mature people, but we speak to them as children who need training, and we

deceive children when we frighten children in order that it may halt the lack of education in youth. And we frighten children when we speak through words of deceit on account of what is basic to their infancy, in order that through the deceit we may cause them to be afraid and to resort to teachers both to declare and to do what is applicable for the progress of children.

We are all children to God, and we need the discipline of children. Because of this, God, since he cares about us, deceives us, even if we do not perceive the deceit beforehand, lest as those who have gone beyond the infant we may no longer be trained through deceit but through acts. In one way the child is led into fear, in another way into progressing in age and crossing beyond the age of childhood. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 19.15.3-5.¹

SWALLOWING THE BITTER PILL WITH HONEY.

ORIGEN: Perhaps then, as a father wishes to deceive a son in his own interest while he is still a boy, since he cannot be helped any other way unless the boy is deceived, as a healer makes it his business to deceive the patient who cannot be cured unless he receives words of deceit, so it is also for the God of the universe, since what is prescribed has to help the human race. Let the healer say to the patient, "It is necessary that you have surgery, you must be cauterized, but you must suffer severely," and that patient would not continue. But sometimes he says another thing, and he hides that surgery, the cutting knife, under the sponge, and again he conceals, as I shall call it, under the honey, the nature of the bitter and annoying drug, wanting not to mislead but to heal the one who is cured. With such remedies the whole divine Scripture is filled, and some of what is concealed is pleasant, but some of what is concealed is bitter. If you see a father who threatens as if he hates the son, and who says to the son frightful things and who does not show affection but who conceals love for the son, one knows that he wants to deceive the child. For it is not fitting for the son to be assured of the love of the father, the goodwill of his devotion. For he will be set

free and will not be disciplined. That is why he hides the sweetness of the affection and exhibits the bitterness of deceit.

By analogy to the father and the healer, such is something of what God does. There are certain bitter things with which he cures the most righteous and wise. For it is necessary to punish every sinner for his sins. "Do not be misled, God is not mocked,"² "neither the immoral nor the adulterer nor homosexual nor thief nor drunkard nor reviler nor robber will inherit the kingdom of God."³ If this was understood and viewed carefully by those who cannot see the surgical knife beneath the sponge, by those who are unable to understand the bitter medicine beneath the honey, a person would become faint-hearted. For who among us has not been conscious of himself drinking without purpose and getting drunk? Who among us is pure from theft and from the desire to take what is necessary, not as one ought? But see what the Word says, "Do not be misled, for these persons will not inherit the kingdom of God." It is necessary that the mystery in this passage be concealed, so that most people may not become faint-hearted lest when learning the facts they may expect the final departure not as a rest but as a punishment. . . . For I know that if I leave, it is necessary that my "wood"⁴ be burned in me, and I have reviler wood, and I have the wood of drunkenness, the wood of theft and many other woods built up in my building. You know that all of these things escape the notice of many of those who have believed, and it is good it escapes the notice. And each of us thinks, since he has not been an idolater, since he has not been immoral—would that we were pure in such areas—that after he has been set free from this life, he will be saved. We do not see that "all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive either good or evil according to what he has done in the body."⁵ HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 20.3.2-3.⁶

¹FC 97:217-18. ²Gal 6:7. ³1 Cor 6:9-10. ⁴See 1 Cor 3:12. ⁵2 Cor 5:10. ⁶FC 97:226-27.

THE BENEFITS OF GOD'S DECEPTION. ORIGEN:

So since the healer sometimes keeps hidden the surgical knife under the tender and soft sponge, and also the father conceals the affection through the appearance of threat, and the deceits—some of which take away the tumors and varicose veins and whatever else weakens the condition of the body . . . something then such as this is what the prophet has understood that God does in mystery, and he says, when he sees in what ways he was deceived for good reason by God, “You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived.” It brought him to so great a grace that he prayed and said to God, “Deceive me, if this is beneficial.” For the deceit from God is one thing, the deceit from the Serpent another. See what the woman says to God, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate,”⁷ and the deceit from the serpent caused Adam and his woman to leave the paradise of God. But the deceit that happened to the prophet, who said, “You have deceived me, and I was deceived,” brought him to a very great grace of prophecy, by increasing in him power, by bringing him maturity and by being able to serve the will of the word of God without fearing people.

Thus, when we also consider these things, for the present and for the future, let us also pray to be deceived by God, and let not the serpent deceive us. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 20.3.4-5.⁸

JEREMIAH UNWILLING TO CONDEMN ISRAEL.

ORIGEN: We must understand that the deceit of God is of another kind from our deceit with which we deceive. . . . God does not tyrannize but rules, and when he rules, he does not coerce but encourages, and he wishes that those under him yield themselves willingly to his direction so that the good of someone may not be according to compulsion but according to his free will. . . . In sum, God seeks a way, in a manner of speaking, whereby one would want to do with free will what God wishes. The tradition⁹ then also was saying to me something like this: He wants to send Jeremiah who prophesies to all of the nations and before all of the nations to the people,

but since the prophecies have had something quite gloomy—for they imparted punishments with which each according to his deserts will be punished—and he knew the choice of the prophet, who does not want to prophesy to the people Israel what is bad, for this reason he arranged to say, “Take this cup, and make all the nations to whom I commissioned you drink.”¹⁰ God then ordered Jeremiah to take the cup, but when he urged him in taking the cup of unmixed wine, he says, “And I commission you to all of the nations with this cup of unmixed wine.” But after Jeremiah heard that he was sent to all of the nations as one who supplied them a cup of anger, a cup of punishments, since he did not guess that also Israel was about to drink from the cup of punishment, since he was deceived, he took the cup from which all of the nations drink. After he took the cup, he heard, “And cause Jerusalem to drink first.”¹¹ Since then it seemed to be one way and happened to him in another, for this reason he then said, “You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived.” HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 20.2.1-2.¹²

TIME AND ETERNITY. JEROME: The prophet says that he was deceived by the Lord because, when he heard the Lord say in the beginning, “I gave you as a prophet to the nations,”¹³ and, again, “Behold, I establish you today over nations and over kingdoms, that you may uproot and destroy and overthrow and dissolve and build and plant,”¹⁴ he believed that none of this was spoken against the people of Judea, but only against the various nations surrounding them, thus leading him to accept his prophetic mission willingly. To the contrary, however, as it turns out, he found himself preaching to a captive Jerusalem that suffered persecution and imprisonment. He also adds, “I have become an

⁷Gen 3:13. ⁸FC 97:228. ⁹The tradition he had heard from the son of a rabbi who, it seems, had become a Christian. See *Homilies on Jeremiah* 20.2. ¹⁰Jer 25:15 (32:15 LXX). ¹¹Jer 25:18 (32:18 LXX). ¹²FC 97:223-25. ¹³Jer 1:5. ¹⁴Jer 1:10.

object of derision all the day; everyone mocks me," because they all judged him to be a liar and everything that he had prophesied to them to be a lie. For, as the prophet thought that the future that the Lord predicted was to be realized immediately, the people also expected nothing further to be coming that did not arrive at once. And he continues, in effect, "I announce destruction at the hands of Babylon and the iniquity of the army through which my people are to be oppressed." Yet, if we follow the Septuagint, which reads, "I will laugh with my bitter message, I will invoke falsehood and misery,"¹⁵ this is the meaning: "I know that the present sorrow is to be exchanged for future joy, according to what is written, 'Blessed are those who weep now, for they will laugh.'"¹⁶ For this reason, I willingly endure misery and iniquity and affliction now, so that I can invoke and even desire them and the brevity of their injury in exchange for eternal happiness. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.22.2-4.¹⁷

20:8-10 *The Burning Flame Within*

I CAN DO NO OTHER. JEROME: Jeremiah says here, in effect: "As I am crying out and saying that the Babylonian army is coming and that the sword of the enemy will plunder us all, the word of the Lord is turned against me as a derision and a reproach, since they believe that the tardiness of a prophecy's fulfillment is tantamount to a lie. For this reason, I've decided within myself that I will no longer speak the word of God to the people of God, nor will I name his name. I am overcome with shame and embarrassment, however, at making this foolish resolution, as what feels like a burning fire is ablaze in my heart and enclosed in my bones, and I am altogether undone and therefore unable to bear it." For a divine word conceived in the soul, which is not then uttered through the mouth, burns in the chest. This is why Paul said, "If I evangelize, no glory redounds to me, for the need to preach the gospel is incumbent on me. Indeed, woe to me if I fail to preach! If I do so willingly, I have a

reward, but if unwillingly, an office is entrusted to me."¹⁸ Moreover, seeing in Athens a city devoted to idolatry, Paul was incited by the Spirit and became impassioned with his whole mind.¹⁹ Hence, later in the same book we read, "When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was devoting himself to the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah."²⁰ But a great many teachers in the church even today sustain against themselves similar invective from a number of congregations, hearing their audience say, "Oppose them! Let us oppose them!" SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.23.2-5.²¹

CHRIST'S PROPHETIC CAREER. ORIGEN: And so far as the literal truth is concerned, it is useful to recount what things Jeremiah suffered among the people, with respect to which he said, "And I said, I will not speak, nor will I call on the name of the Lord." And again, elsewhere, "I was continually being mocked." And how great sufferings he endured from the then king of Israel are written in his prophecy. And it is also written that some of the people often came to stone Moses to death. His homeland was not the stones of any place but was instead the people who followed him, among whom also he was dishonored. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 10.1.8.²²

THE SICK REJECT THEIR PHYSICIAN. ORIGEN: That people then were sick. There were all kinds of diseases among those who had the name of the people of God. God sent to them the prophets as healers. One of the healers was Jeremiah. He reproved the sinners, since he wanted those who do evil to return. Yet, though needing to hear what was said, they accused the prophet, and they accused before judges similar to themselves. And always the prophet was judged by those who, with respect to his prophecy, had been cured but were not cured because of their own disobedience. It

¹⁵Jer 20:8 (LXX). ¹⁶Lk 6:21; cf. Mt 5:4. ¹⁷CCL 74:190-91. ¹⁸1 Cor 9:16-17. ¹⁹See Acts 17:16. ²⁰Acts 18:5. ²¹CCL 74:191-92. ²²ANF 9:425**.

is due to them that he says, "And I said, 'I will no longer speak nor name the name of the Lord.' But it happened as a burning fire flaming in my bones, and I am weakened on all sides, and I cannot bear it." He said, seeing himself as one who always is judged, abused, accused and falsely testified against, "Woe is me, mother. What kind of man did you bear me?"²³ He was not speaking as a man who judges but as one who is judged, and not as one who disputes but one who is disputed over all of the earth. Since those who are sick do not hear him when he advises for their good and well being, he says, "I have not helped."²⁴ **HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 14.2.**²⁵

JEREMIAH GAVE IN. CHRYSOSTOM: Jeremiah, having borne many temptations, gave in on these, and when he was rebuked, said, "I will not prophesy, neither will I name the name of the Lord." And David, too, in many places complains of rebuke. Isaiah also, after many things, admonishes concerning this, saying, "Do not fear the reproach of people, neither be overcome by their reviling."²⁶ And again, Christ also to his disciples: "When they shall speak all manner of evil against you falsely, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."²⁷ **HOMILIES ON 2 CORINTHIANS 12.3.**²⁸

JEREMIAH'S FIRE WITHIN. AMBROSE: I think, too, we cannot leave out of sight that fire when we read that the Lord Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit²⁹ and with fire,³⁰ as John said in his Gospel. Rightly was the sacrifice consumed, for it was for sin. But that fire was a type of the Holy Spirit, who was to come down after the Lord's ascension and forgive the sins of all, and who like fire inflames the mind and faithful heart. For this reason, Jeremiah, after receiving the Spirit, says, "It became in my heart as a burning fire flaming in my bones, and I am vile and cannot bear it." **DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 3.28.102.**³¹

LOVE IS LIKE THE FIRE THAT CHRIST SENDS. AMBROSE: Indeed, Christ, loving Moses, ap-

peared to him in fire,³² and Jeremiah, having in himself the gift of divine love, said, "There was a burning fire in my bones, and I have become weakened on every side, and I cannot bear it."³³ Love is good, then, having wings of burning fire as it flies through the breasts and hearts of the saints and consumes whatever is material and earthly but tests whatever is pure and with its fire makes better whatever it has touched. This fire the Lord Jesus sent on earth,³⁴ and faith shone bright, devotion was enkindled, love was illuminated, and justice was filled with splendor. **ISAAC, OR THE SOUL 8.77.**³⁵

GOD'S PRESENCE OVERWHELMS THE WORTHY. AMBROSE: Now, God reveals in part and in mystery to those who are worthy, and he sheds forth the Spirit and from his countenance, like a torrent, a brilliant light, so that a person who has been illumined may say, "And there was in my bones a flaming fire, and I am melted on all sides and cannot bear it." And David says, "Let my sentence come forth from your presence."³⁶ **LETTER 49.**³⁷

CONSUMED WITH PROPHETIC PASSION. ISAAC OF NINEVEH: For they do not make their journey upon the royal highway as other men, but these giants select for themselves short-cuts, whereby gloriously they journey swiftly to the Heavenly mansions. For this hope so inflames them, as with fire, that they cannot rest from their incessant and headlong course on account of their joy. There comes to pass in them what was spoken by the blessed [Jeremiah], "I said, 'I shall not remember Him nor speak His name.' And there was in my heart as it were a flaming fire and it entered into my bones." Such is the recollection of God in the hearts of people who are drunk with hope on his promises. **ASCETICAL HOMILIES 71.**³⁸

²³Jer 15:10. ²⁴Jer 15:10. ²⁵FC 97:136-37**. ²⁶Is 51:7. ²⁷Mt 5:11-12. ²⁸NPNF 1 12:338. ²⁹Jn 1:33. ³⁰Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16. ³¹NPNF 2 10:84. ³²See Ex 3:2-4. ³³Jer 20:9 (LXX). ³⁴See Lk 12:49. ³⁵FC 65:60-61**. ³⁶Ps 17:2. ³⁷FC 26:261-62**. ³⁸AHSIS 347.

DO NOT QUENCH THE HOLY SPIRIT. ATHANASIUS: For so shall we remain partakers of Christ if we hold fast to the end the Spirit given at the beginning. For he said, “do not quench,” not because the Spirit is placed in the power of people and is able to suffer anything from them, but because bad and unthankful people manifestly wish to quench it, since they, like the impure, persecute the Spirit with unholy deeds. . . . Now they, being without understanding, and deceitful and lovers of sin, walk still as in darkness, not having that “light that lights every one who comes in the world.”³⁹ Now a fire such as this laid hold of Jeremiah the prophet, when the word was in him as a fire and he said, “I leave every place and am not able to endure it.”⁴⁰ And our Lord Jesus Christ, being good and a lover of humankind, came that he might cast this on earth, and he said, “And would that it were already kindled!”⁴¹ FESTAL LETTERS 3.4.⁴²

20:12 *Jeremiah Commits His Cause to God*

JUSTICE IS GOD’S ALONE. JEROME: The Lord alone is able to certify justice, in the same way that he alone sees the interior of a person’s heart. Hence, Jesus knows the thoughts of people⁴³ not as an acquired skill, as some allege, but because he is God by nature. Such is what the psalmist sings: “No living creature will be justified in your presence.”⁴⁴ If none of those living in virtue are justified, how much more true will this be of those who are dead from sin! Even though the just person knows himself to have God as a defender, the impatience of human fragility desires to see right now what it knows to be coming. Jeremiah also entrusted his cause to God, to the one who said elsewhere, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.”⁴⁵ But the conscience is happy whose cause is entrusted to the Lord, as the apostle said: “Anything that is visible is light.”⁴⁶ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.26.I-2.⁴⁷

GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY. CLEMENT OF ALEX-

ANDRIA: For God does not hold out against his children when they beg his pity. And for you he will pray purely, held in high honor as an angel of God, and grieved not by you but for you. This is sincere repentance. “God is not mocked,”⁴⁸ nor does he give heed to vain words. For he alone searches the innermost recesses of the heart,⁴⁹ and hears those that are in the fire, and listens to those who supplicate in the whale’s belly and is near to all who believe, and far from the ungodly if they do not repent. WHO IS THE RICH MAN THAT SHALL BE SAVED? 4I.⁵⁰

POOR AND FREE. JEROME: Those who are poor in spirit and who have no riches to give them consolation in this world,⁵¹ concerning whom Paul said, “only let us be mindful of the poor,”⁵² worshiped the Lord in spirit and gave thanks for being delivered from the hand of the wicked when they obtained vengeance from the Lord. Yet, none of this is due to our merit but to the grace of him who liberated the poor, of him who possesses none of the riches of corrupting pride but has the humility of the poor who are free. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 4.27.I.⁵³

20:14-18 *Cursed Is the Day of My Birth*

WE ARE SAVED FROM WRATH. AUGUSTINE: The apostle says, “God commends his charity toward us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us. Much more now that we are justified in his blood shall we be saved through him from the wrath.”⁵⁴ Of this wrath he says, “We were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.”⁵⁵ Of this wrath Jeremiah says, “Cursed be the day when I was born.” Of this wrath holy Job says, “Let the day perish wherein I was born.”⁵⁶ Of this wrath the same Job says again, “Man born of a woman, living for a short time,

³⁹In 1:9. ⁴⁰See Jer 20:9. ⁴¹Lk 12:49. ⁴²NPNF 2 4:514*. ⁴³See Lk 6:8. ⁴⁴Ps 143:2. ⁴⁵Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30. ⁴⁶Eph 5:13. ⁴⁷CCL 74:193. ⁴⁸Gal 6:7. ⁴⁹See Jer 20:12 (LXX). ⁵⁰ANF 2:603. ⁵¹Mt 5:3; cf. Lk 6:24. ⁵²Gal 2:10. ⁵³CCL 74:193. ⁵⁴Rom 5:8-9. ⁵⁵Eph 2:3. ⁵⁶Job 3:3.

is filled with many miseries."⁵⁷ AGAINST JULIAN 6.24.77-78.⁵⁸

HOLY INDIVIDUALS ALWAYS LONG FOR THE NEXT LIFE. AMBROSE: How much dissatisfaction do we see that even the brief stages of our lives bring on us! The boy longs to be a young man. The young man counts the years when he will be older. The mature man, ungrateful for the blessing of being in the prime of life, eagerly desires the honor associated with old age. Thus, to all there comes naturally a desire for change, simply because we become dissatisfied with what we are now. Therefore, even the very things that

we have wished for become wearisome to us on their enjoyment, and what we have desired to obtain we reject on its attainment. Consequently, holy people have not without reason lamented their prolonged sojourning here: David lamented it,⁵⁹ Jeremiah lamented it, Elijah lamented it.⁶⁰ If we can believe wise people, even those in whom the divine Spirit spoke were hastening to better things. ON HIS BROTHER SATYRUS 2.124-25.⁶¹

⁵⁷Job 14:1. ⁵⁸FC 35:388. ⁵⁹Ps 120:5 (119:5 LXX). ⁶⁰1 Kings 19:4. ⁶¹FC 22:254-55**.





GOD FIGHTS AGAINST REBELLIOUS JUDAH JEREMIAH 21:1-14

OVERVIEW: Through Jeremiah, God tells his people that there are two ways: the way of life, which consists in following the commandments, and the way of death, which consists in sin against those same commandments in rebellion against God (*DIDACHE*). Satan, not God's law, is responsible for our fallen state (*METHODIUS*). We, too, are responsible, and therefore ought to repent and follow in obedience the way of life God has placed before us (*CLEMENT OF ROME*).

21:8 *The Way of Life and the Way of Death*

LIFE AND DEATH. *DIDACHE*: There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but there exists a great difference between the two ways.¹ The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God,² who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself.³ Anything that you would not want to happen to you, you also should not do to another.⁴ And of these sayings, the teaching

is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you.⁵ For what good is it if you love those who love you? Do not also the Gentiles do the same?⁶ Rather, love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy.⁷ Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts.⁸ If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also,⁹ and you shall be perfect. If someone insists on you going one mile, go with him two.¹⁰ If someone takes away your cloak, give him your coat as well.¹¹ If someone takes something from you, do not ask for it back,¹² for indeed you are not able to do so. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not

¹The "two ways" was a prominent theme in the early church. See also *The Epistle of Barnabas*, as well as *Apostolic Constitutions* 7, where much of what the *Didache* has to say here is repeated verbatim and expanded. ²See Deut 6:5. ³Lev 19:18; Mt 22:37, 39; cf. Mk 12:30-31. ⁴The golden rule (Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31). ⁵See Mt 5:44. ⁶Mt 5:46; Lk 6:32 combined. ⁷See 1 Pet 3:13. ⁸1 Pet 2:11. ⁹Mt 5:39; Lk 6:29. ¹⁰Mt 5:41. ¹¹Mt 5:40; Lk 6:29. ¹²Lk 6:30.

ask for it back, because the Father wills that the blessings we have received should be given to everyone. Happy is the one who gives according to the commandment; for that person is guiltless. Woe to the one who receives. For if one having need receives, he is guiltless; but one who receives even when he does not need it will pay the penalty because he received and because of what he received. He will be taken into confinement and examined concerning the things that he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last farthing.¹³ It has also been said concerning this, Let your alms sweat in your hands until you know to whom you should give. . . .

And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and full of cursings, murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rapines, false witnessings, hypocrisies, double-mindedness, deceit, pride, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, overconfidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not experiencing any reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good or to righteous judgment, not looking out for what is good but for what is evil; from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing vengeance, not pitying a poor person, not working for the afflicted or knowing God who made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from the person that is in want, afflicting the one who is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, utter sinners. Be delivered, children, from all these.

See that no one causes you to err¹⁴ from this way of teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you are not able, do what you can. And concerning food, bear what you are able, but be vigilant in rejecting what is sacrificed to idols,¹⁵ for it has been used in the service of dead gods. DIDACHE 1.1, 5.1-6.3.¹⁶

THE DEVIL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FALL.

METHODIUS: It was not God's law that became the cause of my being brought into subjection to corruption, but the devil, that he might be made manifest. He wrought evil through that which is good. The inventor of evil became and was proved to be the greatest of all sinners. "For we know that the law is spiritual."¹⁷ So the law cannot injure anyone in any way. Spiritual things are far removed from irrational lust and sin. "But I am carnal, sold under sin."¹⁸ This means, "I am carnal and placed between good and evil as a voluntary agent, so that I have it in my power to choose what I wish." For "behold, I set before you life and death."¹⁹ This means, "Death would result from disobedience of the spiritual law, that is, of the commandment, and from obedience to the carnal law, that is, the counsel of the serpent." By such a choice I am sold to the devil, fallen under sin. Hence evil, as though besieging me, clings to me and dwells in me. Justice gives me up to be sold to the evil one, as a result of having violated the law. ON THE RESURRECTION 3.2.1.²⁰

A PRAYER FOR PEACE. CLEMENT OF ROME:

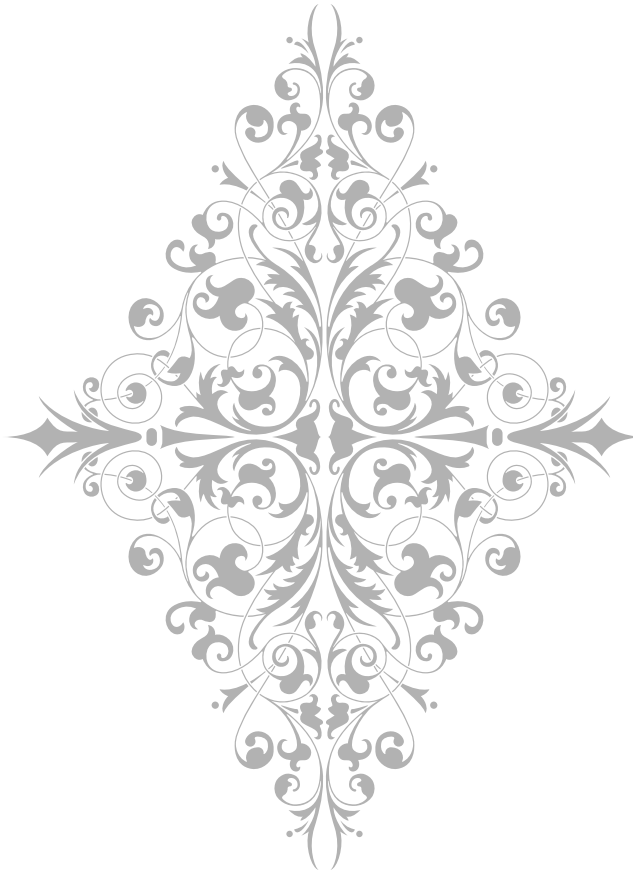
Through your works you have revealed the everlasting structure of the world. You, Lord, created the earth. You are faithful throughout all generations, righteous in your judgments, marvelous in strength and majesty, wise in creating and prudent in establishing what exists. You are good in all that is observed and faithful to those who trust in you. You are merciful and compassionate. You forgive us our sins and our injustices, our transgressions and our shortcomings. Do not take into account every sin of your servants and slave girls, but cleanse us with the cleansing of your truth and "direct our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and purity of heart,"²¹ and "to do what is good and pleasing in

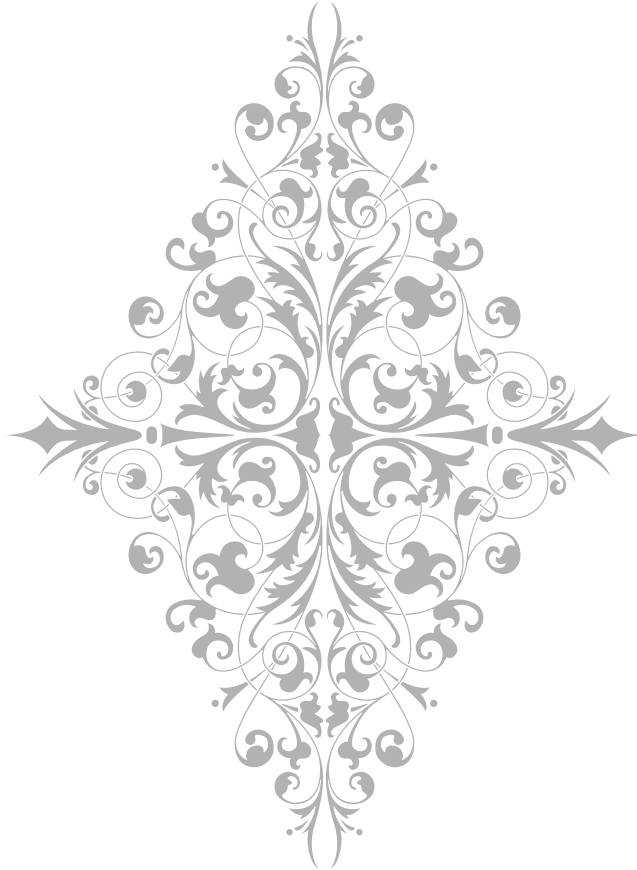
¹³Mt 5:26. ¹⁴Compare the Greek of Mt 24:4. ¹⁵See Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Cor 8:4. ¹⁶ANF 7:377-79**. ¹⁷Rom 7:14. ¹⁸Rom 7:14. ¹⁹Jer 21:8; Deut 30:15. ²⁰ANF 6:371**. ²¹1 Kings 9:4; Ps 40:2 (39:3 LXX).

your sight”²² and in the sight of our rulers. Yes, Lord, “let your face shine on us” in peace “for our good,” that we may be sheltered “by your mighty hand” and delivered from every sin “by your uplifted arm”;²³ deliver us as well from those who hate us unjustly. Give harmony and peace to us and to all who dwell on the earth, just as you did to our ancestors when they reverently “called on

you in faith and truth,”²⁴ that we may be saved, while we render obedience to your almighty and most excellent name, and to our rulers and governors on earth. I CLEMENT 60.1-4.²⁵

²²See Deut 13:18. ²³Ps 67:1 (66:1 LXX); Num 6:25-26; Jer 21:10; Gen 50:20; Ex 6:1; Deut 4:34; Jer 32:21 (39:21 LXX); Ezek 20:33-34. ²⁴Ps 145:18 (144:18 LXX); 1 Tim 2:7. ²⁵AF 97, 99.







PREPARE FOR IMPENDING EXILE JEREMIAH 22:1-30

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah weeps over the impenitent people of Judah and their impiety (THEODORET) because they will go into exile (JEROME). Had they repented of their unjust practices, such as building unjust houses (AMBROSE), they would have realized that merely being descendants of Judah will not save them (THEODORET). Their unrepentance puts them on the same level as dirt (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). Having been brought as low as dirt, however, they are then able to be built up again with Christ as the foundation (ORIGEN).

22:6 Lebanon and Gilead

THE IMPIETY OF THE GILEADITES. THEODORET OF CYR: He calls Jerusalem “Lebanon,”

and he calls the royal palace in Jerusalem “Gilead.” And there is a region in Lebanon that is called by that name, and there is also another Gilead in Israelite territory. But I think that the palace is being compared with the Gilead in Lebanon because of the impiety that they had dared to do in their midst. For this reason he threatens complete destruction on them. ON JEREMIAH 5.22.¹

22:10 No Weeping for the Dead

THERE IS A REASON FOR WEeping. JEROME: Jeremiah too laments over his impenitent people, saying, “O that my head were waters and my

¹PG 81:620.

eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for . . . my people!"² And further on he gives a reason for his lamentation: "Do not weep for the dead," he writes, "or bemoan him, but weep sorely for him who goes away, for he shall return no more." LETTER 122.³

22:13 Woe to Unjust House Builders

LARGER HOMES DO NOT MEAN RIGHTEOUSNESS. AMBROSE: Sensual persons who dwell in vaulted houses and take delight in coffered silver ceilings do not build a house like this. As they despise plain silver, so do they despise a simple dwelling place.⁴ They add to the site of their homes. They add more and more. They join one house with another, one estate with another. They dig up the ground so that the earth itself gives way for their dwelling, and, like children of the earth, they are laid up within her womb and hidden within her flesh. Plainly it was of them that Jeremiah said, "Woe to them who build their house by injustice!"⁵ The person who builds with justice builds not on earth but in heaven. LETTER 80.⁶

CHRIST IS OUR FOUNDATION. ORIGEN: The apostle indicated the one who builds a house with righteousness when he said, "You are a field of God, a building of God."⁷ But he also says that no one can lay another foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if anyone builds, and so on.⁸ Therefore, through the one who taught him, the believer has Christ Jesus as a foundation. And if any person builds well, it is with gold, the teachings of truth; silver, the saving word; precious stones, a structure built from virtues. And if anyone builds in an evil way by building what is bad for Jesus—I mean wood, hay and stubble—how is he not impious? It is for him that the threat comes: Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness! The one who makes a

structure up high, yet not according to reason and truth of God, does not make the upper chambers in judgment. And similarly one can also view those who teach either a true or a falsely called knowledge. Paul builds the house, the church, with righteousness, he builds the upper chambers; Timothy and Luke and those such as them, in judgment. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 12.⁹

22:24-25 Lineage Cannot Save Jeconiah

ANCESTRY IS NO GUARANTEE OF GOODNESS. THEODORET OF CYR: Since they did not imitate the piety of their ancestors though taking pride in their kinship with them—making much of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, David, Hezekiah and Josiah, men conspicuous for their virtue—for this reason the God of all rejects the arrogance of Jeconiah in these words: Even if he were a ring and were placed on my right hand, I would pull it off and hand it over to the enemy. Thus, let him not trust in his forebears' virtue without emulating their virtue. ON JEREMIAH 5.22.24-25.¹⁰

22:29-30 Hear the Word of the Lord

THE UNREPENTANT AND THE RIGHTEOUS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Someone who is in a state of ignorance is sinful and considered "earth and ashes." Someone who is in a state of knowledge, being assimilated as far as possible to God, is already spiritual and thus is considered elect. Scripture calls the senseless and disobedient by the term "dirt," which is clear from what Jeremiah the prophet says in reference to Joachim and his brothers: "Earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Inscribe this man as an outcast."¹¹ STROMATEIS 4.26.¹²

²Jer 9:1. ³NPNF 2 6:226. ⁴See Is 5:8. ⁵See Jer 22:13 (LXX). ⁶FC 26:449. ⁷1 Cor 3:9. ⁸1 Cor 3:11-12. ⁹FC 97:285*. ¹⁰PG 81:625. ¹¹Jer 22:29-30 (LXX). ¹²ANF 2:440.



THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH JEREMIAH 23:1-8

OVERVIEW: Some have applied this chapter to Zerubbabel, but the final fulfillment of the righteous branch prophesied here is Christ (THEODORET). As the righteous Branch, he is the only remedy to help the fallen (LEO). He will gather the church, the seed of Abraham, from all nations in the last day (IRENÆUS).

23:5-6 The Righteous Branch of David

ZERUBBABEL AS A TYPE OF CHRIST. THEODORET OF CYR: These things were fulfilled according to the type in the case of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the son of Jozadak. However, this prophecy was not altogether fulfilled, for many would rise up against them—not only their neighbors but also later on the Macedonians and finally the Romans. But the prophecy proclaims the everlasting nature of grace. Therefore, it is clear that these things were not fulfilled during their lifetimes but during the lifetimes of the apostles, for they alone had the gift of the

Holy Spirit. . . . The Jews shamelessly endeavor to apply this to Zerubbabel. But they need to understand that he was no king—just a popular leader—and he was not called Jozadak. Neither is the meaning of the name appropriate to him, the word meaning “the Lord our righteousness” or, in the Syriac rendering, “Lord, make us righteous”—neither of which applies to Zerubbabel. Since, however, he was a type of Christ the Lord and brought back the captives from Babylon to Judah, just as the Lord transferred those enslaved by the devil to truth, anyone applying this to him in the manner of a type would do nothing beyond reason. It is necessary that we understand, however, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, a descendant of David according to the flesh, who is proclaimed by the prophets as “the righteous dawn,” “the righteous king” and “the Lord of righteousness.” ON JEREMIAH 5.23.5-6.¹

¹PG 81:628.

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH AND THE FALLEN.

LEO THE GREAT: There was only one remedy in the secret of the divine plan that could help the fallen living in the general ruin of the entire human race. This remedy was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of original transgression, to prevail for the rest by his example and by his merits. This was not permitted by natural generation. There could be no clean offspring from our faulty stock by this seed. The Scripture says, "Who can make a clean thing conceived of an unclean seed? Isn't it you alone?"² David's Lord was made David's Son, and from the fruit of the promised branch sprang. He is one without fault, the twofold nature coming together into one person. By this one and the same conception and birth sprung our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was present both true Godhead for the performance of mighty works and true manhood for the endur-

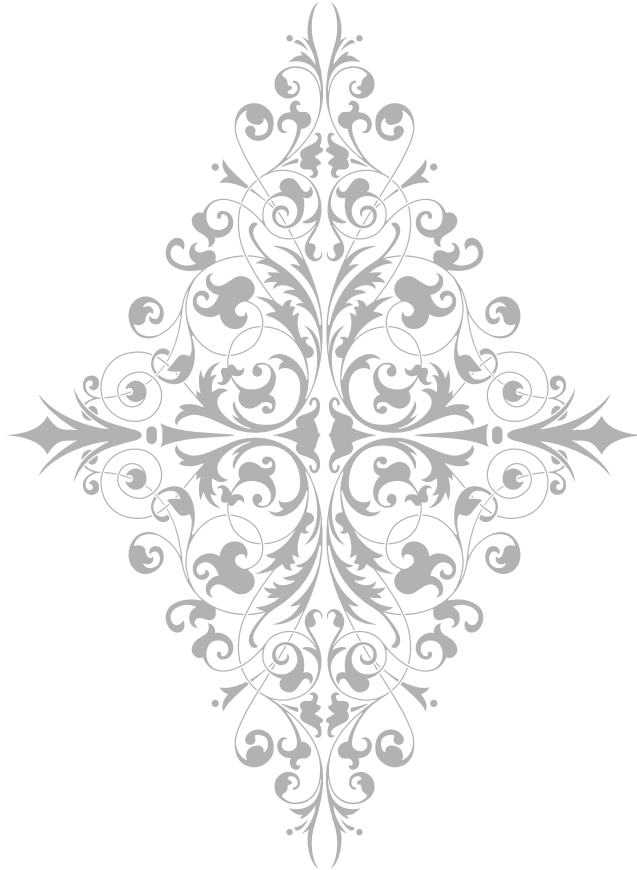
ance of sufferings. SERMON 28.3.³

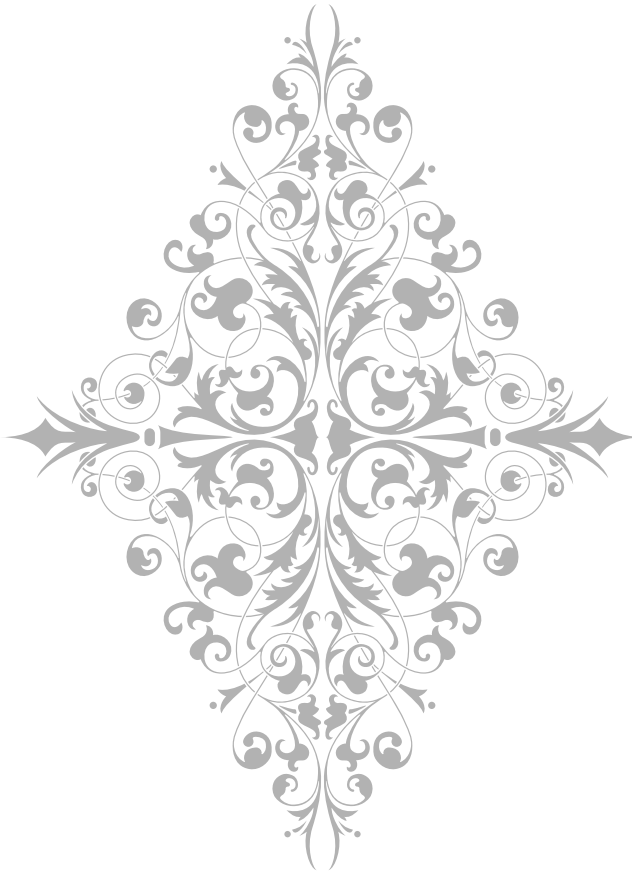
23:7-8 Promised Restoration

GOD WILL RESTORE HIS PEOPLE. IRENAEUS: The church is the seed of Abraham. Jeremiah says, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, 'The Lord lives, who led the children of Israel from the north country and from every region where they had been driven.' He will restore them to their own land which he gave to their ancestors," so that we may know that he who "raises up from the stones children to Abraham"⁴ in the New Testament is he who will gather, according to the Old Testament, those who will be saved from all the nations. AGAINST HERESIES 5.34.1.⁵

²See Job 14:4. ³NPNF 2 12:142. ⁴Mt 3:9. ⁵ANF 1:563-64**.







THE VASTNESS OF GOD
JEREMIAH 23:9-40

OVERVIEW: God puts obstacles in the way of sinners so that they may turn from it (CASSIODORUS). Avoid division and heresy by following your shepherd (IGNATIUS, CYPRIAN). Heretics reject the words of the apostles and prophets by perverting their meaning. The prophets, however, speak from the mouth of God and not their own hearts (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Do not listen to false teachers (AUGUSTINE, CYPRIAN). God did not send them, but still they prophesy (CYRIL OF

ALEXANDRIA). They should thus be wary of the discipline of God's anger, which seeks the reform of those who do evil (ORIGEN).

Whoever sees the Father sees Christ (MARIUS VICTORINUS, ATHANASIUS). Make the journey to Jesus. He is not far away. As our sins separate us from God, our righteousness draws us to him (CHRYSOSTOM). Nothing escapes the sight of God (JEROME, CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). The closer our minds come

to the light of Christ, the more they shine with his light (ORIGEN). Because God is near us, we should always think and act as if God is watching everything we do (BASIL). God is distant in his essence, yet near by his power for our benefit (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit fills all things. The Holy Spirit comes to us when the Father and the Word of God enter our hearts. Everything that exists depends on and exists in God (AMBROSE). We would not exist, if God was not in us. No one who loves God can lose him. God made all things. God is completely in heaven and completely on earth at the same time. All things are with God, who is present everywhere (AUGUSTINE, FULGENTIUS). God is not a body and cannot be bound spatially, but this does not mean he cannot exist, as some would assert. It would be just as difficult to say that he does exist spatially, meaning he either exists in some part of the universe or exists above and beyond it, although then one must define where the universe ends and God begins. Thus, with such ruminations, in the end, we begin to comprehend not the deity but our own incomprehension of God to our human mind when confronted with its totally unimaginable grandeur (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS).

You cannot run away from God. He is everywhere. So run away to God. The Word came into the world as a human even though he was already here as God (AUGUSTINE). The Father did not separate from the Son when the Son entered the world but is always with him (AUGUSTINE, ORIGEN). God fills all things to save us (SALVIAN). God has an infinite nature (THEODORET).

The Word of the Lord is like the fire of the Holy Spirit that brings us to repentance (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Those who preach that Word need to be tested in order to discern who the true prophets are (EPHREM). Do not trust every prophet who says, "Thus says the Lord," but carefully discern between them and true prophets (ORIGEN).

23:12 *Slippery and Dark Ways*

THE WAY OF THE SINNER IS HARD AND DIFFICULT. CASSIODORUS: Let their way become dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them.¹ He demanded that the situation of sinners be wholly arduous, so that their way, which seems to them clear and firm as they linger pleasurably on it, may become dark and slippery so that they cannot stand on it any longer. As the prophet Jeremiah says, "Therefore their way has become slippery in the dark. They shall be thrown down and fall on it." But if they decide to linger further in their evil ways, he asks that the Lord's power pursue them, so that he may not cause them to cling to their sins as they hasten to aspire after their own destruction. What a blessed proliferation of so many obstacles! How vehement is the prayer in this verse that the most salutary opposition is afforded them! EXPLANATION OF THE PSALMS 6.²

23:12 *Defilement*

MAINTAIN HARMONY WITH THE BISHOP. IGNATIUS: As children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines. Where the shepherd is, there you follow as sheep. For there are many wolves that appear trustworthy, who, by means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captive³ those that are running toward God, but they shall have no place in your unity. So, as children of light and truth, avoid the dividing your unity and the wicked doctrine of the heretics, from whom "a defiling influence has gone forth into all the earth." TO THE PHILADELPHIANS 2.⁴

23:16-17 *Do Not Listen to False Prophets*

REJECT FALSE PROPHETS. CYPRIAN: The Lord cries out and says, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who invent a vain vision for themselves, which they speak as false prophets

¹Ps 35:6. ²ACW 51:339. ³See 2 Tim 3:6. ⁴ANF 1:79-80**.

from their own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord. They say to them that reject the words of the Lord, "Peace shall be yours."⁵ They who themselves have neither peace nor the church are now offering peace; they who have withdrawn from the church are permitting the bringing back and recalling of the lapsed. God is one, and Christ, one, and the church, one, and the chair established on Peter by the voice of the Lord, one. Another altar cannot be set up or a new priesthood be made contrary to the one altar and the one priesthood. **LETTER 43.5.**⁶

BWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS. **CYPRIAN:** Against such people as these the Lord cries out, from these he reins in and recalls his erring people, saying, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who invent a vain vision for themselves, which they speak as false prophets from their own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord. They say to those who reject the words of the Lord, 'Peace shall be yours' and to all who walk according to their own desires, to everyone who walks in the error of his heart, they have said, 'No evil shall come on you.'"⁷ **THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH II.**⁸

FALSE TEACHERS SPEAK ONLY FROM THEIR HEARTS. **CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA:** The guilt decreed against the wicked heretics is inevitable. They reject the words of the holy apostles and evangelists and pervert them to that meaning that seems to them to be right without due examination. They fall from the straight way and wander from the doctrines of piety, deceiving and being deceived.⁹ For while, so to speak, they have bidden farewell to the sacred Scriptures, they speak from their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord, as Scripture says.¹⁰ Even though the blessed Evangelist John wrote to us, that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,¹¹ they drag to the exact opposite both the tenet concerning him and the quotation that proves it, saying that the only-begotten Word of God

was not in the beginning, nor true God, and he was not even with God, that is in union with him by nature; God, who has no body, cannot be imagined to be confined to in any one place. **COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 63.**¹²

TRUE SHEPHERDS SPEAK FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD. **CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA:** God gives the promise, "I will deliver them from the hand of the grave, and from death I will redeem them."¹³ So the blessed prophets are in harmony with the decrees from on high. They speak to us not of their own heart or of the will of people but from the mouth of God,¹⁴ as it is written. It is the Holy Spirit speaking within them that declares in every matter what is the sentence of God and his almighty and unalterable will.¹⁵ The prophet Isaiah has said to us, "Your dead shall arise. Those in the graves shall be raised. They who are in the earth shall rejoice. For the dew from you is healing to them."¹⁶ And by the dew I imagine he means the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, and that influence that abolishes death as being that of God and of life. **COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 136.**¹⁷

DO NOT LISTEN TO FALSE PROPHETS. **AUGUSTINE:** I know other persons, however, whom an abysmal lack of wisdom and prudence so deceives and tricks that they think that the faith that they pretend to have will help them before God without the works of justice. They commit abominable crimes without fear by reason of this kind of error, while they believe that God is the avenger not of crimes but of lack of faith. Not only are they willing thus to ruin themselves, but also they strive by their snares to trap others in whom there is not light of divine knowledge. Do not listen to the words of the prophets who invent a vain vision for themselves, which they

⁵See Jer 23:16-17 (LXX). ⁶FC 51:109**. ⁷See Jer 23:16-17 (LXX).

⁸ACW 25:53**. ⁹2 Tim 3:13. ¹⁰Jer 23:16 (LXX). ¹¹Jn 1:1. ¹²CGSL 271**. ¹³Hos 13:14. ¹⁴See Jer 23:16 (LXX). ¹⁵2 Pet 1:21. ¹⁶Is 26:19. ¹⁷CGSL 541**.

speak as false prophets from their own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord. They say to those that reject the words of the Lord, "Peace shall be yours," and to all who walk according to their own desires, to everyone who walks in the error of his heart, they have said, "No evil shall come on you."¹⁸ *THE CHRISTIAN LIFE* 13.¹⁹

BEWARE OF FALSE SHEPHERDS. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: We must, however, examine such things carefully. For there assuredly are people who have not been counted worthy of Christ's grace but make the reputation of being saints and honorable an opportunity for gain. Of such one may say that they are bold and shameless hypocrites, who seize honors for themselves, even though God has not called them to it. They praise themselves and imitate the bold doings of the false prophets of old, of whom God said, "I have not sent the prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." And so, too, may he say of these, "I have not sanctified them, but they falsely assume the gift for themselves. They have not been counted worthy of my grace, but they wickedly seize those things that I bestow only on those who are worthy to receive them." These, making a show of fasting, walk sadly with downcast looks, while full of fraud and baseness. And often they pride themselves on letting their nails grow long. They are especially fond of their jaundiced complexion. Though no one compels them, they delight in enduring such misery as people have to bear in prison, hanging collars on their necks and even putting shackles on their hands and feet. The Savior has commanded us to avoid such persons, saying, "Beware of those who come to you in sheep's clothing but within are ravening wolves."²⁰ *COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY* 55.²¹

23:20 *Turning Back God's Anger*

BITTER AND KIND THINGS TOGETHER. ORIGEN: It is the custom in Scripture, after what is bitter, to say kind things for encouragement,

and after what is good to say more bitter words. Scripture does this in order that, when they have disdained the wealth of the goodness of God, they may not store up for themselves anger in a day of anger.²² Hence God said, "If anger comes, it will not withdraw unless God has accomplished what he wants." And if God wants, anger also occurs, in order that what God wants does occur. For if anyone does not want to be in the will of the Word of God, the anger²³ is unleashed on him. Thus let us not show a need for an anger or wrath that disciplines. *FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH* 52.²⁴

23:22 *Had They Remained with My Counsel*²⁵

WHO SEES THE SON SEES THE FATHER.

MARIUS VICTORINUS: What if these formulas also are scriptural, and of these two formulas, one is used with such clearness that one knows it has not been invented by me but has already been authorized by sacred Scripture? David, who sings hymns in the book of Psalms, which is called the key of all the mysteries, in the thirty-fifth psalm chants a psalm to God, sings praise to God in this way: "For in you is the source of life. In your light we shall see the light."²⁶ Do we think that that is addressed to God or to Christ or to both? Because to both, it is rightly addressed, for in the Father is the Son, and in the Son is the Father. But if it is addressed to God the Father, it will be this: "If they had stood in my substance, they would have also seen my Word."²⁷ But if it is addressed to the Son, it will be this: "Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father also."²⁸ *AGAINST ARIUS* 2.12.²⁹

BREATHING THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURE.

ATHANASIUS: This enables us to see that the

¹⁸See Jer 23:16-17 (LXX). ¹⁹FC 16:34*. ²⁰Mt 7:15. ²¹CGSL 241**. ²²Rom 2:5. ²³Jer 30:23-24 (37:23-24 LXX). ²⁴FC 97:307. ²⁵The Septuagint reads *hypostasei*, which Marius Victorinus, Athanasius and others translate as "substance," in support of Christ being of one substance with the Father. ²⁶Ps 36:9. ²⁷See Jer 23:22 (LXX). ²⁸Jn 14:9. ²⁹FC 69:215-16*.

Council of Nicaea breathes the spirit of Scripture. God says in Exodus,³⁰ "I am that I am," and through Jeremiah, "Who is in his substance and has seen his word?"³¹ and just below, "if they had stood in my subsistence and heard my words."³² Now subsistence is essence and means nothing else but very being, which Jeremiah calls existence, in the words "and they heard not the voice of existence."³³ LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF AFRICA 4.³⁴

23:23 Is God Only Close By?

MAKE YOUR JOURNEY TO JESUS. CHRYSOSTOM: From this time on, bid everything farewell for these five days and begin to observe the feast. Away with the business of the law courts! Away with the business of the city council! Away with daily affairs together with their contracts and business deals! I wish to save my soul. "What does it profit a person if he gains the whole world but suffers the loss of his soul?"³⁵ The Magi went forth from Persia. You go forth from the affairs of daily life. Make your journey to Jesus. It is not far to travel if we are willing to make the trip. We need not cross the sea or climb the mountain crests. If you prove your piety and full compunction, you can see him without leaving home, you can tear down the whole wall, remove every obstacle and shorten the length of the journey. As the prophet said, "I am a God near at hand and not a God afar off,"³⁶ and, "The Lord is close to all who call on him in truth."³⁷ AGAINST THE ANOMOEANS 6.34.³⁸

GOD IS NEAR THE RIGHTEOUS. CHRYSOSTOM: If God were distant from us in place, you might well doubt, but he is present everywhere. To him who strives with purposeful intent, God is near. For this reason also the psalmist said, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me,"³⁹ and God again, "I am a God near at hand and not a God afar off."⁴⁰ Then, just as our sins separate us from him, so do our righteous deeds draw us near to him. "For while you are yet speaking," it is said, "I will

say, 'Here I am.'"⁴¹ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 54.8.⁴²

NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM GOD. JEROME: He was fully conscious of his own wound and the power of him from whom nothing can be hidden, who says through the prophet, "I am a God near at hand and not a God afar off."⁴³ For nobody can escape the notice of him who fills heaven and earth, and nobody can conceal from him the secrets of his heart. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.27.⁴⁴

GOD SEES WHAT IS SECRET. CYPRIAN: He has been more obedient to human authority than to God. It matters not whether he has published what he has done with less either of disgrace or of guilt among people. Be that as it may, he will not be able to escape and avoid God his judge, seeing that the Holy Spirit says in the Psalms, "Your eyes did see my substance, that it was imperfect, and in your book shall all people be written."⁴⁵ And again, "People see the outward appearance, but God sees the heart."⁴⁶ The Lord also forewarns and prepares us, saying, "And all churches shall know that I am he who searches the reins and heart."⁴⁷ He looks into the hidden and secret things and considers those things that are concealed; nor can anyone evade the eyes of the Lord, who says, "I am a God near at hand and not a God afar off. If a person shall be hidden in secret places, shall I not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?"⁴⁸ He sees the heart and mind of every person, and he will not judge our deeds alone, but even our words and thoughts. He looks into the minds and the wills and conceptions of all people, in the very lurking places of the heart that are still closed up. THE LAPSED 27.⁴⁹

³⁰Ex 3:14. ³¹Jer 23:18 (LXX). ³²Jer 23:22 (LXX). ³³Jer 9:10 (9:9 LXX). ³⁴NPNF 2 4:490. ³⁵Mt 16:26. ³⁶See Jer 23:23 (LXX). ³⁷See Ps 145:18. ³⁸FC 72:180*. ³⁹Ps 23:4. ⁴⁰See Jer 23:23 (LXX). ⁴¹See Is 58:9; 65:24. ⁴²NPNF 1 10:337**. ⁴³See Jer 23:23 (LXX). ⁴⁴FC 53:341. ⁴⁵Ps 139:16. ⁴⁶1 Sam 16:7. ⁴⁷Rev 2:23. ⁴⁸See Jer 23:23-24 (LXX). ⁴⁹ANF 5:445**.

OUR MIND WILL SHINE. ORIGEN: The closer our mind approaches Christ in a more exalted and lofty way and presents itself nearer the splendor of his light, the more it will be made to shine more magnificently and clearly in his light as also he says through the prophet: “Draw near to me, and I shall draw near to you, says the Lord.”⁵⁰ And again he says, “I am a God who draws near and not a God afar off.”⁵¹ **HOMILIES ON GENESIS I.**⁵²

WE FEAR EVIL BUT LOVE GOD. BASIL THE GREAT: He also observes the rule, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God.”⁵³ But one who departs from the strict observance of the commandment in performing his actions clearly shows that he has given small thought to God. Mindful, therefore, of the voice of him who said, “Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord” and again, “Am I a God at hand and not a God afar off?” Also, “Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”⁵⁴ We should perform every action as if under the eyes of the Lord and think every thought as if observed by him. Thus, fear will abide constantly within us who hate iniquity, as it is written,⁵⁵ insolence, pride, and the ways of the wicked, and love will be made perfect,⁵⁶ fulfilling the words of the Lord: “I seek not my own will but the will of him that sent me.”⁵⁷ **THE LONG RULES 5.**⁵⁸

23:24 *Can Anyone Hide?*

THE POWER OF GOD SEES, BENEFITS AND INSTRUCTS. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRA: “I have known all that is hidden and all that is open to view. I was a pupil of Wisdom, who formed them all.”⁵⁹ There, in brief, you have the profession of our philosophy. The process of learning about these, if practiced under good supervision, leads upward via Wisdom, who formed the whole universe, to the ruler of the universe, a being hard to catch, hard to track down, who always

distances himself in retreat from his pursuer. But this same ruler, distant as he is, has—truth be told!—drawn near. “I am God who is near at hand, declares the Lord.”⁶⁰ In his essential being he is distant—how could a creature subject to birth ever draw near to the unborn and the uncreated?—but very close by the exercise of that power that had enfolded all things in its embrace. It is written, “Can anyone act in secret without my seeing him?” Yes, the power of God is always present, touching us with a power that sees, is good and instructs. **STROMATEIS 2.2.**⁶¹

LET US PLEASE GOD WITH OUR SPEECH AND BEHAVIOR. CYPRIAN: But let our speech and petition when we pray be under discipline, observing quietness and modesty. Let us consider that we are standing in God’s sight. We must please the divine eyes in our bodily manner and with appropriate restraint of voice. For as it is characteristic of a shameless person to be noisy with his cries, so it is fitting for the modest to pray with moderated petitions. Moreover, in his teaching the Lord has bidden us to pray in secret—in hidden and remote places, in our very bedchambers—which is best suited to faith, that we may know that God is everywhere present, hears and sees all and in the plenitude of his majesty penetrates even into hidden and secret places, as it is written, “I am a God at hand, and not a God afar off. If a person shall hide himself in secret places, shall I not then see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?”⁶² **THE LORD’S PRAYER 4.**⁶³

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PRESENT WITH FATHER AND SON. AMBROSE: Of what creature can it be said that it fills all things, as it written of the Holy Spirit: “I will pour my Spirit on all flesh.”⁶⁴ This cannot be said of an angel. Lastly, Gabriel, when sent to Mary, said, “Hail, full of grace,”⁶⁵

⁵⁰See Zech 1:3; Jas 4:8. ⁵¹See Jer 23:23 (LXX). ⁵²FC 71:56. ⁵³1 Cor 10:31. ⁵⁴Mt 18:20. ⁵⁵See Ps 119:163. ⁵⁶1 Jn 4:12. ⁵⁷Jn 5:30. ⁵⁸FC 9:244-45**. ⁵⁹Wis 7:21-22. ⁶⁰Jer 23:23 (LXX). ⁶¹ANF 2:348**. ⁶²See Jer 23:23-24 (LXX). ⁶³ANF 5:448**. ⁶⁴Jol 2:28. ⁶⁵See Lk 1:28.

plainly declaring the grace of the Spirit that was in her, because the Holy Spirit had come on her, and she was about to have her womb full of grace with the heavenly Word. It is the Lord who fills all things, who says, "I fill heaven and earth." If, then, it is the Lord who fills heaven and earth, who can judge the Holy Spirit to be without a share in the dominion and divine power, seeing that he has filled the world, and what is beyond the whole world, filled Jesus, the Redeemer of the whole world? For it is written, "But Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, departed from the Jordan."⁶⁶ Who, then, except one who possessed the same fullness could fill him who fills all things? ON THE HOLY SPIRIT 1.7.85-86.⁶⁷

WHEN HIS WORD COMES. AMBROSE: God says, "I will dwell in them."⁶⁸ Elsewhere also it stands that God said, "Come, let us go down and confound their language."⁶⁹ God, indeed, never descends from any place, for he says, "I fill heaven and earth." He seems to descend when the Word of God enters our hearts, as the prophet has said: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."⁷⁰ We are to do this, so that, as he himself promised, he may come together with the Father and make his home with us.⁷¹ It is clear, then, how he comes. ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 5.7.98.⁷²

THE FULLNESS OF GOD IS EVERYWHERE. AMBROSE: Since we are in his image and likeness, as Scripture says,⁷³ let us presume to speak, just as he expresses himself in the fullness of his majesty and sees all things—sky, air, earth, sea—embracing all and penetrating each one, so that nothing passes his notice and nothing exists unless it exists in him and depends on him and is full of him, as he says: "I fill heaven and earth, declares the Lord." LETTER 49.⁷⁴

THE LORD IS NEAR TO EVERYONE. AUGUSTINE: How shall I call on my God—my God and my lord? For when I call on him, I ask him to come into me. And what place is there in me into which

my God can come—into which God can come, even he who made heaven and earth? Is there anything in me, O Lord my God, that can contain you? Do indeed the heaven and the earth that you have made and in which you have placed me, contain you? Or, since nothing could exist without you, does whatever exists contain you? Why, then, do I ask you to come into me, since I indeed exist and could not exist if you were not in me? Because I am not yet in hell, though you are even there. For "if I go down into hell, you are there."⁷⁵ I could not exist, O my God, I could not exist at all, unless you were in me. Or should I not rather say that I could not exist unless I were in you, "from whom, through whom and in whom are all things?"⁷⁶ It is even so, O Lord, even so. Where do I ask you to be, since I am in you? Or, from where can you come into me? Where may I go beyond heaven and earth, in order that my God may then come into me, he who has said, "I fill heaven and earth." CONFESSIONS 1.2.2.⁷⁷

GOD'S LOVE ENDURES. AUGUSTINE: A person's conscience accuses itself if he doesn't love someone who loves him, or love in return someone who loves him, expecting nothing from that person but indications of his love. So he mourns if someone dies, experiences the gloom of sorrow, that saturating of the heart in tears. All sweetness turns into bitterness on the loss of the life of the dying, the death of the living. Blessed is the one who loves you and has his friend in you. . . . For he alone loses none dear to him. All are dear to him who cannot be lost. And who is this but our God, the God who created heaven and earth⁷⁸ and fills them, because by filling them he created them? No one loses you but the one who leaves you. CONFESSIONS 4.9.14.⁷⁹

GOD ALONE IS THE CREATOR. AUGUSTINE: It was by this same divine creative force, which

⁶⁶Lk 4:1. ⁶⁷NPNF 2 10:104. ⁶⁸See 2 Cor 6:16. ⁶⁹Gen 11:7. ⁷⁰Mt 3:3; Is 40:3. ⁷¹Jn 14:23. ⁷²NPNF 2 10:296. ⁷³Gen 1:26. ⁷⁴FC 26:261. ⁷⁵Ps 139:8. ⁷⁶See Rom 11:36. ⁷⁷NPNF 1 1:45-46*. ⁷⁸Gen 1:10. ⁷⁹NPNF 1 1:72*.

knows not what it is to be made but only how to make, that roundness was given to the eye, to the apple and to other objects that are by nature round and that we see all about, taking on their form with no extrinsic cause but by the intrinsic power of the Creator, who said, "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" and whose wisdom "reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly."⁸⁰ CITY OF GOD 12.26.⁸¹

SHALL WE SEE GOD WITH OUR EYES? AUGUSTINE: The question still remains whether they will see God with their eyes open and by means of these bodily eyes. For, of course, if spiritual eyes in a spiritual body can see no better than our present eyes can see, then it will certainly be impossible for even spiritual eyes to behold God. If the spiritual realm, without material form, circumscribed by no place but everywhere wholly present, is to be visible to the eyes of a spiritual body, then those eyes will most certainly have to have a power altogether unlike the power of any eyes on earth. It is true that we say that God is in heaven and on earth, and he himself through a prophet says, "I fill heaven and earth." But this does not mean that in heaven we shall say that God has one part there and another part on earth. For he is entirely in heaven, and he is entirely on earth. He is in both simultaneously, not merely successively—which is utterly impossible in the case of any material substance. CITY OF GOD 22.29.⁸²

THE TRINITY FILLS THE EARTH. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE: Accordingly, we must consider that one and the same nature of the Trinity fills the whole in such a way that there is no place where it is not. So, it is everywhere complete and in no way contained in a place. It is complete in individual spirits and bodies and complete at the same time in all creatures. Now we are not speaking about grace by which God with a free gift of his mercy offers himself to human beings for their salvation, but about nature by which God both fills and contains all the things which

he made; according to this, he says, "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" LETTER 14.4.⁸³

LIMITS OF THE NEGATIVE WAY OF KNOWING GOD. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: How, again, can justice be done to the scriptural fact that God pervades and fills the universe ("Do not I fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord," and, "The spirit of the Lord fills the world"⁸⁴) if part of it limits him and part of it is limited by him? It cannot, for he must either occupy a complete vacuum and our universe vanish—involving the blasphemy that God has been rendered corporeal and does not possess the universe he made; or his body must be contained by bodies, which is impossible; or he must be knit through them as a contrasted strand, like liquids in mixture, parting some, parted by others—which is a more absurd old wives' tale than even Epicurus's atoms. It follows, then, that talk of God's body has no solid body to it and must collapse. What if we call God "immaterial," the fifth element envisaged by some, borne along the circular drift? Let us assume that he is some immaterial, fifth body, incorporeal, if they wait for it so to suit their free-drifting, self-constructing argument—I will not quarrel over the point. What place will he have in the moving drift of things—leaving out of account the blasphemy of identifying the creatures' motion with their creator's, the mover's (if they will concede the term) with that of the moved? What moves this fifth element? What moves the whole? What moves that which moves the whole? And so on ad infinitum. Must not this moving fifth element be in space? Suppose that they call it something other than the fifth element, an angelic body, say. What grounds have they for asserting that angels are bodies? What are these bodies? How far will God transcend angels who are his ministers? If supra-angelic, a countless swarm of bodies will be fetched in, an abyss of nonsense with no halting place.

So we have proved that God is not a body.

⁸⁰Wis 8:1. ⁸¹FC 14:292. ⁸²FC 24:500**. ⁸³FC 95:501. ⁸⁴Wis 1:7.

No divinely inspired teacher has asserted or accepted that idea; the verdict of our fold is against it. He can only be incorporeal. But the term "incorporeal," though granted, does not give an all-embracing revelation of God's essential being. The same is true of "ingenerate," "unoriginate," "immutable," and "immortal," indeed of all attributes applied or referred to God. For what has the fact of owning no beginning, of freedom from change, from limitation, to do with his real, fundamental nature? No, the full reality is left to be grasped, philosophically treated and scrutinized by a more advanced theorist of God. Just as predicating "is body" or "is begotten" of something or other where these predicates are applicable is not enough clearly to set out the things, but you must also, if an object of knowledge is to be displayed with adequate clarity, give the predicates their subject (people, cows and horses, you see, are "corporeal," "begotten" and "mortal"), so, in the same way, an inquirer into the nature of a real being cannot stop short at saying what it is *not* but must add to his denials a positive affirmation (and how much easier it is to take in a single thing than to run the full gamut of particular negations!). The point of this is that comprehension of the object of knowledge should be effected by negation of what the thing is not and by positive assertion of what it is. A person who tells you what God is not but fails to tell you what he is is rather like someone who, asked what twice five is, answers "not two, not three, not four, not five, not twenty, not thirty, no number, in short, under ten or over ten." He does not deny it is ten, but he is also not settling the questioner's mind with a firm answer. It is much simpler, much briefer, to indicate all that something is *not* by indicating what it *is*, than to reveal what it *is* by denying what it is *not*. ON THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ORATION 2 (28).8-9.⁸⁵

IS DEITY LOCATED IN SPACE OR NOT?

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: This is all common sense, surely, but now that we have proved deity incorporeal, we shall take the examination

a stage further. The problem is this: is deity located in space or not? If it is not, then your shrewd critic might ask how it can even exist at all. Granted that what does not exist has no spatial location, it may well be the case that what has no spatial location does not exist. But if deity is spatially located there are two possible consequences: either the universe contains it, or it is located above the universe. Taking the first alternative, then, it is either contained in a part of the universe or the whole of it. Supposing deity is contained in a part of the universe, it will be delimited by something smaller; if in the whole, by something larger, quite different in relative scale, I mean, as between deity inside and the surrounding universe, granted the universe is going to be contained by the universe and all spatial location to have its bounding line. These consequences follow the hypotheses that the universe contains God. Again, where was it before the universe was created? This produces a considerable problem, you see. If, on the other hand, deity is located above the universe, what is the dividing line between it and the universe? Where is this higher place? How are higher and lower levels to be recognized; where there is no dividing line between to separate them? There will have, surely, to be something in between, something to bound the universe off from what lies above it. In that case this something in between must have the very spatial location we rejected. I do not now insist on the fact that deity must be delimited if it be mentally comprehended, for comprehension is one form of delimitation.

Why have I made this digression, too labored, I dare say, for the general ear but in tune with the prevalent fashion in discussions, a fashion that despises noble simplicity and substitutes tortuous conundrums? I did it to make the tree known by its fruits, to make the darkness that activates dogmas like these, I mean, known by the obscurity of their expres-

⁸⁵OGAC 42-44.

sion. I did not do it to gain a reputation for startling oratory or extraordinary wisdom as a marvelous Daniel for “showing hard sentences and dissolving doubts.”⁸⁶ No, I wanted to make plain the point my sermon began with, which was this: the incomprehensibility of deity to the human mind and its totally unimaginable grandeur. Not that deity resents our knowledge: resentment is a far cry from the divine nature, serene as it is, uniquely and properly “good,” especially resentment of its most prized creation. What can mean more to the Word than thinking beings, since their very existence is an act of supreme goodness? It is not that he treasures his own fullness of glory, keeping his majesty costly by inaccessibility. It would be utterly dishonest, utterly out of character not merely for God but also for an ordinary good person with anything of a proper conscience about him to get himself the senior place by keeping others out. ON THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ORATION 2 (28).IO-II.⁸⁷

GOD IS EVERYWHERE IN KEEPING WITH HIS CHARACTER. AUGUSTINE: Therefore, God is poured forth in all things. He says by the prophet, “I fill heaven and earth,” and, as I quoted a short time before of his wisdom, “He reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly.”⁸⁸ It is likewise written, “the Spirit of the Lord filled the whole world,”⁸⁹ and one of the psalms has these words addressed to him: “Where shall I go from your Spirit, or where shall I flee from your face? If I ascend up into heaven, you are there. If I descend into hell, you are there.”⁹⁰

Yet God so permeates all things as to be not a quality of the world but the very creative substance of the world, ruling the world without labor, sustaining it without effort. Nevertheless, he is not distributed through space in a physical sense so that half of him should be in half of the world and half in the other half of it. He is wholly present in all of it in such a way as to be wholly in heaven alone and wholly in the earth

alone, and wholly in heaven and earth together; not confined in any place, but wholly in himself everywhere. LETTER 187.14.⁹¹

THE BEAUTY OF THE FIELD. AUGUSTINE: Through the indescribable wisdom of God residing in the Word, we understand that all things are with him and the Word himself is all things. Is not the beauty of the field in a manner with him, since he is everywhere and has said, “Heaven and earth I fill”? What is not with him, of whom it is said, “If I shall have ascended into heaven, you are there. If I descended into hell, you are present”?⁹² EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 50.18.⁹³

COME TO CHRIST. AUGUSTINE: Listen to him: “Come to me, all you who labor.”⁹⁴ You do not put an end to your labor by running away. You prefer to run away from him, do you, not to him? Find somewhere, and run away there. But if you cannot run away from him, for the good reason that he is present everywhere, the next thing to do is to run away to God, who is present right where you are standing. Run away, then. So, you see, you have run away beyond the heavens, he is there. You have gone right down to hell, he is there. Whatever solitary places of the earth you may choose, there he is, the one who said, “I fill heaven and earth.” So if he fills heaven and earth and there is nowhere you can run away to from him, do not go on laboring with all that trouble. Run away to him where he is present right beside you, to avoid experiencing him as he comes to judge you. SERMON 69.4.⁹⁵

THE WORD OF GOD BECAME HUMAN. AUGUSTINE: So the aspect he chose was the one by which Christ came into the world. He came, after all, insofar as he was man. Because insofar as he was God, he was always here. Is there anywhere

⁸⁶Dan 5:12. ⁸⁷OGAC 44-45. ⁸⁸Wis 8:1. ⁸⁹Wis 1:7. ⁹⁰Ps 139:7-8.

⁹¹FC 30:231**. ⁹²Ps 139:7-8. ⁹³NPNF 1 8:185**. ⁹⁴Mt 11:28.

⁹⁵WSA 3 3:237*.

God is not, I mean, seeing that he said, “I fill heaven and earth”? Christ is certainly the power of God and the wisdom of God. Of this wisdom it says, “She reaches from end to end mightily and disposes all things sweetly.”⁹⁶ So then, “he was in this world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him.”⁹⁷ He was here, and yet he also came. He was here by divine greatness; he came by human weakness. So because he came by human weakness, that is why Paul declared his coming by saying, “The word is human.” The human race would not have been set free unless the Word of God had agreed to be human. After all, people are said in particular to be human who show some humanity, above all by giving hospitality to human persons. So if human beings are called human because they receive human beings into their homes, how human must that one be who received humanity into himself by becoming human? SERMON 174.I.⁹⁸

THE FATHER IS WITH THE SON. AUGUSTINE: Jesus said, “He that sent me is with me.”⁹⁹ He had already said this before, but he is constantly reminding them of this important point. “He sent me,” and “He is with me.” If then, O Lord, he is with you, it is not so much that the One has been sent by the other but rather that you both have come. And yet, while both are together, one was sent, the other was the sender. Incarnation is a sending, and the incarnation itself belongs only to the Son and not to the Father. The Father therefore sent the Son but did not withdraw from the Son. For it was not the case that the Father was absent from the place to which he sent the Son. For where could the Maker of all things not be? Where could he not be who said, “I fill heaven and earth”? TRACTATES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 40.6.¹⁰⁰

CHRIST FILLS THE COSMOS. ORIGEN: And how will it be possible to set the text, “Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord,” side by side with the whole world understood as Jesus’ shoe? It is worthwhile, however, to give attention

to whether we must understand the words in relation to the fact that the Word and Wisdom have permeated the whole world, and the Father is in the Son, as we presented it, or he who first girded himself with all creation, because the Son was in him, granted to the Savior, since he was second after him and God the Word, to pervade the whole creation. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.202.¹⁰¹

GOD’S FULLNESS IS EVERYWHERE. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: Elsewhere we read the words of the prophet: “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” God tells why he fills all things: “because I am with you to save you.”¹⁰² Behold, the Lord shows us not only his rule and its all pervading fullness but also the power and benefits accruing from this very fullness. For the fullness of divinity carries as its reward the salvation of what it fills. Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles, said, “for in him we live and move and are.”¹⁰³ THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD 2.2.¹⁰⁴

GOD FILLS THE COSMOS. THEODORET OF CYR: If the sun, being corporeal, for it is visible and susceptible to disintegration, cannot be polluted when it passes through corpses, putrid mud and many other evil-smelling substances, much more impervious to such pollution is the maker of the sun, the creator of the universe, the incorporeal one, the invisible, the unchangeable, the one who always remains the same. And that those things are so the following reflection will bear out. We both assert and believe that his nature is infinite, for we have heard him exclaim: “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? says the Lord.” ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE 10.16-17.¹⁰⁵

23:29 *The Word Like Fire*

THE FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: “Fire” is called “the Gospel” and “salva-

⁹⁶Wis 8:1. ⁹⁷Jn 1:10. ⁹⁸WSA 3 5:257*. ⁹⁹Jn 8:29. ¹⁰⁰NPNF 1 7:227*. ¹⁰¹FC 80:224*. ¹⁰²Jer 42:11. ¹⁰³Acts 17:28. ¹⁰⁴FC 3:58-59*. ¹⁰⁵ACW 49:140**.

tion" is called "preaching," or "fire" could also refer to participation in the Holy Spirit, which is similar to experiencing fire. And indeed, this is also why the most wise John the Baptist concerning himself and all of us said, "I baptize you with water for repentance"¹⁰⁶ etc., [looking ahead] to our Savior Jesus Christ [who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire]. Rightly, therefore, did Christ say, "I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and I wish that it were already kindled."¹⁰⁷ FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH IN CATENA.¹⁰⁸

23:30 *Against the Prophets*

ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Thus, I am against the prophets who steal my words, says the Lord." The prophet includes this with reference to the false prophets who were stealing true prophecies from true prophets and then passing them on in secret to someone whom they forbade to speak about this. What they had in mind was the following: If the prophecy was fulfilled, they would say, "See, we have a witness that we were prophesying the same thing." But if the prophecy was not fulfilled, they would blame Jeremiah and other true prophets, as if they deceived people.

However, there is another kind of false prophet who would say anything to please listen-

ers. They would reassure people, "No calamity will come on you," and according to the custom of false prophets, they would support this claim in the name of the Lord. They are like those against whom Jeremiah spoke previously, those who mix their false dreams with pronouncements of the Spirit and deceive the people. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 23.30.¹⁰⁹

DISCERNING TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS.

ORIGEN: Since the false prophets also avail themselves of the phrase "thus says the Lord," pretending to be the true prophets, there is need of signs that distinguish each of them. Therefore there was, according to the apostle, a gift of distinguishing spirits,¹¹⁰ and one who possessed this gift distinguished spirits, both the divine and the bad ones, just as a moneychanger distinguishes genuine currency from counterfeit. But aside from this general knowledge, what was just said also suffices for distinguishing. For, my word, he says, is not empty and a nourishment for what is irrational, but it is like wheat and nourishment for what is rational. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 19.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶Mt 3:11. ¹⁰⁷Lk 12:49. ¹⁰⁸PG 70:1453. ¹⁰⁹ESOO 2:138. ¹¹⁰1 Cor 12:4-11. ¹¹¹FC 97:289.





TWO FIG BASKETS JEREMIAH 24:1-10

OVERVIEW: The synagogue mystically represents a basket of bad fruit and the church a basket of good fruit (CAESARIUS). If you repent and live uprightly, God will provide you a remedy for past sins and the power to master the devil's snares (HERMAS). The devil often tries to imitate the fig tree in order to deceive. Those who seek life from it are deceived into embracing death through bad figs. Thus the Lord cursed the bad fig tree that bore corrupted fruit (METHODIUS). We should thus remain with the good fig tree. Ask for anything from this tree without doubting, and you will learn of God's abundant mercy and grace and walk in the straight path of righteousness (HERMAS). God takes down the buildings of unclean spirits and builds a temple for God within us (ORIGEN).

24:1-10 Good and Bad Figs

THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: The prophet speaks thus concerning the people of Israel and ours: "The Lord showed me two baskets of figs. One had very good ones, the other had very bad ones." This fact, as has often been said, presents an image of the two people, for those two baskets prefigured the synagogue and the church. The basket of very bad fruit mystically designated the people of the synagogue, while the one with very good

fruit pointed out the church of the Christians. SERMON 106.4.¹

THE LORD'S MERCY IS GREATER THAN THE DEVIL'S SNARES. HERMAS: "I, the angel of repentance, am telling you: Do not fear the devil. For I have been sent," he said, "to be on the side of you, who repent with your whole heart, and to steady you in the faith. Put your faith in God, you who despair of your life because of your sins, you who add to your sins and make your life burdensome. Trust that, if you turn to the Lord with your whole heart² and do righteousness³ for the rest of your life, serving him uprightly in accordance with his will, he will provide a remedy for your previous failings, and you will obtain the power of mastering the devil's snares. Do not be in the least afraid of the devil's threats, for they are as powerless as a dead person's sinews." SHEPHERD, MANDATE 6.1-2.⁴

THE TRUE AND FALSE FIG TREES. METHODIUS: The fig tree can be taken as a type of the delights of paradise due to the sweetness and excellence of its fruit. The devil beguiled the man by imitating it and then led him captive, persuading him to conceal the nakedness of his

¹FC 47:128. ²Cf. Joel 2:12. ³Acts 10:35. ⁴FC 1:286.

body by fig leaves. . . . The enemy, by his power, always imitates⁵ the forms of virtue and righteousness, not for the purpose of truly promoting its exercise but for deception and hypocrisy. He camouflages himself with the colors of immortality in order to entice those who are fleeing from death to embrace death. And so he desires to look like a fig tree or vine and to produce sweetness and joy, and he is “transformed into an angel of light,”⁶ ensnaring many by the appearance of piety.

For we find in the sacred Writings that there are two kinds of fig trees and vines, “the good figs, which are very good, and the evil, which are very evil”; and “wine that makes glad the heart of people”⁷ and wine that is the poison of dragons and the incurable venom of asps.⁸ But from the time when chastity began to rule over the human race, the fraud was detected and overcome, with Christ, the chief of virgins, overturning it. So both the true fig tree and the true vine yield fruit after that the power of chastity has laid hold on all, as Joel the prophet preaches, saying, “Do not be afraid, O land. Be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things. Do not be afraid, beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are springing into life, for the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you food for righteousness.”⁹ He calls the former laws the vine and the fig, trees bearing fruit for righteousness for the children of the spiritual Zion that bore fruit after the incarnation of the Word, when chastity ruled over us, when formerly, because of sin and much error, they had checked and destroyed their buds. For the true vine and the true fig tree were not able to yield such nourishment to us as would be profitable for life while as yet the false fig tree, variously adorned for the purpose of fraud, flourished. But when the Lord dried up the false branches—imitations of the true branches—uttering the sentence against the bitter fig tree, “Let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever,”¹⁰ then those

that were truly fruit-bearing trees flourished and yielded food for righteousness.

The vine—and not just in a few places—refers to the Lord,¹¹ and the fig tree to the Holy Spirit, as the Lord makes glad the hearts of people and the Spirit heals them. And therefore Hezekiah is commanded¹² first to make a plaster with a lump of figs—that is, the fruit of the Spirit—that he may be healed—that is, according to the apostle—by love; for he says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”;¹³ which, because of their great pleasantness, the prophet calls figs. Micah also says, “Every person shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.”¹⁴ Now it is certain that those who have taken refuge and rested under the Spirit and under the shadow of the Word shall not be alarmed or frightened by him who troubles the hearts of people. SYMPOSIUM OR BANQUET OF THE TEN VIRGINS 10.5.¹⁵

THE LORD OFFERS LAVISH MERCY. HERMAS: He said to me, “Cast off indecision and doubt not in the least, when asking anything from God. Do not say, ‘How can I ask and receive anything from the Lord after having committed so many sins?’ Do not entertain such thoughts, but with your whole heart turn to the Lord¹⁶ and ask him without wavering. You will learn his superabundant mercy. He will not leave you in the lurch. No! He will fulfill the request of your soul. God is not like human beings who bear a grudge. He is without malice and has mercy on what he has made.” SHEPHERD, MANDATE 9.1-3.¹⁷

⁵*Diabolus simia Dei*, an idea common to the Fathers. He is the malignant caricature of the most High, exulting in the deformity that he gives to his copies (Ex 7:11). ⁶2 Cor 11:14. ⁷Ps 104:15. ⁸Deut 32:33. ⁹Joel 2:21-23, with the last words of the quote coming from the Septuagint. ¹⁰Mt 21:19. ¹¹E.g., Jn 15:1. ¹²2 Kings 20:7; Is 38:21. ¹³Gal 5:22-23. ¹⁴Mic 4:4. ¹⁵ANF 6:349-50*. ¹⁶Cf. Joel 2:12. ¹⁷FC 1:275.

ONE WHO TURNS TO THE LORD. HERMAS: “In the first mandate,” he said, “I bade you keep the faith, fear the Lord, and be self-restrained.” “Yes, sir,” I said. “But now I wish to explain their nature, that you may know their individual power and effect. Well! Their effects are twofold. For they relate both to the just and to the unjust. Trust righteousness, but distrust unrighteousness. For the path of righteousness is straight, but wickedness is a crooked path. So, walk in the straight path, and leave the crooked path. Instead, there is nothing but wastelands and numerous obstacles. It is rough and full of thorns. So it is injurious to those who walk in it. Those who take the straight path walk smoothly without stumbling, because it is neither rough nor thorny. Hence, you see that it is more advantageous for you to walk in this road.” “Sir,” I said, “it is on this road that I like to walk.” “Walk in

it, then,” he said, “and anyone who turns to the Lord wholeheartedly¹⁸ will also walk there.”
SHEPHERD, MANDATE 6.I.I-5.¹⁹

CHRIST THE ARCHITECT. ORIGEN: Christ is a builder and architect, about whom it has been said in the prophets: “He will build my city, and he will turn back the captivity of my people.”²⁰ Thus the Lord said, “And I will build them up, and I will not tear them down.” For the God who is good takes down certain buildings. For it is necessary that the building of unclean spirits be destroyed in us, and a temple to God be built in this way from virtues and right teachings so that his glory can be seen in it. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 23.²¹

¹⁸Cf. Joel 2:12. ¹⁹FC 1:270**. ²⁰Is 45:13. ²¹FC 97:292.





THE SEVENTY-YEAR CAPTIVITY

JEREMIAH 25:1-14

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah mentions the twenty-three years in which God had been speaking with his people in order to emphasize the extent of God's patience (THEODORET). They, however, not only rejected the message of the prophets but also killed them (LACTANTIUS). Because God found no fruit in them, he took away their joy (ATHANASIUS) and, as Jeremiah had predicted, they would be taken captive to Babylon (AUGUSTINE).

25:3-7 God's Long-suffering

THE EXTENT OF GOD'S PATIENCE. THEODORET OF CYR: He mentions the great number of years in order to emphasize God's long-suffering in putting up with unbelievers for so long. I sent my servants the prophets to you, he says. I urged you to abandon the road to ruin and travel by the other road that produces life. I, in fact, promised you blessings for doing this. But you did not listen, and instead you chose the worship of idols. And to censure the purpose of this unbelief he went on, "So that you might provoke me by the works of your own hands to your own misfortune." To provoke me, you committed those things, but then you also reaped their harmful effects then as well. ON JEREMIAH 6.25,3-7.¹

GOD'S PEOPLE REFUSED THE PROPHETS' CALL FOR REPENTANCE. LACTANTIUS: When the Jews often resisted wholesome precepts and departed from the divine law, going astray to

the impious worship of false gods, then God filled just and chosen men with the Holy Spirit, appointing them as prophets in the midst of the people, by whom he might rebuke with threatening words the sins of the ungrateful people and nevertheless exhort them to repent of their wickedness. Unless they did this and, laying aside their vanities, returned to their God, it would come to pass that he would change his covenant, that is, bestow the inheritance of eternal life on foreign nations and collect to himself a more faithful people out of those who were aliens by birth. But they, when rebuked by the prophets, not only rejected their words but, being offended because they were scolded for their sins, killed the prophets with calculated tortures. All these things are sealed up and preserved in the sacred writings. For the prophet Jeremiah says, "I have sent to you my servants, the prophets. I sent them before light, and you hearkened not to me nor inclined your ears to hear when I said to you, 'Return, you, every one from this evil way and from your wicked devices, and you shall dwell in that land that I have given to you and to your ancestors forever and ever. Do not go after strange gods to serve them, and do not provoke me to wrath by the works of your hands for afflicting you.'" DIVINE INSTITUTES 4.II.²

25:10-14 Banished from the Sounds of Joy

¹PG 81:636. ²ANF 7:109**.

ISRAEL'S DISOBEDIENCE MEANS NO JOY.

ATHANASIUS: Israel . . . killed those who were sent, and not even before the Lord of the vineyard were they ashamed, but even he was slain by them. Truly, when he came and found no fruit in them, he cursed them through the fig tree, saying, "From now on, let there be no fruit from you."³ The fig tree was dead and fruitless so that even the disciples wondered when it withered away. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet: "I will take away from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the scent of myrrh and the light of a lamp, and the whole land shall be destroyed." For the whole service of the law has been abolished from them, and from now on and forever they remain without a feast. *FESTAL LETTERS* 6.5-6.⁴

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS PREFIGURED

THE CITY OF GOD. AUGUSTINE: We have seen the promises that God made to Abraham—to be the father, first, of the Jewish race according to the flesh, and second, of all nations who were to embrace the faith. The development in

history of the City of God will show how these promises were kept. The end of the preceding book brought us up to the reign of King David. I shall now begin with his reign and treat of what ensued in as much detail as the theme of this book requires. There is a period that begins with the prophecies of Samuel and continues through the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity (which Jeremiah had foretold) and ends with the rebuilding of the temple, after the Israelites came home. This period is known as the age of the prophets, although, of course, the patriarch Noah, in whose lifetime the whole earth was destroyed by the flood, and others before and after him up to the time of the kings were prophets also. At least, they prefigured, in some fashion, many things touching the City of God and the kingdom of heaven and sometimes actually prophesied. Consequently, it is not too much to speak of these men as prophets; some of them are explicitly in Holy Scripture, for example, Abraham and Moses.⁵ *CITY OF GOD* 17.1.⁶

³Mt 21:19. ⁴NPNF 2 4:521**. ⁵Gen 20:7; Deut 34:10. ⁶FC 24:17.





THE CUP OF WRATH

JEREMIAH 25:15-29

OVERVIEW: The cup symbolizes God’s punishment for sins that he calls the cup of unmixed wine, implying they will drink it full strength and thus get drunk on it (THEODORET, JEROME). But God ultimately gives the cup of his wrath to cure the soul (ORIGEN) and bring about restoration, as happened to those nations Jeremiah prophesied would drink the cup of wrath (APHRAHAT). They were made to drink the cup because they worshiped false gods and not the true, living God (CYPRIAN).

THE CUP SYMBOLIZES GOD’S JUDGMENT.

THEODORET OF CYR: He gives the name drinking cup to punishment, as also in another psalm, “In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of wine, full of a strong mixture,” and a little later, “all the sinners of the earth will drink it.”¹ This drinking cup blessed Jeremiah was ordered to offer to the nations. COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS II.4.²

FULL-STRENGTH PUNISHMENT. THEODORET OF CYR: And he calls God’s punishment the “cup of unmixed wine.” . . . By “drinking” and “vomiting” Jeremiah implies they have had enough, and in their “raving,” he alludes to the terrible nature of their punishment. Then the prophet further relates how Jerusalem and the cities that paid tribute to it, along with their kings and rulers, were made to drink this cup. ON JEREMIAH 6.25.³

DRINKING TO THE DREGS. JEROME: The pouring out of the cup—and that a cup of pure

or unmixed wine (which is called *akratos* in Greek)—is a sign of the Lord’s wrath so that all the nations who have waged war against the people of God will drink from the cup of the wrath of the Lord. Also, Isaiah writes concerning this cup against Jerusalem, “You have drunk and emptied the drinking cup of wrath, the cup of destruction; therefore, arise!”⁴ But that cup is being drunk by all nations so that they can vomit and be maddened. To be sure, an unsound interpretation understands this cup in a good sense,⁵ so that like a purgative it forces out whatever bile or phlegm or noxious humor is in the chest and restores pristine health. This interpretation understands the Savior instead of Jeremiah as the one who would make all the nations drink it, to whom also he was sent, so that when they had rejected idolatry they might dedicate themselves to the worship of God. But the words that follow will show that this is contrary to the Holy Scripture, for they are made to drink of the cup of pure wine not as a remedy (as this interpretation wants to understand it) but as a punishment. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.14.⁶

GOD’S FURY PURGES THE SOUL. ORIGEN: In the same way in which physicians apply remedies to the sick, in order that by careful treatment they may recover their health, God so deals toward those who have lapsed and fallen into sin,

¹Ps 75:8 (74:9 LXX). ²FC 101:101. ³PG 81:637. ⁴Is 51:17. ⁵E.g., Origen’s interpretation, which immediately follows. ⁶CCL 74:241-42

is proved by this, that the cup of God's fury is ordered, through the agency of the prophet Jeremiah, to be offered to all nations, that they may drink it, and be in a state of madness and vomit it forth. In doing which, God threatens them, saying that if anyone refuses to drink, he shall not be cleansed. By this certainly it is understood that the fury of God's vengeance is profitable for the purgation of souls. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 2.10.6.⁷

RESTORATION FOR THOSE WHO DRANK THE CUP. APHRAHAT: Consider and observe, my hearer, that if God had provided hope for Sodom and its companions, he would not have overthrown them with fire and brimstone, the sign of the last day of the world. Instead, he would have delivered them over to one of the kingdoms to be chastised. This is what was written, for instance, when Jeremiah caused the nations and kingdoms to drink the cup of wrath. Concerning each one of the cities, he said that after they shall "drink the cup, I will turn back the captivity of Elam, of Tyre, of Sidon, of the children of Ammon, and of Moab and of Edom."⁸ Concerning each one of these kingdoms he said, "In the last days I will turn back its captivity." Now we see that Tyre was inhabited and was opulent after it had wandered seventy years,⁹ and after it had received the reward of its harlotries and after it had committed fornication with all the kingdoms. And Tyre took the harp, and played it sweetly and multiplied its music. And also the region of Elam is inhabited and opulent. And with regard to Babylon Jeremiah said, "Babylon shall fall and shall not rise."¹⁰ And look! Up to the present day it continues in desolation and will do so forever. And also about Jerusalem he said, "The virgin of Israel shall fall and shall not rise again. She is forsaken on the ground, and there is none to raise her up."¹¹ For if the prophecy is true that Jeremiah spoke about Babylon, also that about Jerusalem is true and worthy of faith. And Isaiah said to Jerusalem, "I will not again be angry with you, nor will I reprove you."¹² He truly will not be angry with Jerusalem ever again, nor will he

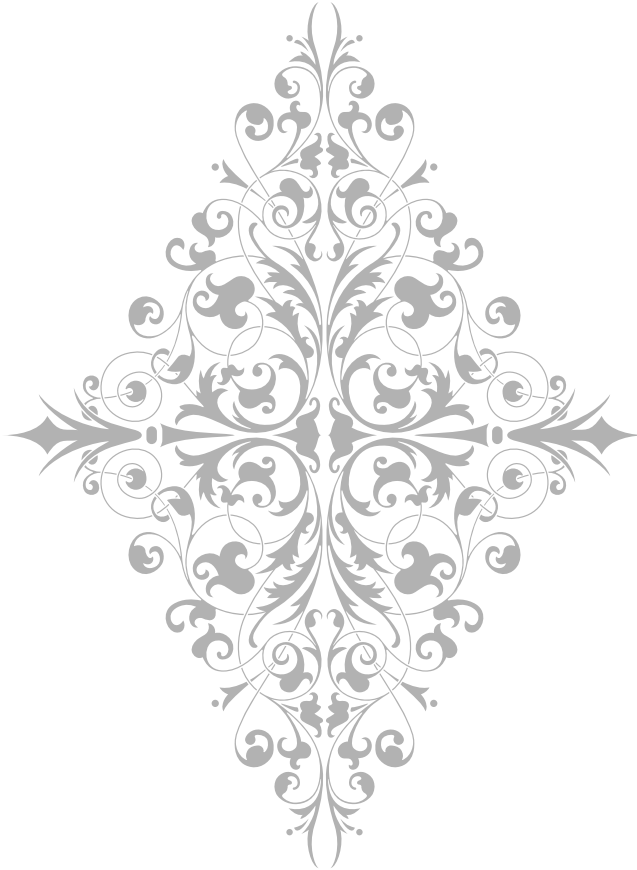
reprove her forever; for that which is in desolation he will not reprove, nor will she provoke him to wrath. DEMONSTRATIONS 21.6.¹³

BECAUSE PAGANS DO NOT WORSHIP THE TRUE GOD. CYPRIAN: Know that it was foretold that wars would continue frequently to prevail, death and famine accumulate anxiety, health would be shattered by raging diseases and the human race be wasted by the desolation of pestilence. It was predicted that evils should be multiplied in the last times and that misfortunes should be varied and that as the day of judgment is now drawing near, the censure of an indignant God should be more and more aroused for the scourging of the human race. For these things do not happen, as your false complaining and ignorant inexperience of the truth asserts and repeats, because your gods are not worshiped by us, but because God is not worshiped by you. For since he is Lord and Ruler of the world and all things are carried on by his will and direction, nor can anything be done save what he has done or allowed to be done, certainly when those things occur that show the anger of an offended God, they happen not on account of us by whom God is worshiped, but they are called down by your sins and by what you deserve, by whom God is neither in any way sought or feared, because your vain superstitions are not forsaken, nor is the true religion known in such a way that he who is the one God over all might alone be worshiped and petitioned. Finally, listen to himself speaking with a divine voice at once instructing and warning us: "You will worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."¹⁴ And again, "You will have no other gods but me."¹⁵ And again, "Do not go after other gods to serve them, and do not worship them, and do not provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to destroy you."¹⁶ To DEMETRIAN 5-6.¹⁷

⁷ANF 4:296**. ⁸See Jer 25:15-27; 48:47; 49:6, 39. ⁹Is 23:15-17.

¹⁰Jer 51:64. ¹¹Amos 5:1-2. ¹²Is 54:9. ¹³NPNF 2 13:394-95**.

¹⁴Deut 6:13. ¹⁵Ex 20:3. ¹⁶Jer 25:6. ¹⁷ANF 5:459**.





[GOD'S JUDGMENTS DESCRIBED
JEREMIAH 25:30-38]

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES REJECTED
JEREMIAH 26:1-24

OVERVIEW: The present prophecy is not necessarily in correct chronological order with those that surround it. It is a prophecy of the future, but that does not mean what is prophesied has to happen (JEROME). God uses the uncertainty of a word such as "perhaps" to bring about the possibility for repentance (THEODORET, AMBROSE). God decides to reject a person or draw him or her not on the basis of his foreknowledge or power but on the person's actions (JOHN CASIAN). While we can choose to act or not to act, all our good works are credited to God's grace. Ahikam chose to act in defense of Jeremiah and saved him from death (JEROME).

26:1 Early in the Reign of Jehoiakim

THIS PROPHECY IS NOT IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER. JEROME: This prophecy preceded in time the former prophecy, though it was given under the same king. For the former prophecy came in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah,¹ but this one in the beginning of the same king's reign, as Scripture records: "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word

came from the Lord." The prophecies of history, therefore, as we have often noted before, are not necessarily composed in chronological order, since, in the present case, the prior and subsequent prophecies under one king were recorded in reverse sequence. But whoever is preparing to speak the word of the Lord needs to stand with Moses² and to hear with the psalmist, "You stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the Lord our God."³ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5:36.2-3.⁴

26:2-3 Perhaps They Will Turn

FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FREE WILL. JEROME: Jeremiah is also instructed to speak to all the cities of Judah, although the Septuagint does not translate the word *cities*, lest it seem indecorous to speak to cities from the court of the house of the Lord, to which they are not present. Yet, when he addresses the people and the citizens, he speaks to the cities themselves. And he stands beautifully in the court and the vestibule of the temple of the Lord, that the people

¹Jer 25:1. ²See Deut 5:31. ³Ps 135:2 (134:2 LXX). ⁴CCL 74:253.

may be brought together to hear the words of the prophet through the occasion of praying to the Lord and adoring him. "Do not remove a word," he is told, even though it may be sorrowful, even though your audience may be incited to rage against you, nevertheless speak what you have been commanded to say, not yielding to the fear that they will persecute you but only to the rule of the Lord! "Perhaps," he thinks, "they will listen and be converted." However, an ambiguous word like "perhaps" cannot be reconciled with the majesty of the Lord but speaks instead of our desire that human free will be served and that it not be compelled from the Lord's foreknowledge, as though of necessity, either to act or to refrain from acting. For it is not because God knows the future that the future comes about, but it is because of what will happen that God knows it before it occurs. Nevertheless, Jeremiah knew that if the Lord warned of bad consequences and the people did penance, they would be repenting for the sake of what the Lord threatened to do to them. Likewise, if the Lord had promised prosperity and the people then acted with negligence, God would exchange the favorable outcome for a bad one.⁵ Such is what is also found in the Gospel: "I will send my son; perhaps they will respect him,"⁶ spoken indeed from the person of the omnipotent God. Furthermore, in the present passage, he says, "If, perhaps, they listen and are converted each one from his wicked way, then after they repent, I will change my punishment and not do to them what I had planned to do because of their evil, but only if they change first."⁷ We should also read the story of Jonah and Nineveh.⁸ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.36.3-7.⁹

THE POSSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE. THEODORET OF CYR: He did not use the word *perhaps* out of ignorance, aware as he was of their disobedience. Instead, he expressed such uncertainty to avoid their taking note of the divine sentence and despairing of salvation. It resembles also

what was said by Ezekiel, "If then they hear, if then they see."¹⁰ In other words, it was not a result of ignorance. It was, rather, to prevent their saying, He foretold our disobedience, and he is trustworthy, so how is it possible for us to be changed? Thus, in the present words he emphasizes that it is possible to undergo a change in behavior, if they are willing. ON JEREMIAH 6.26.3.¹¹

GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE. AMBROSE: The Novatians bring up a question from the words of the apostle Peter.¹² Because he said, "if perhaps," they think that he did not imply that forgiveness would be granted on repentance. But let them consider concerning to whom the words were spoken—of Simon, who did not believe through faith but was contemplating trickery. So, too, the Lord, to him who said, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go,"¹³ replied, "Foxes have holes."¹⁴ For he knew that the man was not being fully sincere. If, then, the Lord refused to him who was not baptized permission to follow him, because he saw that he was not sincere, do you wonder that the apostle did not absolve him who after baptism was guilty of deceit and whom he declared to be still in the bond of iniquity? But let this be my answer to them. As to myself, I say that Peter did not doubt, and I do not think that so great a question can be so easily disposed of by the questionable interpretation of a single word. For if they think that Peter doubted, did God doubt, who said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and you shall give an answer to all Judah, to those who have come to worship in the Lord's house, even all the words that I have appointed for you to answer to them. Do not omit a word, perhaps they will listen and be converted." Let them say, then, that God also did not know

⁵Jer 18:7-10. ⁶Lk 20:13. ⁷Jer 26:3. ⁸Jon 3-4. ⁹CCL 74:253-54.

¹⁰Ezek 2:5 (Lucian LXX). ¹¹PG 81:641. ¹²Peter's words to Simon Magus. ¹³Mt 8:19. ¹⁴Mt 8:20.

what would happen. But ignorance is not implied in that word, but the common custom of Holy Scripture is observed to be taken in its simplest sense. Inasmuch as the Lord says also to Ezekiel, "Son of man, I will send you to the house of Israel, to those who have angered me, both themselves and their ancestors, this very day, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, if perhaps they will hear and be afraid."¹⁵ Did God not know that they could or could not be converted? So, then, that expression is not always a proof of doubt. CONCERNING REPENTANCE 2.5.29-31.¹⁶

GOD CHANGES HIS PLAN WHEN SINNERS REPENT. JOHN CASSIAN: But if one says that God revoked that severe sentence in consideration of their penitence, according to what he says by Ezekiel, "If I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die' and he becomes penitent for his sin and does judgment and justice . . . he shall surely live; he shall not die,"¹⁷ we are similarly taught that we should not be obstinate in our resolve, but that we should with gentle pity soften down the threats that necessity called forth. That we may not conclude that the Lord granted this specially to the Ninevites, he continually affirms by Jeremiah that he will do the same in general toward all and promises that without delay he will change his sentence in accordance with what we deserve, saying, "I will suddenly speak against a nation and against a kingdom to root out and to pull down and to destroy it. If that nation repents of the evil which I have spoken against it, I also will repent of the evil which I thought to do to them. And I will suddenly speak of a nation and a kingdom, to build up and to plant it. If it shall do evil in My sight, that it obey not my voice: I will repent of the good that I thought to do to it."¹⁸ To Ezekiel also: "Leave out not a word, if so they will hearken and be converted every one from his evil way that I may repent of the evil that I thought to do to them for the wickedness of their doings."¹⁹ And by these passages

it is declared that we ought not obstinately to stick to our decisions but to modify them with reason and judgment, and that better courses should always be adopted and preferred and that we should turn without any delay to that course that is considered the more profitable. For this above all that invaluable sentence teaches us, because though each person's end is known beforehand to God before his birth, yet somehow God so orders all things by a plan and method for all, and with regard to human disposition, that he decides on everything not by the mere exercise of his power or according to the indescribable knowledge that his foreknowledge possesses but according to the people's present actions, and he rejects or draws to himself each one, and daily he either grants or withholds his grace. CONFERENCE 2.17.25.²⁰

26:5-6 Multiple Messengers Sent

LAW AND PROPHETS. JEROME: To us, therefore, the power has been given to act or not to act, with the consequence that whatever good work we desire, will and accomplish, we should refer to the grace of God, who, according to the apostle, enables us to will and to work.²¹ If, however, it suffices to walk just once in the law that was given to us through Moses, as foolish heretics suspect, why did he add "and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets," who were sent after the law and not just once but repeatedly, nor leisurely and apathetically but continuously and carefully? He says, in effect, "I sent my servant to you daily, even throughout the night, but if you refuse to hear him, I will make this house (i.e., the temple of God) like Shiloh," where the tabernacle was located.²² And when the temple is destroyed, the city as well will then be "a curse to all the peoples of the earth," from which curse the Lord liberated us, as the apostle

¹⁵See Ezek 2:3-5. ¹⁶NPNF 2 10:349**. ¹⁷Ezek 33:14-15. ¹⁸Jer 18:7-10 (LXX). ¹⁹Cf. Ezek 33:10-11. ²⁰NPNF 2 11:471**. ²¹Phil 2:13. ²²Judg 18:31.

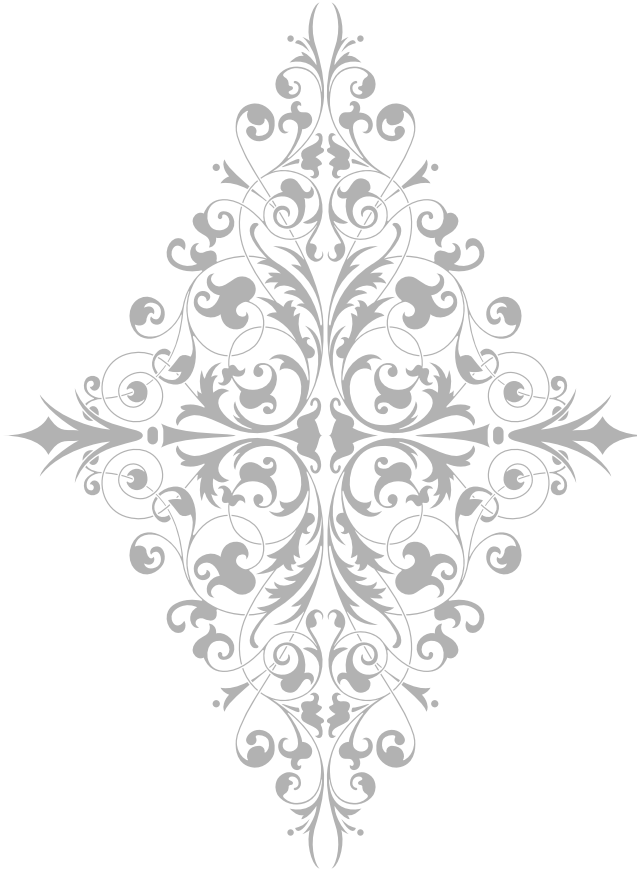
says: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf."²³ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.37.2-4.²⁴

26:24 *Abikam Supported Jeremiah*

JEREMIAH NEEDED HELP. JEROME: Jeremiah

needed the help of Ahikam. How much more do we need that of God. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.27.²⁵

²³Gal 3:13. ²⁴CCL 74:254-55. ²⁵NPNF 2 6:471.





JUDAH WILL SERVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR JEREMIAH 27:1-22

OVERVIEW: Israel must have been very evil for God to refer to Nebuchadnezzar as his servant (JEROME). God does not begrudge humans the title of king but in his grace tolerates them, even giving honor to them (JEROME). God threatened those who would not go into exile and promised happiness to those who would go willingly (AUGUSTINE).

27:6 *Handed Over to Nebuchadnezzar*

OUR SINS MAKE THE BARBARIANS STRONG. JEROME: We have long felt that God is angry, yet we do not try to appease him. It is our sins that make the barbarians strong. It is our vices that vanquish Rome's soldiers. As if there were here too little material for carnage, civil wars have made almost greater havoc among us than the swords of foreign foes. Miserable must those Israelites have been compared with whom Nebuchadnezzar was called God's servant. Unhappy too are we who are so displeasing to God that he uses the fury of the barbarians to execute his wrath against us. Still, when Hezekiah repented, 185,000 Assyrians were destroyed in one night by a single angel.¹ When Jehosaphat sang the praises of the Lord, the Lord gave his worshiper the victory.² Again, when Moses fought against Amalek, it was not with the sword but

with prayer that he prevailed.³ Therefore, if we wish to be lifted up, we must first prostrate ourselves. LETTER 60.17.⁴

27:8 *Punishment for Disobedience to Nebuchadnezzar*

GOD DOES NOT BEGRUDGE HUMANS EXALTED TITLES. APHRAHAT: By the mouth of his prophet God called the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar, king of kings. For Jeremiah said, "Every people and kingdom that shall not put his neck into the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of kings, my servant, with famine and with sword and with pestilence will I visit that people."⁵ Though he is the great King, God does not begrudge the name of kingship to mortals. Though he is the great God, yet he did not grudge the name of godhead to the children of flesh. Though all fatherhood is his, he has called men fathers too. He said to the congregation, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children."⁶ Though authority is his, he has given people authority one over another. While worship is his for honor, he has still allowed in the world for one human being

¹2 Kings 19:35. ²2 Chron 20:5-25. ³Ex 17:11. ⁴NPNF 2 6:130.

⁵The Hebrew has "king of Babylon," and so the Peshitta. But Nebuchadnezzar is addressed as "king of kings" (Dan 2:37). ⁶Ps 45:16.

to honor another. . . Behold the grace and the love of our good Maker, that he did not begrudge to people the name of godhead and the name of worship, and the name of kingship and the name of authority, because he is the Father of the created things that are over the face of the world, and he has honored and exalted and glorified human beings above all creatures. For with his holy hands he formed them, and with his Spirit he breathed into them, and he became a dwelling place for them from ancient times.⁷ He abides in them and walks among them. For he said through the prophet, I will dwell in them and walk in them.⁸ DEMONSTRATIONS 17.6.⁹

JEREMIAH DEMONSTRATES HE IS A TRUE

PROPHET. AUGUSTINE: For Jeremiah also prophesied that the Lord commanded them to go into Babylon. He reproved as false prophets any of the other prophets who told the people not to go to Babylon. Let those who read the Scriptures remember this as we do. Let those who do not, give us credit. Jeremiah, then, on the part of God, threatened those who would not go to Babylon, whereas he promised rest to those who would go and even a kind of contentment in the cultivation of their vines, and planting of their gardens and the abundance of their fruits. SERMON 1[51].14.¹⁰

⁷Gen 2:7; Ps 90:1. ⁸Lev 26:12. ⁹NPNF 2 13:388. ¹⁰NPNF 1 6:250**.





HANANIAH THE FALSE PROPHET JEREMIAH 28:1-17

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah wished that Hananiah's prophecy would come true. False prophets promise pleasant things, true prophets bitterness. Jeremiah behaved humbly and waited for the Lord to reveal to him what to say. Hananiah's death was punishment for the false prophecy he had delivered (JEROME).

28:6 *Jeremiah Wishes Prophecy Would Come True*

TRUTH AND GOODNESS. JEROME: Jeremiah wishes "May the Lord do" what the false prophet¹ said falsely, for this is what "Amen" signifies, a word that the Lord often employed in the Gospel: "Amen, amen, I say to you."² He also has greater desire that prosperity is realized than that the truth is told. Another prophet testifies in this connection, saying, "O that I not be a man who has the Spirit and prefers to speak falsely!"³ Unlike Jeremiah, however, Jonah is saddened that he should tell a falsehood, in response to which the Lord proves that a false prophecy is better than the destruction of so great a multitude of people.⁴ Lest it seem that he was approving the prediction of the false prophet, he then speaks the truth by using an example from others, without utilizing harmful deception: "Yet, hear this word that I speak in your hearing and in that of all the people. The

prophets who preceded me and you from the beginning also prophesied many things for the earth and for great kingdoms concerning war and disease and famine. The prophet who foretold peace, when it comes to pass, will be known as the prophet whom the Lord sent in truth." SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.58.2-59.1.⁵

28:10-14 *A Yoke of Iron*

DO NOT BELIEVE FALSE PROPHETS. JEROME: About four hundred years have passed since the preaching of Christ burst on the world, and during that time in which his robe has been torn by countless heresies, almost the whole body of error has been derived from the Chaldaean, Syriac and Greek languages. Basilides, the master of licentiousness and the grossest sensuality, after the lapse of so many years and like a second Euphorbus, was changed by transmigration into Jovinian, so that the Latin tongue might have a heresy of its own. Was there no other province in the whole world to receive the gospel of pleasure and into which the serpent might insinuate itself, except that which was founded by the teaching of Peter, on the rock Christ? Idol temples

¹Jerome identifies Hananiah as a false prophet in the preceding paragraph. ²E.g., Jn 1:51. ³Mic 2:11 (Vg). ⁴See Jon 3-4. ⁵CCL 74:270-71.

had fallen before the standard of the cross and the severity of the gospel. Now, on the contrary, lust and gluttony endeavor to overthrow the solid structure of the cross. And so God says by Isaiah, "O my people, they which bless you cause you to err, and trouble the paths of your feet."⁶ Also by Jeremiah, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save every one his life,"⁷ and do not believe the false prophets who say, "Peace, peace, and there is no peace,"⁸ who are always repeating, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."⁹ "Your prophets have foreseen false and foolish things for you. They have not exposed your iniquity in order to call you to repentance. They devour God's people like bread. They have not called on God."¹⁰ Jeremiah announced the captivity and was stoned by the people. Hananiah, the son of Azzur, broke the bars of wood for the present but was preparing bars of iron for the future. False prophets always promise pleasant things and please for a time. Truth is bitter, and those preaching it are filled with bitterness. For with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth the Lord's Passover is kept, and it is eaten with bitter herbs. *AGAINST JOVINIANUS* 2.37.¹¹

WAITING ON THE LORD. JEROME: The Septuagint does not translate "two years," nor does it call Hananiah a "prophet," lest it appear to name someone a prophet who was in fact no prophet, as if not many persons in sacred Scripture were named in accordance with the opinion of the time in which they lived or according to the truth of the matter. But Joseph is called the father of the Lord. And Mary, who knew that she had conceived by the Holy Spirit (responding to the angel, "How can this be, since I have never known a man?"¹²), asked her son, "Son, why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been looking for you desperately."¹³ The prudence, humility and patience of Jeremiah must also be considered. When the pseudo-prophet damaged and broke the yoke around Jeremiah's neck, which he was not able to do with iron, Jeremiah remained silent and concealed his pain.

For what he should say was not yet revealed to him by the Lord, so that sacred Scripture would demonstrate tacitly that a prophet never speaks only on his own decision but also by the will of the Lord, most especially regarding future events, which are known to God alone. Jeremiah departed, it says, and went on his way as though he were well, thus fulfilling the prophecy: "I have become like a person who hears nothing and has no rebukes in his mouth."¹⁴ *SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH* 5.60.2-4.¹⁵

28:15-17 *Hananiah the Prophet Died*

DEATH AND DECEPTION. JEROME: When Jeremiah admonishes him, saying, "Listen, Hananiah, the Lord did not send you," he omits the title "prophet," for how could he call him a prophet who refused to be sent by the Lord? But the truth and order of history is preserved, as we said above, not according to what was but according to what was thought to be at the time. He says, in effect, "You have deceived the people with a falsehood, to prevent them from agreeing with the judgment of God. Hence, you know that this will be the year you die." But if, when we die, we are liberated from the prison of the body, according to that testimony that has been badly misinterpreted by heretics, "Free my soul from this prison,"¹⁶ how is the death of a pseudo-prophet now imposed as a punishment? It also must be observed, however, that Jeremiah suffered injury from the false prophet and remained silent, the word of the Lord not yet having come to him. Afterwards, however, when sent by the Lord, he boldly convicted him of lying and announced his imminent death. And because he died in the seventh month, which was always customarily understood to represent "rest," due to the significance of the number,¹⁷ perhaps they were deceived that he died in the seventh

⁶Is 3:12. ⁷Jer 51:6. ⁸Jer 6:14. ⁹Jer 7:4. ¹⁰See Ps 14:4; 53:4.

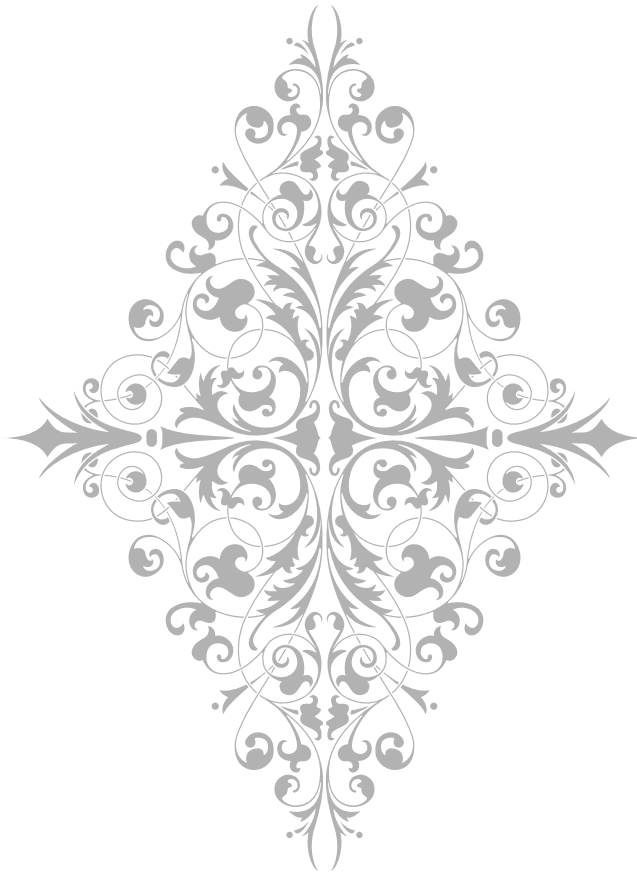
¹¹NPNF 2 6:415**. ¹²Lk 1:34. ¹³Lk 2:48. ¹⁴Ps 38:14 (37:15 LXX).

¹⁵CCL 74:271-72. ¹⁶Ps 141:8 (LXX). ¹⁷See Gen 2:2; Ex 31:15.

month, so that he would be liberated from the evils of the body according to that passage they proffer from Scripture: "Death gives rest to a person."¹⁸ But we know that the bodies of believers are temples of God, if the Holy Spirit still

dwells within them.¹⁹ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.62.2-4.²⁰

¹⁸See Sir 22:11. ¹⁹See 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16. ²⁰CCL 74:274*.





JEREMIAH WRITES A LETTER TO THE EXILES

JEREMIAH 29:1-32

OVERVIEW: Seek the peace of the land where your church is located. When it is at peace, so are you (JEROME, AUGUSTINE). The exiles are a type of Christ and the church. When the church prayed for the peace of pagan kings, their prayer was answered by the conversion of these kings. Therefore, you should pray for your leaders and for peace in the land where God has placed you (AUGUSTINE). God will punish false bishops and elders as he did false prophets in ancient times (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). The devil hunts Christians, not unbelievers or those who have already given into falsehood. So Christians cannot be sure they will not fall from grace while in this life (JEROME).

29:7 Seek the Peace of Your City

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED. JEROME: He also adds, “Seek the peace of the city or

the land,” “for in its peace will be your peace.” This is confirmed by the apostolic exhortation: “I urge, first of all, that intercessions, prayers, requests and thanksgivings be made for all persons, for kings and all who are in high office, that we might live a quiet and tranquil life in all reverence and chastity.”¹ Furthermore, according to the mystical understanding, after we are expelled on account of our sins from Jerusalem, that is, the church, and delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, about whom the same apostle said “delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord,”² and again, “they are those whom I delivered to Satan, that they would learn not to blaspheme,”³ we must not be careless or idle, so as to despair inwardly of salvation, but first we must build homes—on

¹ 1 Tim 2:1-2. ² 1 Cor 5:5. ³ 1 Tim 1:20.

rock, not on sand⁴—the kind of homes that the midwives built in Exodus because they feared the Lord.⁵ Second, we must plant gardens or orchards, the kind that the Lord also planted in paradise in Eden, placing within it the tree of life,⁶ about which it is written, “The tree of life is for those who will receive it, and blessed is the one who lays hold of it.”⁷ Third, we must take wives, one of whom is wisdom, about whom Solomon wrote, “Love her, and she will keep you. Embrace her, and she will exalt you,”⁸ and, in another passage, “I sought to make her my bride, and I became enamored of her beauty.”⁹ Nor is the one spouse, wisdom, sufficient for us, unless we have the others as well: fortitude, temperance and justice, that we might generate many children with them. We also must give our daughters away to men, that the truth of the faith, which is translated into sons, might espouse good works, which refers to daughters, and good works be united to those healed by faith. And we must multiply the number of such fruitful sons and daughters, so that, destroying what is childish and growing into perfection,¹⁰ we may deserve to hear, “I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning,”¹¹ and may say to our children, along with the apostle, “I have begotten you in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”¹² Let us furthermore seek the peace of the city and land in which our church is located, that we might deserve to return to it from whom we were transferred by the judgment of the Lord, to live in the error of “confusion.” For if the church will receive us, we will have peace. The mercy of the Lord must also be taken into account, who commanded us to pray for our enemies and to do good to those who persecute us,¹³ that we would not be content with our salvation alone but would also seek the salvation of our enemies. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 5.63.8-12.¹⁴

PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF THE KING. AUGUSTINE: Because the life of the flesh is the soul, so

the blessed life of humankind is God, of whom the sacred writings of the Hebrews say, “Blessed are people whose God is the Lord.”¹⁵ Miserable, therefore, are people who are alienated from God. Yet even this people has a peace of its own that is not to be lightly esteemed, though, indeed, it shall not in the end enjoy it, because it makes no good use of it before the end. But it is our interest that it enjoys this peace meanwhile in this life. As long as the two cities are combined, we enjoy the peace of Babylon. For from Babylon the people of God is so freed that it meanwhile travels in its company. Therefore the apostle also admonished the church to pray for kings and those in authority, assigning as the reason “that we may live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and love.”¹⁶ And the prophet Jeremiah, when predicting the captivity that was to befall the ancient people of God and giving them the divine command to go obediently to Babylonia and thus serve their God, counseled them also to pray for Babylonia, saying, “In its peace you will have peace”—the temporal peace that the good and the wicked together enjoy. CITY OF GOD 19.26.¹⁷

THE EXILE OF JECONIAH A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Augustine: Remember then, that Jeconiah, rejected without any fault of his own, ceased to reign and passed into the custody of the Gentiles when the exile to Babylon took place. Now observe the symbol of things to come in the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in advance. For the Jews did not want our Lord Jesus Christ to reign over them, yet they found no fault in him. He was rejected in his own person and in that of his servants also, and so they passed into the custody of the Gentiles as into Babylon symbolically. . . .

How then do the people of Israel, not now in symbol but in truth, pass into the custody of Babylon? Where did the apostles come from?

⁴See Mt 7:24-25; Lk 6:48-49. ⁵See Ex 1:21. ⁶See Gen 2:8-9. ⁷Prov 3:18. ⁸Prov 4:6, 8. ⁹Wis 8:2. ¹⁰See 1 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:13. ¹¹1 Jn 2:13. ¹²1 Cor 4:15. ¹³See Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-28. ¹⁴CCL 74:276-78. ¹⁵Ps 144:15. ¹⁶1 Tim 2:2; variant reading = “purity.” ¹⁷NPNF 1 2:419.

Were they not from the nation of the Jews? Where did Paul come from? He said, "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."¹⁸ Many of the Jews then believed in the Lord. From these were the apostles chosen. From these were the more than five hundred brothers, who were allowed to see the Lord after his resurrection.¹⁹ From these were the 120 in the house²⁰ when the Holy Spirit came down.

But what does the apostle in the Acts of the Apostles say, when the Jews refused the word of truth? "We were sent to you, but seeing you have rejected the word of God, see, we turn to the Gentiles."²¹ The true passing over into Babylon, which was prefigured in the time of Jeremiah, took place in the spiritual dispensation of the time of the Lord's incarnation. But what does Jeremiah say about these Babylonians to those who were passing into their custody? "For in their peace shall be your peace." When Israel then went into exile in Babylon by Christ and the apostles, that is, when the gospel came to the Gentiles, what did the apostle say, as though by the mouth of Jeremiah in ancient times? "I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all people. For kings, and for all that are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."²² For they were not Christian kings, yet he prayed for them. Israel then praying in Babylon has been heard. The prayers of the church have been heard, and the kings have become Christian, and you see now fulfilled what was then spoken in symbol: "In their peace shall be your peace," for they have received the peace of Christ and have ceased persecuting Christians, that now in the secure quiet of peace, the churches might be built up and peoples planted in the garden of God, and that all nations might bring forth fruit in faith and hope and love, which is in Christ.

SERMON I[51].14.²³

29:22 *The Curse of Zedekiah and Ahab*

FALSE BISHOPS AND ELDERS WILL BE PUNISHED. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: Not everyone who prophesies is holy, nor is everyone who casts out devils religious. Even Balaam the son of Beor the prophet did prophesy,²⁴ though he was himself ungodly, as also did Caiaphas, the falsely named high priest.²⁵ No, the devil foretells many things, and the demons, about Christ. Yet for all that, there is not a spark of piety in them. They are oppressed with ignorance, by reason of their voluntary wickedness. It is clear, therefore, that the ungodly, although they prophesy, do not by their prophesying cover their own impiety. Nor will those who cast out demons be sanctified by the demons being made subject to them. They only mock one another, as they do who play childish tricks for mirth, and destroy those who give heed to them. For neither is a wicked king any longer a king but a tyrant. Nor is a bishop oppressed with ignorance or an evil disposition a bishop, but he is called so falsely. He is not one sent out by God but by people, as Ananiah and Samoeah in Jerusalem, and Zedekiah and Achiah the false prophets in Babylon.²⁶ Indeed, Balaam the prophet, when he had corrupted Israel by Baalpeor, suffered punishment.²⁷ Caiaphas at last was his own murderer. The sons of Sceva, endeavoring to cast out demons, were wounded by them and fled away in an undignified way.²⁸ The kings of Israel and of Judah, when they became impious, suffered all sorts of punishments. It is therefore evident how bishops and elders, also called so falsely, will not escape the judgment of God. For it will be said to them even now, "O priests that despise my name,²⁹ I will deliver you up to the slaughter, as I did Zedekiah and Achiah, whom the king of Babylon fried in a frying pan," as says Jeremiah the prophet. We say these things, not in contempt of true prophecies, for we know that they are wrought in holy people by the inspira-

¹⁸Rom 11:1. ¹⁹1 Cor 15:6. ²⁰Acts 1:15. ²¹Acts 13:46. ²²1 Tim 2:1-2. ²³NPNF 1 6:250**. ²⁴Num 23-24. ²⁵Jn 11:51. ²⁶Jer 28-29. ²⁷Num 25, 31. ²⁸Acts 19:14. ²⁹Mal 1:6.

tion of God, but to put a stop to the boldness of conceited people, and add this, that from such as these God takes away his grace. "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."³⁰ CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 8.1.2.³¹

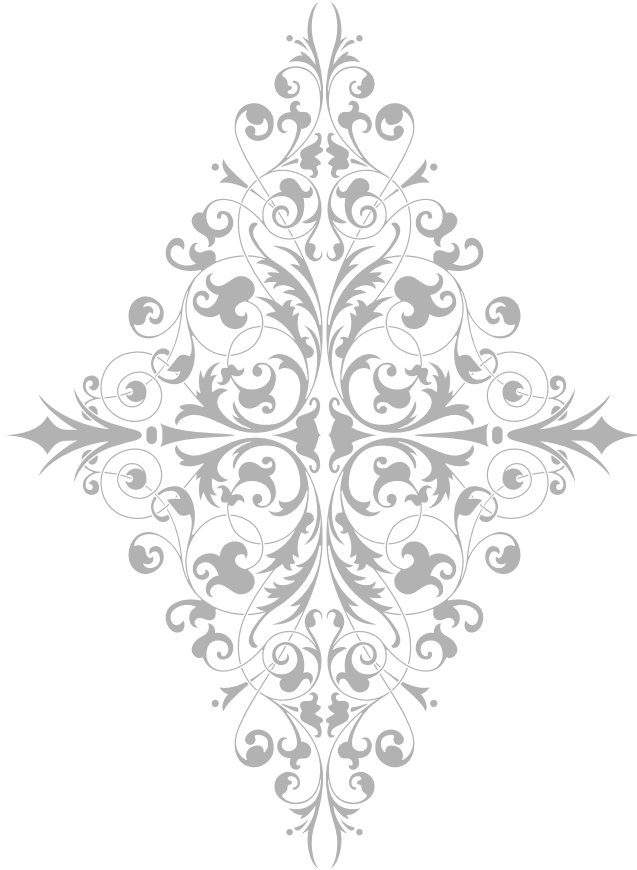
WE ARE NOT ASSURED OF VICTORY IN THIS

LIFE. JEROME: So long as we are held down by this frail body, so long as we have our treasure in earthen vessels,³² so long as the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh,³³ there can be no sure victory. "Our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."³⁴ "You make darkness," David says, "and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God."³⁵ The devil does not look for unbelievers, for those who are outside, whose flesh the Assyrian king roasted in the furnace. It is the church of Christ that he "hurries to spoil."³⁶ According to Habakkuk, "His food is the choicest."³⁷ Job is the victim of his scheming, and after devouring Judas he seeks power to sift the other apostles.³⁸ The Savior came not to

send peace on the earth but a sword.³⁹ Lucifer fell, Lucifer who used to rise at dawn,⁴⁰ and he who was raised in a paradise of delight had the well-earned sentence passed on him, "Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord."⁴¹ For he had said in his heart, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," and "I will be like the most High."⁴² Therefore God says every day to the angels, as they descend the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream,⁴³ "I have said you are gods, and all of you are children of the most High. But you shall die like mortals and fall like one of the princes."⁴⁴ The devil fell first, and since "God stands in the congregation of the gods and judged among the gods,"⁴⁵ the apostle writes to those who are ceasing to be gods, "Since there is among you envy and strife, are you not carnal and walk as humans?"⁴⁶ LETTER 22.4.⁴⁷

³⁰1 Pet 5:5. ³¹ANF 7:480-81**. ³²2 Cor 4:7. ³³Gal 5:17. ³⁴1 Pet 5:8. ³⁵Ps 104:20-21. ³⁶An allusion to Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Is 8:1). ³⁷Hab 1:16 (LXX). ³⁸Lk 22:31. ³⁹Mt 10:34. ⁴⁰Is 14:12. ⁴¹Obad 4. ⁴²Is 14:13-14. ⁴³Gen 28:12. ⁴⁴Ps 82:6-7. ⁴⁵Ps 82:1. ⁴⁶1 Cor 3:3. ⁴⁷NPNF 2:6:23-24**.





RESTORATION

JEREMIAH 30:1-24

OVERVIEW: Christ is the fulfillment of this prophecy of restoration as he breaks the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, who is a type of the devil (JEROME), and becomes the shepherd not only of Israel but of all the nations (THEODORET). The Lord sends various types of trials to his people besides Satan and Nebuchadnezzar (JOHN CASSIAN). But in the midst of the trials he also promises restoration. Thus we not only see the promised return of the exiles but also this return even more completely fulfilled in the church as God's people return to him along with the nations (JEROME). This prophecy is not only about biological children of Abraham but also children of promise (EPHREM).

30:8-9 *They Will Serve David*

SEED OF DAVID. JEROME: This is the David of whom the Gospel speaks: "It will be granted to us, that, liberated from our enemies, we may serve him without fear in holiness and justice all of our days."¹ For, just as the first Adam and the second Adam are described according to the truth of the body,² so also with David and the Lord and Savior. For, since everything that Mary gave to the Lord according to the flesh came from David, whatever was of the seed of David also took its origin and conception from the Holy Spirit.³ And that the Lord says, "I will break his yoke off of your neck, and I will destroy his hold," is undoubtedly to be understood in reference to Nebuchadnezzar as a type of the devil. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.5.2-3.⁴

CHRIST SHEPHERDS ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS. THEODORET OF CYR: "I shall raise up David their king for them." Christ the Lord

brought fulfillment to the prophecy. He sprang from David according to the flesh, and he no longer shepherds only Israel but all the nations. The prophecy had a kind of outcome by way of shadow and type in the time of Zerubbabel as well. ON JEREMIAH 7.30.⁵

30:11 *Judah Not Destroyed*

GOD TRIES PEOPLE FOUR WAYS. JOHN CASSIAN: Although we say that trial is twofold, that is, in prosperity and in adversity, yet you must know that all people are tried in three different ways. Often they are tried for their *probation*, sometimes for their *improvement*, and in some cases because their sins deserve it. For their probation indeed! We read that the blessed Abraham and Job and many of the saints endured countless tribulations. . . . For *improvement*, because God chastens his righteous ones for some small and venial sins or to raise them to a higher state of purity, and he delivers them over to various trials that he may purge away all their unclean thoughts, and, to use the prophet's word, the "dross," which he sees to have collected in their secret parts. Thus may he transmit them like pure gold to the judgment to come, as he allows nothing to remain in them for the fire of judgment to discover when hereafter it searches them with penal torments according to this saying: "Many are the tribulations of the righteous."⁶ . . . To whom under the figure of Jerusalem the following words are spoken by Jeremiah, in the person of God: "I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you

¹Lk 1:74. ²See 1 Cor 15:45-46. ³See Mt 1:18-20; Lk 1:35. ⁴CCL 74:292. ⁵PG 81:656. ⁶Ps 34:19.

I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished." . . . But as a *punishment* for sins, the blows of trial are inflicted, as where the Lord threatens that he will send plagues on the people of Israel: "I will send the teeth of beasts on them, with the fury of creatures that trail on the ground,"⁷ and "In vain have I struck your children. They have not received correction."⁸ . . . We find, it is true, a fourth way also in which we know on the authority of Scripture that some sufferings are brought on us simply for the manifestation of the *glory* of God and his works, according to these words of the Gospel: "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him,"⁹ and again, "This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified by it."¹⁰ . . . The perfect person will always remain steadfast in either kind of trial; now let us return to it once more. CONFERENCE I.6.II.¹¹

30:18 Restoring Jacob's Fortunes

ISRAEL COMPLETED IN THE CHURCH. JEROME: A type of these events previously occurred in Zerubbabel and Ezra, when the people returned and the city was begun to be built on its heights and religion observed in the temple, all of which are contained in Ezra's own book. But this was more fully and more perfectly completed in the Lord and Savior and his apostles, when the city was built on its heights—about which it is written, "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden"¹²—and the temple was founded in accordance with its order and ceremony,¹³ so that whatever was done carnally by the people in the past would be completed spiritually in the church. Then praise went forth—or thanksgiving, for this is what *thoda* means—so that all of the apostles would be able to say "grace and peace to you."¹⁴ The "voice of celebration" was not the kind of celebration in which people eat, drink, sleep and then get up to do it again for its own sake, but the kind of celebration that David enjoyed

before the ark of the Lord.¹⁵ They were also multiplied and not diminished so that the entire world would believe in God the Savior. And they were glorified so that what was written would be fulfilled: "Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!"¹⁶ They were his children, that is, the apostles, as were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the beginning, the rulers of the people of Israel. Then the Lord made a visit against all who opposed the people of God, clearly powerful adversaries.¹⁷ And "their leader came from them"—undoubtedly a reference to the Lord and Savior, who was from the Israelite race according to the flesh—and "their ruler was produced from their midst." The Father united this ruler to himself and drew near to him, as the Son would say: "I in the Father and the Father in me,"¹⁸ for no one is able thus to unite his heart to the Lord or to be joined to the Father as the Son. That it also says, "You will be my people, and I will be your God,"¹⁹ we determine to have been completed partly in Israel and fully in the multitude of nations. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.9.3-6.²⁰

30:19-20 God Repents

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION FULFILLED IN CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "I will multiply them, and they will not be diminished. Their congregation will be before my face," as during the time of Moses, Aaron and Joshua.

All this and what would follow in the prophecy below was fulfilled and was accomplished in the coming of our Lord, as we have already noted above. Like many other things in the Lord's divine plan predicted by the prophet and fulfilled by the redemption and restoration of the people of God, this passage also should not be simply understood in the sense of Israel but of people that the divine Paul calls the Israel of

⁷Deut 32:24. ⁸Jer 2:30. ⁹Jn 9:3. ¹⁰Jn 11:4. ¹¹NPNF 2 11:357-59*. ¹²Mt 5:14. ¹³Jer 30:18 (Vg). ¹⁴1 Cor 1:3. ¹⁵See 2 Sam 6:5. ¹⁶Ps 87:3. ¹⁷See Num 16:3. ¹⁸Jn 14:11. ¹⁹Only according to the Hebrew, not in the Septuagint. ²⁰CCL 74:296-97.

God who consisted of, and were gathered from, Jews and people of other nations. This passage is not simply about biological children of Abraham but about children of promise, and Paul teaches the same. Only in this more mysterious sense was the word of Jeremiah fulfilled, "They would no longer serve foreigners, but they shall serve the Lord their God and king David, whom I will raise up for them." The Jews did not have peace. After they were conquered by the Chaldeans, they never were free from fear and oppression from other foreign nations. Rather, at various times they were enslaved by Persians, Greeks

and Romans. These words of the prophet, "Jacob shall return, have rest and should not be afraid," were not fulfilled for Jews. All prophets who prophesied after the Babylonian captivity say that during their time Jews were not free from fear and wars with neighboring nations, and they did not have even a moment of rest but were instead in fear of other peoples. And even though they served the Lord their God and did not worship pagan gods, they were oppressed. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 30.19-20.²¹

²¹ESOO 2:140.





A REMNANT WILL RETURN JEREMIAH 31:1-17

OVERVIEW: The remnant of Israel is a type of all who are saved through the cross. God's people are the spiritual Israel. They are gathered by the apostles (JEROME), which happened at Pentecost (TERTULLIAN) when the Lord gathered his scattered sheep among Israel and the nations (JEROME).

Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Rachel weeping for her children was first fulfilled historically when her descendants from the tribe of Benjamin, along with Judah, were sent off to Babylon; but in a spiritual sense they were fulfilled when Herod killed the children of Bethlehem in search

of Jesus (THEODORET, EPHREM, CHRYSOSTOM). Rachel sowed the seed of her children for Christ, washed in the rain of her tears (AMBROSE). Through the suffering of the infants, Judah offered God white-clad, sinless, peaceful martyrs (CAESARIUS). The voice in Ramah is the mourning as well of the church for its martyrs (BEDE).

31:1-8 *The Remnant Restored*

ISRAEL ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT. JEROME: If the intention of the Lord were not fulfilled and if his wrath had not remained on the head

of the wicked,¹ the Lord of all could not be the God of the tribes of Israel. But he addressed this only to the remnant who were saved. And if the objection should be posed to us that he said, "I will be the God of the Israelite race" or "of all the tribes of Israel," we would cite, "If you were children of Abraham, you would do the works of your father,"² as well as the apostle, who wrote, "Consider Israel according to the flesh,"³ which implies that there is another Israel according to the Spirit. They are Israel, therefore, who discern God with the mind or who remain most steadfast in the Lord. In this way, Israel will be the people of God. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.11.1-2.⁴

DRAWN TO THE CROSS. JEROME: The remnant of the people of Israel are gathered through the apostles and apostolic people, about whom we read above "guardians will call on the mountain" and to whom it was commanded to "sing and resound," that the remnant of Israel might be saved. The Lord also promises that he will bring them down from the north country, he who is "the most severe wind but is called the right hand,"⁵ due to unbelief and the frigidity of his love. He also promises to gather them from the ends of the earth in no time other than the paschal solemnity, that is, in the days of the Lord's passion, when the Lord was crucified and when the gospel promise was fulfilled: "When I am lifted up, I will draw everyone to me."⁶ At that moment, he generated many people, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "a people is born in one moment,"⁷ for on one day, three thousand and five thousand people believed.⁸ It is also written in Hebrew, "among whom were the blind, the lame, the pregnant and women in labor together, a great gathering of those returning here." SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.15.2-4.⁹

THE GATHERING AT PENTECOST. TERTULLIAN: When Jeremiah says, "And I will gather them together from the extremities of the land in the feast day," he signifies the day of the Passover

and of Pentecost, which is properly a "feast day."¹⁰ However, every day is the Lord's. Every hour, every time, is apt for baptism. If there is a difference in the solemnity, there is no distinction in the grace. ON BAPTISM 19.¹¹

31:10 *Distant Coastlands*

THE LORD CALLS THE NATIONS. JEROME: The calling of the nations is demonstrated clearly when Scripture says, "Hear the word of the Lord, nations, and announce it to the distant coastlands." What do they announce to the distant coastlands? They announce that "the same Lord who scattered Israel will gather him," showing that it was never in the power of his enemies to scatter Israel, but only in the will of the Lord, "and guard Israel as a shepherd guards his flock," since "the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep,"¹² "for the Lord redeemed Jacob with his own precious blood and freed him from the hands of those who were more powerful or stronger." . . . "They will come," it continues, no doubt referring to those who were liberated from the hand of the powerful, "and praise their liberator on Mount Zion," that is, in the church, "and stream to the goodness of the Lord of all abundance," which is known not in the fruits and foods of this flesh but in a diversity of virtues. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.17.3-5.¹³

31:15 *Rachel Weeping for Her Children*

PROPHECY OF RACHEL'S CHILDREN. THEODORET OF CYR: Ramah belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, and the tomb of Rachel is in the hippodrome of Chaphratha on the way to Ephrath.¹⁴ While the prophecy had its fulfillment in the time of Herod the Great, who did away with the babies in the hope of doing away

¹See Jer 30:24. ²Jn 8:39. ³1 Cor 10:18. ⁴CCL 74:298. ⁵Prov 27:16 (Vg). ⁶Jn 12:32. ⁷Is 66:8. ⁸See Acts 2:41. ⁹CCL 74:301-2. ¹⁰Jer 31:8 (38:8 LXX). ¹¹ANF 3:678*. ¹²Jn 10:11. ¹³CCL 74:303-6. ¹⁴See Gen 35:19.

at the same time with the newborn Savior,¹⁵ the prophet places it here in the context of the promise of good things so as to emphasize that the birth of our Lord and Savior according to the flesh was the real good and the summit of salvation, though on account of it the babies met that unjust end. ON JEREMIAH 7.31.15.¹⁶

THE LAMENTATION OF RACHEL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Thus says the Lord: A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, sobbing and weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children." In a historical sense this prophecy speaks about sons of Judah and Benjamin living in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jeremiah later on describes the fulfillment of this prophecy, saying that tribes of Judah and Benjamin were sent to Ramah, the city of Benjamin's tribe, and then they were sent to captivity in Babylon.¹⁷ But in a spiritual sense, these words were fulfilled when Herod killed infants in Ephrathah and in its suburbs. It was said that Rachel was crying in Bethlehem and her voice was heard in Ramah because her body was buried in Bethlehem. But the people of Bethlehem were captured and sent to Ramah, and from there they had to go into a foreign land, to Babylon. It is why the prophet comforts mothers of killed infants when referring to Rachel. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 31.15.¹⁸

HEROD'S SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS.

CHRYSOSTOM: Herod sought him after his birth. He was to kill all the children in that place. And the prophet revealed this, too, foretelling it long beforehand when he said, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, mourning and much weeping, of Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are not." The Scriptures also predicted that he would come to Egypt when they said, "Out of Egypt I called my son."¹⁹ DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE PAGANS 3.7.²⁰

CHRIST BRINGS THE LIVING FAITHFUL WITH HIM. AMBROSE: What need have I to study the

rising and the setting of the stars, and at their rising plough up and pierce the fallow ground with hard ploughshares or at their setting cut the fruitful crop? One star means more to me than all the others, "the bright morning star" at whose rising was sown not the seed of grain but the seed of martyrs, that time when Rachel wept for her children to offer for Christ her babies washed with her tears. The setting of that star brought back in triumph from the tomb not the unfeeling relics of funeral piles but bands of the living, who had been dead. LETTER 50(44).²¹

GOD DELIVERED THE INFANTS WHEN HEROD

KILLED. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Today we are celebrating the feast of all those infants who, the Gospel text tells us, were killed by King Herod, and for this reason our land, the fruitful mother of heavenly soldiers and such great virtues, should rejoice with the greatest exultation. Behold, the wicked enemy could never have helped the blessed infants as much by submission as he did by his hatred. As today's most sacred feast shows us, the grace of benediction shone forth in the blessed infants as much as cruelty against them abounded. For we heard a little while ago that when King Herod was pursuing Christ, thousands of happy boys were killed. As the prophet said, "Rachel mourns her children; she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more." The blessed mother of the triumphant, the land of illustrious warriors, rich in children, for a short time seemed to the eyes of the foolish to be bereaved. But she never was in need of consolation, nor did she bewail the sons whom she acquired with enviable sorrows, even while she lost them. Blessed are you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, who suffered the cruelty of King Herod in the death of your sons and at the same time merited to offer to God a white-clad group of peaceable, sinless infants. SERMON 222.1.²²

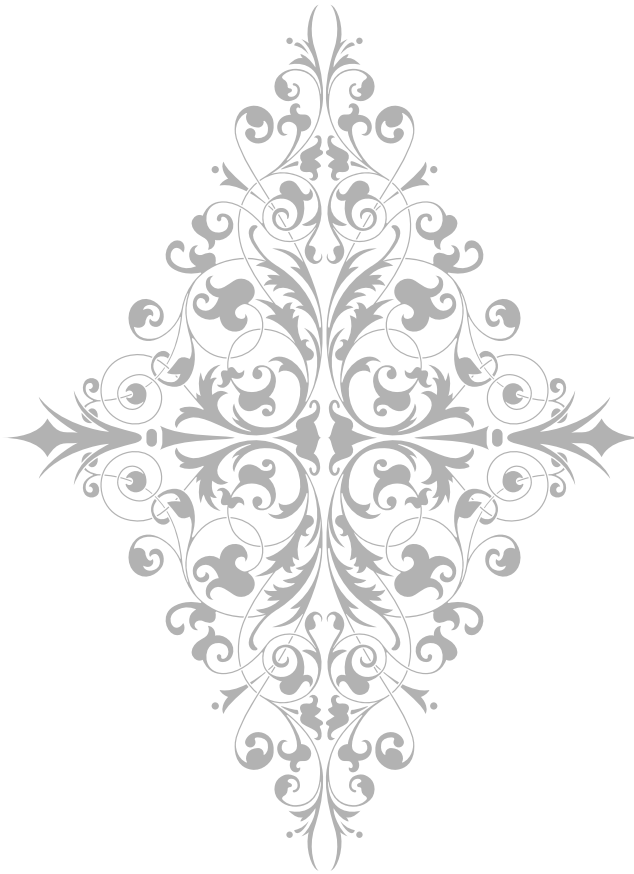
¹⁵See Mt 2:16-18. ¹⁶PG 81:661. ¹⁷Jer 40:1 (47:1 LXX). ¹⁸ESOO 2:141. ¹⁹Mt 2:15 ²⁰FC 73:199. ²¹FC 26:269. ²²FC 66:139.

GOD HATES THE DEATH OF THE FAITHFUL.

BEDE: According to the oracle of Jeremiah, “A voice was heard in Ramah,” that is, “on high,” “of lamentation and great wailing.” This clearly denotes that holy church’s mourning, by which it grieves for the violent death of its members, does

not, as our enemies foolishly claim, pass away into a void, but it ascends right to the throne of the heavenly judge. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 1.10.²³

²³CS 110:97.



NO MORE HEREDITARY GUILT
JEREMIAH 31:18-30

OVERVIEW: We purify ourselves by weeping for our sins. Moved by such sorrow, God promises mercy. Jesus was sorrowful not over his own sin, which he did not have, but over our sin, even to the point of death so that we might exchange our sorrow for joy (AMBROSE). God has called his church to receive those who sorrow over their sin. If one congregation has perhaps been too lenient, this does not mean that the entire church is at fault (PACIAN). Each individual is responsible for his own sin. God will not hold a child guilty of the sins of his or her parents. Rather, because of the mediation of his Son (AUGUSTINE), he promises children the greatest blessings even when their parents sin (THEODORET).

31:18-20 *Ephraim's Repentant Weeping*

THE LORD HEARS THE WEEPING OF THE PENITENT. AMBROSE: Let us purify ourselves by tears, that the Lord our God may hear us when we lament, as he heard Ephraim when weeping, as it is written: "I have surely heard Ephraim weeping." He expressly repeats the words of Ephraim: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised; like a calf I was not trained." For a calf shows itself off and leaves its stall, and so Ephraim was untrained like a calf far away from the stall, because he had forsaken the stall of the Lord, followed Jeroboam and worshiped the calves, which future event was prophetically indicated through Aaron, namely, that the people of the Jews would fall after this manner. And so repenting, Ephraim says, "Turn me, and I shall be turned, for you are the Lord my God. Surely in the end of my captivity I repented, and after I learned I mourned over the days of confusion and subjected myself to you because I received reproach and made you known." CONCERNING REPENTANCE 2.5:36.¹

31:26 *A Pleasant Sleep*

LET OUR CONVERSION BE SINCERE. AMBROSE: Let us, then, submit ourselves to God

and not be subject to sin, and when we ponder the remembrance of our offenses, let us blush as though at some disgrace and not speak of them as a glory to us, as some boast of overcoming modesty or putting down the feeling of justice. Let our conversion be such that we who did not know God may now ourselves declare him to others, that the Lord, moved by such a conversion on our part, may answer to us: "Ephraim is from youth a dear son, a pleasant child, for since my words are concerning him, I will truly remember him; therefore have I hastened to be over him. I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord."² And what mercy he promises us, the Lord also shows, when he says further on: "I have satiated every thirsty soul and have satisfied every hungry soul. Therefore, I woke up and beheld, and my sleep was sweet to me." We observe that the Lord promises his sacraments to those who sin. Let us, then, all be converted to the Lord. CONCERNING REPENTANCE 2.5:38-39.³

THOSE WHO WEEP IN REPENTANCE. AMBROSE: The Lord Jesus said, "Now my soul is troubled."⁴ For he who took on our infirmities also took on our feelings. He was sad even to death, but not by reason of death. For the death that was freely chosen could not have held sorrow. In it was the future joy of all people and the refreshment of all. Concerning it the Scripture said, in another passage, "And I rose up and saw, and sleep became pleasant to me." Good is the sleep that has made the hungry not to hunger and the thirsty not to thirst and has prepared for them the pleasant savor of the mysteries. How then was Christ's soul troubled when he made the souls of others not to fear? He was sad, then, even to death, until grace should be fulfilled. This is proved by his testimony as he speaks of his death, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished."⁵ THE PRAYER OF JOB AND DAVID 4.3.II.⁶

¹NPNF 2 10:350**. ²Jer 31:20 (38:20 LXX). ³NPNF 2 10:350**.

⁴Jn 12:27. ⁵Lk 12:50. ⁶FC 65:397-98.

31:29-30 Everyone Dies for One's Own Sin**INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SIN.**

PACIAN OF BARCELONA: Will you be able to persuade anyone that, by receiving those who lapsed, the entire church has fallen? That the party of those who receive them back has become like someone who denies the faith because they admit penitents? But even if a congregation somehow has been too lenient, have other congregations who did not approve of their actions but rather followed convention and kept communion, also lost the name Christian? Hear the voice of Jeremiah! "In those days they shall not say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But each one shall die for his own sin." LETTER 3.3.3.⁷

CHILDREN ARE NOT TO PAY FOR PARENTS'

SINS. THEODORET OF CYR: It is similarly impossible, he says, for children to be called to account for ancestral sins, because I promise to children the greatest blessings even when their parents sin. ON JEREMIAH 7.31.⁸

SINS OF FATHERS NOT HELD AGAINST SONS.

AUGUSTINE: Finally, that we may not be disturbed by the words I have quoted and many others of like importance, about returning the sins of the parents on the children—words written truthfully, yet that might be thought contrary to this prophecy—he solves this very vexed question by adding, "Behold, the days shall come, says the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their ancestors."⁹ In this new covenant through the blood of the Mediator, the paternal decree having been cancelled, humankind by rebirth begins to be no longer subject to the paternal debts that bind them at birth, as the Mediator says: "And call no one on earth your father,"¹⁰ inasmuch as we but shall live forever with the Father. AGAINST JULIAN 6.25.82.¹¹

⁶FC 65:397-98. ⁷FC 99:41-42**. ⁸PG 81:665. ⁹Jer 31:31-32. ¹⁰Mt 23:9. ¹¹FC 35:394-95.



THE NEW COVENANT
JEREMIAH 31:31-34

OVERVIEW: Although often alluded to, nowhere in the Old Testament do we find any clear mention of the New Testament, as we do here (AUGUSTINE). It speaks of two covenants but only one Lawgiver (CHRYSOSTOM) because God is the author of both covenants (IRENAEUS, CHRYSOSTOM). The former covenant was incomplete (THEODORET) because it commanded and threatened, while the new covenant is called new because of the newness of the spirit it brings that heals the new person from the faults of the old person (AUGUSTINE). This new covenant, promised through the prophet Jeremiah, is delivered through the Lord of the prophets in the New Testament (AUGUSTINE). It calls on us to put aside the clothing of the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant, such as circumcision, unleavened bread and the literal observance of the Sabbath, and to put on the clothing of the New Covenant of obedience from the heart (AUGUSTINE). The number seven, symbolizing the Sabbath, has gone; the number eight, symbolizing the resurrection has come (AMBROSE), since the Old Testament was only a type of the New Testament (CHRYSOSTOM). Notice also how Jeremiah says that the new covenant is promised to the Jews, not the Gentiles, because it was with the Jews he had made the first covenant (AUGUSTINE), although Gentiles are also included in this new covenant (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

After Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, there is a new relationship with the law as God writes his law on our hearts so that we are now taught by the Holy Spirit (JEROME). As the finger of God, the Spirit wrote the first law on tablets of stone but writes this law on our hearts. The reward for keeping this covenant is defined briefly in Jeremiah: "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (AUGUSTINE). God will teach us in heaven, so that our knowledge will be perfect, even as he is teaching us now through his Spirit as we memorize in our hearts the gospel he teaches us that is summarized in the creed (AUGUSTINE) and in the law: to love one's neighbor as oneself (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA).

Jeremiah describes for us what our future life of bliss under the new covenant would be like (THEODORET), noting how easy it should be for others besides only the Jews to come to know the Lord (CHRYSOSTOM). He also predicts that our worship in the Spirit will be different from theirs and that of the Old Covenant but not in opposition to it (JEROME). Since God teaches us as those made in his image, we should imitate him and not our human teachers (AUGUSTINE), who will come and go even as the Scriptures endure until the end when we fully know the Lord (BEDE).

Jeremiah concludes this portion of prophecy by noting God's amnesia over our sins even as we grow in knowledge of him (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). He prophesies of the infinite grace of forgiveness that will be at the disposal of those believers with penitent hearts (CHRYSOSTOM) and of the wonderful equality that will be evident in his kingdom even as there is also differentiation (JEROME). Jesus has rewritten the law in our hearts with the pen of the Holy Spirit and has promised pardon and perseverance for all who receive him (PROSPER).

31:31 A New Covenant

AN EXPLICIT PROMISE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. AUGUSTINE: Nowhere, or hardly anywhere, except in this passage of the prophet, do we find in the Old Testament Scriptures any mention so made of the New Testament as to indicate it by its name. It is no doubt often referred to and foretold as about to be given, but not so plainly as to have its name mentioned. Consider, then, carefully what difference God has testified as existing between the two Testaments—the old covenant and the new. ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER 33.¹

ONE LAWGIVER. CHRYSOSTOM: From the prophets I will prove that the Old and New

¹NPNF 1 5:97**.

Covenants have one Lawgiver. And so, what does Jeremiah say? “I will give you a new covenant.” Do you see Jeremiah’s prophetic reference to a new covenant that shines forth brilliantly for so many years before Christ’s coming? “I will give you a new covenant.” But how does it seem that he gave even the Old? When he said, “I will give you a new covenant,” he added, “not like the covenant that I gave to your ancestors.” *HOMILIES ON REPENTANCE AND ALMSGIVING* 6.4.15.²

THE SAME GOD OF OLD AND NEW COVENANTS. *IRENAEUS:* All things therefore are of one and the same substance, that is, from one and the same God, just as the Lord says to the disciples, “Therefore every scribe who is instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.”³ He did not teach that the one who brought forth the old was one while the person who brought forth the new was another. Rather, he taught that they were one and the same. For the Lord is the good man of the house who rules the entire house of his Father and who delivers a law suited both for slaves and those who are as yet undisciplined. He provides fitting precepts to those who are free and have been justified by faith, as well as throwing his own inheritance open to those who are sons and daughters. And he called his disciples “scribes” and “teachers of the kingdom of heaven” of whom also he elsewhere says to the Jews, “Behold, I send to you wise men, and scribes and teachers; and some of them you shall kill and persecute from city to city.”⁴ Now, without contradiction, he means by those things that are brought forth from the treasure new and old—the two covenants. The old concerns that giving of the law that took place formerly. He points out the new as being that manner of life required by the gospel, of which David says, “Sing to the Lord a new song.”⁵ . . . And Jeremiah says, “Behold, I will make a new covenant, not as I made with your ancestors” in Mount Horeb. But one and the same householder produced

both covenants, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke with Abraham and Moses, and who has again restored us to liberty and has multiplied that grace that is from himself. *AGAINST HERESIES* 4.9.1.⁶

GOD GAVE THE OLD TESTAMENT AS WELL AS THE NEW. *CHRYSOSTOM:* Don’t you see how their reasoning comes around to the very contrary? The God of the old covenant, whom they call cruel, will be found mild and meek. The God of the new, whom they acknowledged to be good, will be hard and grievous, according to their madness. But we say that there is but one and the same Legislator of both covenants, who dispensed all correctly and adapted to the difference of the times the difference between the two systems of law. Therefore the first commandments are not cruel, nor are the second hard and grievous, but all come from one and the same providential care. Hear the affirmation of the prophet that God gave the old covenant also, or rather (so we must speak), the affirmation of him who is both the one and the other: “I will make a covenant with you, not according to the covenant that I made with your ancestors.” *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW* 16.8.⁷

THE OLD COVENANT WAS INCOMPLETE. *THEODORET OF CYR:* He conveyed to us, of course, many prophecies on the same point: first, that there is one Lawgiver for the two covenants; then, the incompleteness of the former covenant, since there would be no need for the second one if the former had been adequate. *ON JEREMIAH* 7.31-32.⁸

FAITH REPLACES TRUST IN ONESELF. *AUGUSTINE:* Because of the offense of the old Adam, which was by no means healed by the law that commanded and threatened, it is called the old covenant. The other is called the new covenant,

²FC 96:78-79. ³Mt 13:52. ⁴Mt 23:34. ⁵Ps 96:1 (95:1 LXX). ⁶ANF 1:472. ⁷NPNF 1 10:109-10**. ⁸PG 81:665.

because of the newness of the spirit that heals the new Adam of the fault of the old. Then consider what follows, and see in how clear a light the fact is placed, that people who have faith are unwilling to trust in themselves: “Because,” says he, “this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.” *ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER* 35.⁹

GOD IS KNOWN TO JEWS AND GENTILES.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: For we find in the Scriptures, as the Lord says, “Behold, I make with you a new covenant, not as I made with your ancestors in Mount Horeb.” He made a new covenant with us. For what belonged to the Greeks and Jews is old. But we, who worship him in a new way, in the third form, are Christians. For clearly, as I think, he showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically and in a new and spiritual way by us. *STROMATEIS* 6.5.¹⁰

31:32 Not Like the Covenant with Their Ancestors

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE FORMED IN TORAH. **AUGUSTINE:** Learn, all of you—learn! What better law of God is there, after all, than the holy gospel? It is the law of the New Testament, about which you heard, when the prophet was read, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, I will perfect on the house of Jacob a new testament, not like the testament that I laid down for their ancestors when I led them from the land of Egypt.” The testament (or covenant) is promised there, delivered here. It is promised through the prophet, delivered through the Lord of the prophets. *SERMON* 25.1.¹¹

PUT ON THE NEW CLOTHING OF THE NEW COVENANT. **AUGUSTINE:** “But I,” he says, “hold on to what God handed over to Moses.” Listen to what God says through the prophet. What

is God telling Jeremiah? “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, I will confirm on the house of Jacob a new covenant.” Leave the old aside, take up the new, and you can see that you ought to leave aside circumcision, and unleavened bread taken literally, and the sabbath taken literally and the sacrifices taken literally. Listen to how the new covenant is promised: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, I will confirm for them a new covenant, not like the covenant that I gave to their ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt,” when the law of commandments was given, when the people were led through the desert. It is not like that that I will give the new covenant. So do not go on wearing the old tunic. That was what crucified Christ. Your parent crucified him; you hate him. He by his own hand, you in your heart, both of you have carried out the crime. Therefore be displeased with what your parent did, and listen to what your Lord has done. *SERMON* 196A.2.¹²

THE BEAUTY OF THE NEW COVENANT. **AMBROSE:** The number seven has gone. The number eight has come. Yesterday is gone. Today has come. That is the promised day on which we have been warned to hear and follow God’s Word. The day of the Old Testament is gone. The new day has come in which the New Testament is made perfect, of which Jeremiah says, “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their ancestors, in that day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” He adds the reason why the covenant was changed: “They did not abide by my covenant, and I did not regard them, says the Lord.”¹³ *LETTER* 50(44).¹⁴

THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS A TYPE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. **CHRYSOSTOM:** There was

⁹NPNF 1 5:98. ¹⁰ANF 2:489. ¹¹WSA 3 2:82. ¹²WSA 3 6:65-66.

¹³Heb 8:9. ¹⁴FC 26:271.

a law before, and there is a law now: “The law of the Spirit of life has delivered me.”¹⁵ There was worship before, and there is worship now: “Whose worship,” Paul says, and again, “Who serve God in spirit.”¹⁶ There was a covenant before, and there is a covenant now: “I will make a new covenant with you, not according to the covenant that I made with your ancestors.” There was holiness before, and there is holiness now. There was a baptism before, and there is a baptism now. There was a sacrifice before, and there is a sacrifice now. There was a temple before, and there is a temple now. There was a circumcision before, and there is a circumcision now. So also there was grace before, and there is a grace now. But the first-named as types, and the others as the reality, have kept the same name but not the same meaning. Thus, even in pictures and images one that is done in black and white shades is said to be a person, and likewise one that has been done in realistic colors. Similarly, in the case of statues, both the gold one and clay one are called statues, but the one as a model, the other as the real statue. **HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 14.**¹⁷

THE ABIDING GRACE OF THE GOSPEL. **JEROME:** For the grace of the law, which has passed away, we have received the abiding grace of the gospel, and, instead of the shadows and figures of the ancient covenant, truth has come by Jesus Christ. Jeremiah also prophesies in the person of God: “Behold, the days shall come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their ancestors, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” Notice what he says, that it is not to the people of the Gentiles, with whom he had not previously made a covenant, but to the people of the Jews, to whom he had given the law by Moses, that he promises the new covenant of the gospel, so that they might no longer live according to the ancient letter but in the newness of the Spirit. **LETTER 75.**¹⁸

31:33 *The Law Written on Their Hearts*

SALVATION FROM THE JEWS. **JEROME:** When Israel was led out of the land of Egypt, God was intimate only with that people, such that it could be said that he took them by the hand and made a covenant with them, which they then violated and were therefore neglected by the Lord. Now, however, it is promised in the gospel that after the cross, resurrection and ascension, the covenant will be written not on stone tablets but on tablets of embodied hearts,¹⁹ since the testament of the Lord was to be written on the minds of believers, he being God dwelling in them and they a people in him, so that they would never again seek Jewish teachers and traditions and human commandments²⁰ but would be taught instead by the Holy Spirit, provided that they are worthy to hear: “You are God’s temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you.”²¹ But “the Spirit blows where he wills”²² and has various graces and is himself the possession of the knowledge of the God of all virtue. “And I will forgive their iniquities, and I will not remember their sins any more,” he says. From this, it is clear, according to the proper knowledge of the reading above, that this must be understood of the Savior’s first coming, when both the people of Israel and Judah were joined together. Should anyone worry, however, about why it says “I will make a new covenant—or testament—with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with your ancestors,” he should first understand that the church of Christ came to everyone from the Jews and, moreover, that the Lord Savior said, “I came only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”²³ **SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.26.5-8.**²⁴

THE BEAUTY OF THE NEW COVENANT. **AUGUSTINE:** Isn’t the finger of God to be understood as

¹⁵Rom 8:2. ¹⁶Phil 3:3. ¹⁷FC 33:132-33. ¹⁸FC 12:357-58. ¹⁹2 Cor 3:3. ²⁰See Mk 7:8; Col 2:8. ²¹1 Cor 3:16. ²²Jn 3:8; cf. 1 Cor 12:4. ²³Mt 15:24. ²⁴CCL 74:319-20.

being the Holy Spirit? Read the gospel, and see that where one Evangelist has the Lord saying, "If I with the Spirit of God cast out demons,"²⁵ another says, "If I with the finger of God cast out demons."²⁶ So if that law too was written by the finger of God, that is by the Spirit of God, the Spirit by which Pharaoh's magicians were defeated, so they said, "This is the finger of God."²⁷ So if that law too, indeed because that law too was composed by the Spirit of God, that is, by the finger of God, why can it not be said of it, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ has delivered you from the law of sin and death"? . . . So, the "law of the Spirit of life," written on the heart, not on stone, in Christ Jesus, in whose person was celebrated the ultimately real and genuine Passover "has delivered you from the law of sin and death."²⁸ SERMON 155.3, 6.²⁹

GOD IS THE GOOD REWARD FOR THE FAITHFUL. AUGUSTINE: What are you asking about, you see, is what special thing God is keeping for the good, if he generously bestows so many things on both good and bad. When I said, "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it come up into the heart of people,"³⁰ there is no lack of people to say, "Can you think what it is?" Here is what it is that God is keeping for the good alone, though it is he who has made them good. Here is what it is. Our reward has been very briefly defined by the prophet: I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will be their God. He has promised us himself as our reward. SERMON 331.4.³¹

GOD IS OUR HAPPINESS. AUGUSTINE: God is the reward, in him the end, in him the perfection of happiness, in him the sum of the blessed and eternal life. For after saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," he at once adds, "And they shall no more teach everyone his neighbor, and everyone his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them." ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER 39.³²

GOD IS JERUSALEM'S REWARD. AUGUSTINE: Here, God is Jerusalem's reward. Its highest—its entire—good is to possess him and to be possessed by him. CITY OF GOD 17.3.³³

WE ALL LOOK FORWARD TO GOD TEACHING US. AUGUSTINE: I have acted thus, not as a finished master but as one needing to be perfected with his pupils, excellent lady, daughter deservedly honored and cherished in Christ. Indeed, even in the subjects that, one way or another, I know, I am more anxious for you to be learned than to be in need of my learning, for we ought not to desire the ignorance of others in order to teach what we know. It surely is much better for all of us to be ready to be taught of God what will certainly be perfected in that country on high when the promise will be fulfilled in us, that a person shall not say to his neighbor, "Know the Lord, for all shall know him," as it is written, "from the least of them even to the greatest." LETTER 266.³⁴

THE CREED IS TO BE LEARNED BY HEART. AUGUSTINE: You should not write the creed out in any way, but, so as to hold the exact words of the creed, learn it by listening. Not even when you have learned it should you write it down, but, rather, always hold it and cherish it in your memory. For whatever you will hear in the creed is contained in the inspired books of the Holy Scriptures. The fact that it is not permitted to write down what has been thus collected and reduced to a definite form comes about in memory of the promise of God in which, predicting a New Testament, he said in the words of the prophet: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, by setting my law in their minds, I will write it also in their hearts." SERMON 212.2.³⁵

²⁵Mt 12:28. ²⁶Lk 11:20. ²⁷Ex 8:19. ²⁸Rom 8:2. ²⁹WSA 3 5:86-87. ³⁰1 Cor 2:9. ³¹WSA 3 9:192. ³²NPNF 1 5:99. ³³FC 24:21. ³⁴FC 32:283. ³⁵FC 38:120.

THE LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: It was probable, however, that the holy apostles would perhaps think these things difficult to put into practice. Therefore he who knows all things takes the natural law of self-love as the arbiter of what any one would wish to obtain from another. Treat others, he says, such as you wish them to treat you. If you would have them harsh and unfeeling, fierce and wrathful, revengeful and ill-disposed, treat them this way. But if, on the contrary, you would have them kind and forgiving, do not think it a thing intolerable to be so yourselves. And in the case of those so disposed, the law is perhaps unnecessary, because God writes on our hearts the knowledge of his will. "For in those days," says the Lord, "I will surely give my laws into their minds and will write them on their hearts." COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 29.³⁶

31:34 *They Will All Know the Lord*

THE BLISS OF OUR FUTURE LIFE. THEODORET OF CYR: The future life achieves the fulfillment of these words. In that life we shall no longer need instruction from one another, since everything will be patently obvious. Sufferings will be at an end, bodies will be incorruptible, souls will be immune to change. Now it is customary with the divine Scripture to mix prophecies together. It connects prophecies about his repeated call to Israel with those about the captivity, and the Lord in the sacred Gospels cites at the one time the sayings about Jerusalem and those about the consummation. ON JEREMIAH 7:31.³⁷

THE GOSPEL WILL SPREAD. CHRYSOSTOM: Consider how easy it is for people to obey. For Jeremiah said, "They shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the Lord.' For all men will know me from the least of them to the greatest." And Isaiah showed how indestructible the Church would be. "For in the last days the mountain of the Lord will be conspicuous, and the house

of the Lord will be on top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills. And to this mountaintop will come many peoples and many nations."³⁸ DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE PAGANS 6.5.³⁹

GOD'S GRACE IS FOR ALL OF CREATION.

CHRYSOSTOM: Let me beg you to consider then this simple and single-hearted person⁴⁰ and take notice of him in the affairs of life, and you will see him a pattern of the utmost scrupulousness, such that if he would have shown it in spiritual matters he would not have been overlooked. The facts of the truth are clearer than the sun. And wherever a person may go, he might easily lay hold of his own salvation, if he wanted to, that is, to be obedient and not to look on this as a byproduct. For were these events confined to Palestine or to a little corner of the world? Didn't you hear the prophet say, "All shall know me, from the least even to the greatest"? HOMILIES ON ROMANS 26.⁴¹

A NEW KIND OF WORSHIP. AUGUSTINE: If we are asked why we do not worship God as the Hebrew ancestors of the Old Testament worshiped him, we reply that God has taught us differently by the New Testament fathers, and yet not in opposition to the Old Testament, but as that Testament itself predicted. For it is thus foretold by the prophet Jeremiah . . . that that covenant would not continue but that there would be a new one. And to the objection that we do not belong to the house of Israel or to the house of Judah, we answer according to the teaching of the apostle, who calls Christ the seed of Abraham and says to us, as belonging to Christ's body, "Therefore you are Abraham's seed." REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN 32.9.⁴²

HUMANS ARE MADE NEW IN GOD'S IMAGE. AUGUSTINE: You do not say, "Let man be made," but, "Let us make man." Nor do

³⁶CGSL 137*. ³⁷PG 81:668. ³⁸Is 2:2. ³⁹FC 73:213. ⁴⁰Cornelius. ⁴¹NPNF 1 11:532*. ⁴²NPNF 1 4:335.

you say, “after his kind,” but after “our image” and “likeness.” Because, being renewed in his mind and beholding and apprehending your truth, a person does not need another person as his director so that he may imitate his own kind. By your direction he proves what your good, acceptable and perfect will is. You teach him—now that he has been made capable—to perceive the Trinity of the Unity and the Unity of the Trinity. Therefore this being said in the plural, “Let us make man,” it is yet followed by the phrase in the singular, “and God made man.” This is said in the plural, “after our likeness,” followed by the phrase in the singular, “after the image of God.”⁴³ Thus humankind is renewed in the knowledge of God, after the image of him who created them.⁴⁴ Being made spiritual, he judges all things—all things that are to be judged—“yet he himself is judged by no mortal.”⁴⁵ CONFESSIONS 13.22.32.⁴⁶

SACRED SCRIPTURE REMAINS. BEDE: The teachers of the Word come and go, and others follow in the succession of those who pass away. But the sacred Scripture remains for all time without ever being abolished, until the time when the Lord shall appear at the end of the world. Then we shall have no further need for the Scriptures or for those who interpret them, since there will be a long-awaited fulfillment of that promise of the Lord that says, “And they shall not teach their neighbor and brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.” ON THE TABERNACLE 1.7.⁴⁷

GOD WILL BE MERCIFUL. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: God raised Christ to the skies, transplanting mortality into immortality and translating earth to heaven—he, the husbandman of God, “pointing out the favorable signs and rousing the nations to good works, putting them in mind of their true sustenance,”⁴⁸ having bestowed on us the truly great, divine and inalienable inheritance of the Father, deifying people

by heavenly teaching, putting his laws into our minds and writing them on our hearts. What laws does he inscribe? “That all shall know God, from small to great,” and, “I will be merciful to them,” says God, “and will not remember their sins.” Let us receive the laws of life, let us comply with God’s corrections. Let us become acquainted with him, that he may be gracious. EXHORTATION TO THE GREEKS II.⁴⁹

GOD’S INFINITE GRACE PROPHESED BY JEREMIAH. CHRYSOSTOM: To show the rapidity of the change and the facility with which they would embrace Christ’s teaching, the prophet went on to say, “And they shall no more teach everyone his neighbor and everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” On his coming, Christ would also pardon the transgressions of all people and no more remember their sins. What could be clearer than this? By these predictions the prophet revealed the calling of the Gentiles, the superiority of the new law over the old law, the ease of access, the grace possessed by those who have believed and the gift given in baptism. DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE PAGANS 10.9-10.⁵⁰

WONDERFUL EQUALITY IN CHRIST’S KINGDOM. JEROME: In Jeremiah, we read concerning the future kingdom . . . , “They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them.” The context of this passage clearly shows that the prophet is describing the future kingdom. But how can there possibly be in it a least or greatest, if all are to be equal? The secret is disclosed in the Gospel: “Whoever shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever shall teach and not do shall be least.”⁵¹ AGAINST JOVINIANUS 2.27.⁵²

⁴³Gen 1:27. ⁴⁴Col 3:10. ⁴⁵1 Cor 2:15. ⁴⁶NPNF 1 1:200-201**.

⁴⁷TTH 18:30. ⁴⁸A quotation from Aratus. ⁴⁹ANF 2:203-4**.

⁵⁰FC 73:230-31*. ⁵¹Mt 5:19. ⁵²NPNF 2 6:409.

JESUS WRITES GRACE WHERE THE LAW CONDEMNED. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE: The adulterous woman whom the law prescribed to be stoned was set free by him with truth and grace when the avengers of the law, frightened with the state of their own conscience, had left the trembling guilty woman to the judgment of him who had come “to seek and save what was lost.”⁵³ For that reason he, bowing down—that is, stooping down to our human level and intent on the work of our reformation—“wrote with his finger on the ground,”⁵⁴ in order to repeal the law of the commandments with the decrees of his grace and to reveal himself as the One who had said, “I will give my laws in their understanding, and I will write them in their hearts.” This indeed he does every day when he infuses his will into the hearts of those who are called and when with the pen of the Holy Spirit the Truth mercifully rewrites on the pages of their souls all that the devil enviously falsified. **THE CALL OF ALL NATIONS 1.8.**⁵⁵

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISE. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE: Obviously, those who have heard the gospel and refused to believe are all the more inexcusable than if they had not listened to any

preaching of the truth. But it is certain that in God’s foreknowledge they were not children of Abraham and were not reckoned among the number of them of whom it is said, “In your seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.”⁵⁶ He promised them the faith when he said, “And no one shall teach his neighbor and no one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord.’ For all shall know me, from the small among them even to the great.” He promised them pardon when he said, “I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” He promised them an obedient heart when he said, “I will give them another heart and another way, that they may fear me all days.”⁵⁷ He promised them perseverance when he said, “I will give my fear in their heart, that they may not revolt from me, and I will visit them, that I may make them good.”⁵⁸ Finally, to all without exception he promised the faith when he said, “I have sworn by myself, justice alone shall go out of my mouth, and my words shall not be turned away. Every knee shall be bowed to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”⁵⁹ **THE CALL OF ALL NATIONS 1.9.**⁶⁰

⁵³Lk 19:10. ⁵⁴Jn 8:6. ⁵⁵ACW 14:38. ⁵⁶Gen 28:14. ⁵⁷Jer 32:39. ⁵⁸Jer 32:40. ⁵⁹Is 45:23. ⁶⁰ACW 14:44-45.



THE REBUILDING OF THE CITY JEREMIAH 31:35 - 40

OVERVIEW: God will ensure that his people survive, just as surely as the laws governing night and day will endure (EPHREM). The literal city of Jerusalem did not necessarily survive the way Jeremiah prophesied. But spiritual Jerusalem, the church which is the City of God, is to be rebuilt into a lasting city according to the promise in Jeremiah. Jeremiah lays out the straight lines for the plan of its rebuilding, but those are lines we sinners cannot toe while in this life. Despite our failures, however, the church will never be destroyed (JEROME).

31:35-36 *If Day and Night Cease*

GOD'S PROMISE IS FULFILLED IN CHRIST.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "If laws of day and night cease to speak before my face, says the Lord, then the descendants of Israel cease to be a nation forever." It is impossible that the world order established from the beginning would change, that is, movement of stars, change of seasons. Therefore, without doubt, the promise given to David would not be left unfulfilled, and his kingdom and his seed would not cease before God's face. Although this prophecy was fulfilled in its own time for Zerubbabel, who ruled over David's kingdom, it was more completely fulfilled in our Lord, as even the angel said, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign in the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end."¹

And the prophet repeats and confirms later on what is said here about the spread and eternity of Christ's kingdom by saying, "Just as

the heavenly stars could not be counted and the sands of the sea could not be measured, so I will increase the seed of David,"² that is, the seed of his Word (Logos), son of David, priests and the Levites of the new covenant. According to their dignified status, the prophet depicts the gospel and the church of Christ in the image of the powers of heaven (stars) and their spread in the image of the sands of the sea, because thus it should be that the gospel and the church would become known to all the ends of the universe and that all nations would believe in them. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 31:36.³

31:38-40 *Rebuilding the City*

JEREMIAH DOES NOT PROPHECY A LITERAL RESTORATION. JEROME: Those who accept the reign of the Messiah for one thousand years in the land of Judea—clearly the Jews and our Judaizers—strive to claim and to demonstrate that the sanctuary of the Lord, that is, the temple, must be maintained forever in one location, specifically that of the tower of Hananel and the corner gate and the hill Gareb and Goah and the entire valley of corpses and ashes and the river Kidron and the corner of the eastern Gate of Horses. Because they are unable to show that it was completed after their captivity in the times of Zerubbabel and Ezra, they pass to the times of the Messiah, whom they say is coming at the consummation of the world, so that a golden and bejeweled Jerusalem can descend, according to

¹Lk 1:32-33. ²Jer 33:22. ³ESOO 2:142.

the Apocalypse of John,⁴ and be built within this space of land, that is, beginning at one place and ending at another. And they receive this whiff of a suspicion that the foundation of the city is to be laid from the tower at Anathoth, which today is called Jeremiah's and is separated from Jerusalem by three thousand [sic], to the river Kidron, where there is a garden in which Judas the traitor betrayed the Savior, as written in the Gospel.⁵

"We are about to read in what follows," they say, "that Hanamel the son of Shallum was Jeremiah's uncle and that Jeremiah bought Hanamel's field and that this is the tower of Hanamel."⁶ Yet, they did not know the truth of the Hebrew, for this is what is written: "from the tower of Hananel," with an *n* clearly as the fifth letter, whereas the name in the other phrase has an *m* as the fifth letter: "Behold, Hanamel, son of Shallum, your uncle, will come to you."⁷ SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.29.2-5.⁸

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, CITY OF GOD.

JEROME: Invoking the Lord and Savior "who has the key of David, who opens and no one closes, who closes and no one opens,"⁹ . . . let us approach the edifice of the city to which the prophetic words were directed: "Glorious things are said of you, O city of God,"¹⁰ and "the river's flow delights the City of God."¹¹ Thus, the church is built from the tower "of obedience" or "grace" or "the gifts of God"—for this is what Hananel means—to the corner gate. Even though the church may appear to have a sublime beginning, we are unable to possess the straight line of truth as long as we are in the flesh, but we stand on a corner with broken lines, where the measuring line goes out beyond the corner gate to the hill Gareb, which, in our language, is translated either "sojourn" or "itch," to teach us that we are foreigners and wanderers with ears itching to provide easy agreement to the worst of new doctrines.¹²

And "it will go around Goah," it says, which the Septuagint translates as "a circuit around

chosen stones,"¹³ who wish to be on the face of the earth and are bound together by the cornerstone, with the apostle Peter saying, "like living stones, be built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."¹⁴ It continues, "And it goes around the entire valley of Phagarim," which means "ruins" and "ashes," so that even though we appear to be in the hills, we may always yet fear the ruins and consider the ashes and say penance with David: "I ate ashes like bread and mixed tears into my drink."¹⁵ Hence, to the sleeping it is said, "Is it not true that one who falls rises again, says the Lord?"¹⁶ It also says "the entire Sademoth," which we translate as the "region of death," from *sade*, which means "region," and *moth*, which means "death." But Aquila translates it "suburban," or "field" and "country." But the "region of death" is the region of sinners and "suburban" the region of pleasures, which continues all the way to the river Kidron, where the Lord was betrayed, which is translated "darkness."¹⁷ See how many places the church has and how the apostolic word that it is to be "without spot or wrinkle" is reserved for the future in heaven.¹⁸ You heard about the corner, you heard about the itchy ears, you heard about the ruins and the ashes and the region of death and the darkness, and still you glory in your virtue and your sinlessness! SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.29.6-11.¹⁹

THE CHURCH WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED.

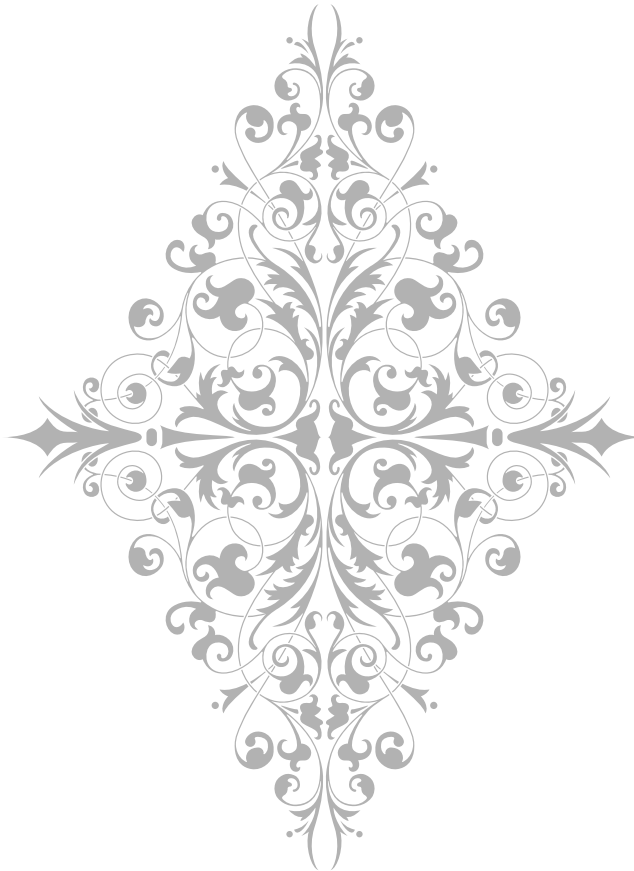
JEROME: Then it continues, "to the corner gate." It is made a corner lest any true justice or any certain victory be thought demonstrable in this world. And the corner gate itself, though it may

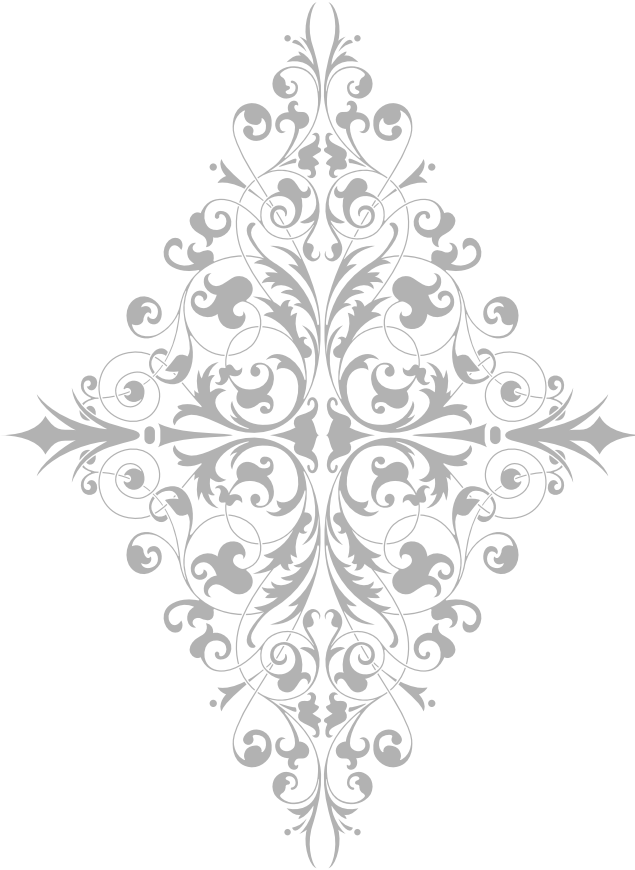
⁴See Rev 21:2-21. ⁵See Jn 18:1-5. ⁶See Jer 32:7-9. ⁷Jer 32:7. Hananel is the name of a tower on the northern wall of Jerusalem, and Hanamel was Jeremiah's cousin, whose field God commanded Jeremiah to buy. It appears that Jerome had opponents from a Judaizing party who claimed the tower was named for this cousin. In the passage above, Jerome clarifies the point. ⁸CCL 74:323-24. ⁹Rev 3:7. ¹⁰Ps 87:3 (86:3 LXX). ¹¹Ps 46:4 (45:5 LXX). ¹²See 2 Tim 4:3. ¹³Jer 31:39; cf. Zech 9:16. ¹⁴1 Pet 2:5. ¹⁵Ps 102:9 (101:10 LXX). ¹⁶Jer 8:4. ¹⁷See Jn 18:1-5. ¹⁸Eph 5:27. ¹⁹CCL 74:324-26.

be “in the east,” whence the light originates, is nevertheless called “horse gate,” this to teach us that we need to ride and to fight, so that we may deserve to hear with the Lord, “You mounted your horses and the salvation of your chariot.”²⁰ The sanctification of the Lord is placed in the eastern gate, the gate of chariots, that we may be deemed perfect when we say to the Lord, “The chariot of God is tens of thousands of joyful

people, for the Lord is among them.”²¹ In this way, the building that is established on the foundation of Christ, about which the apostle also said, “as a wise architect, I laid a foundation,”²² will never be destroyed but will remain forever. SIX BOOKS ON JEREMIAH 6.29.12-13.²³

²⁰Hab 3:8. ²¹Ps 68:17-18 (67:18-19 LXX). ²²1 Cor 3:10. ²³CCL 74:326.





GOD ANSWERS JEREMIAH'S PRAYER

JEREMIAH 32:1-44

OVERVIEW: Nothing that is logically possible is too hard for the Lord. The Lord sees into the heart (TERTULLIAN), admonishing his people because he loves them (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). The fear of God is a gift of God (JOHN CASSIAN). The Lord places the fear of God into the hearts of Christians, so that they can persevere to the point of death. It is God's work, not ours, that keeps us from departing from him (AUGUSTINE).

NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR THE LORD.

TERTULLIAN: Of course nothing is "too hard for the Lord." But if we choose to apply this principle so extravagantly and harshly in our capricious imaginations, we may then make out God to have done anything we please, on the ground that it was not impossible for him to do it. We must not suppose, however, because he is able to do all things, that he has done what he has not done. But we must inquire whether he has really done it. God could, if he had liked, have furnished humankind with wings to fly with, just as he gave wings to kites. We must not, however, run to the conclusion that he did this because he was able to do it. He might also have extinguished Praxeas and all other heretics at once; it does not follow, however, that he did, simply because he was able. For it was necessary that there should be both kites and heretics; it was necessary also that the Father should be crucified.¹ In one sense there will be something difficult even for God—namely, that which he has not done—not because he could not but because he would not do it. For with God, to be willing is to be able and to be unwilling is to be unable; all that he has willed, however, he has both been

able to accomplish and has displayed his ability. **AGAINST PRAXEAS 10.**²

32:19 God's Eyes Are Wide Open

GOD KNOWS TRUE CHRISTIANS. **TERTULLIAN:** You, as a person, know any other person from the way he appears outside. You think the way you see. And you see as far only as your eyes do. But the Scripture says, "The eyes of the Lord are lofty," "People look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart,"³ "The Lord sees and knows his own,"⁴ and "the plant that my heavenly Father has not planted, he roots up,"⁵ and "the first shall," as he shows, "be last,"⁶ and he carries "his fan in his hand to purge his threshing floor."⁷ Let the chaff of a fickle faith fly off as much as it will at every blast of temptation; all the purer will be that heap of corn that shall be laid up in the garner of the Lord. **PRESCRIPTIONS AGAINST HERETICS 3.**⁸

32:29 Offerings to Baal

ADMONITION IS A SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Admonition, then, is the censure of loving care and produces understanding. Such is Christ the Educator in his admonitions, as when he says in the Gospel, "How often would I have gathered your children, as a bird gathers her young ones under her wings, and you would not!"⁹ And again, the Scripture admonishes, saying, "And they committed adul-

¹An ironical reference to a great paradox in the Praxean heresy.

²ANF 3:605**. ³1 Sam 16:7. ⁴2 Tim 2:19. ⁵Mt 15:13. ⁶Mt 20:16.

⁷Mt 3:12. ⁸ANF 3:244. ⁹Mt 23:37.

tery with wood and stone and burned incense to Baal.”¹⁰ For it is a very great proof of his love, that, though knowing well the shamelessness of the people that had kicked and bounded away, he notwithstanding exhorts them to repentance and says by Ezekiel, “Son of man, you live among scorpions. Nevertheless, speak to them. Perhaps they will hear.”¹¹ Further, to Moses he says, “Go and tell Pharaoh to send my people forth; but I know that he will not send them forth.”¹² For he shows both things: both his divinity in his foreknowledge of what would take place and his love in affording an opportunity for repentance to the self-determination of the soul. He admonishes also by Isaiah, in his care for the people, when he says, “This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” What follows is reproving censure: “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of people.”¹³ Here his loving care, having shown their sin, shows salvation side by side with repentance. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.9.¹⁴

32:39-41 *One Heart*

GOD BESTOWS FAITH. JOHN CASSIAN: The prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the person of God, clearly tells us that the fear of God by which we can hold on to him comes from the Lord: “I shall give them one heart and one way so that they may fear me during all their days, so that all will be well for them and for their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I shall not cease to do good things for them, and, as a gift, I shall put fear of me in their hearts so that they may never go away from me.” CONFERENCE 1.3.18.¹⁵

GOD WILL PRESERVE THE FAITHFUL. AUGUSTINE: It is much more difficult to persevere when a persecutor is endeavoring that one not persevere, and on this account one is sustained in perseverance to death. The latter perseverance is more difficult to have, the former easier, but for him to

whom nothing is difficult, it is easy to give either one. For God has promised this in saying, “I will give my fear in their heart, that they may not revolt from me.” And what else do these words mean but, such and so great shall be my fear, which I will give into their heart that they will adhere with perseverance to me? . . .

So when the hand of God is on him, that we not depart from God, then the work of God (for this is what is meant by his hand) reaches indeed to us. For in Christ “we have obtained our lot, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things.”¹⁶ Therefore it is by God’s hand, not our own, that we depart not from God. This is his hand, I say, who declared, “I will give my fear into their heart, that they may not revolt from me.” ON THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE 2.2, 7.14.¹⁷

SCRIPTURE REVEALS GOD’S GRACIOUS CHARACTER. AUGUSTINE: Pride has so stopped the ears of their heart that the Pelagians do not hear, “For what have you that you have not received?”¹⁸ They do not hear, “Without me you can do nothing.”¹⁹ They do not hear, “Love is of God.”²⁰ They do not hear, “God has dealt the measure of faith.”²¹ They do not hear, “The Spirit breathes where it will,”²² and, “They who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God.”²³ They do not hear, “No one can come to me, unless it were given him of my Father.”²⁴ They do not hear what Esdras writes, “Blessed is the Lord of our ancestors, who has put into the heart of the king to glorify his house that is in Jerusalem.”²⁵ They do not hear what the Lord says by Jeremiah, “And I will put my fear into their heart, that they do not depart from me. I will visit them to make them good.” They do not hear that word by Ezekiel the prophet, where God fully shows that he is not induced to make people good because they

¹⁰Jer 3:9; 7:9; 11:13; 32:29 (39:29 LXX). ¹¹Ezek 2:6-7. ¹²Ex 3:18-19. ¹³Is 29:13. ¹⁴ANF 2:228-29. ¹⁵NPNF 2 11:328**. ¹⁶Eph 1:11. ¹⁷FC 86:273, 282. ¹⁸1 Cor 4:7. ¹⁹Jn 15:5. ²⁰1 Jn 4:7. ²¹Rom 12:3. ²²Jn 3:8. ²³Rom 8:14. ²⁴Jn 6:65. ²⁵1 Esd 8:25.

deserve good, that is, because they obey his commands, but rather that he repays to them good for evil, by doing this for his own sake and not for theirs. *AGAINST TWO LETTERS OF THE PELAGIANS* 4.14.²⁶

GOD'S HAND HOLDS US. AUGUSTINE: This grace God placed "in him in whom we have obtained a lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things."²⁷ And thus as he works that we come to him, so he works that we do not depart. For this reason, it was said to him by the mouth of the prophet, "Let your hand be on the man of your right hand, and on the Son of man whom you made strong for yourself, and we will not depart from you."²⁸ This certainly is not the first Adam, in whom we departed from him, but the second Adam, on whom his hand is placed, so that we do not

depart from him. For Christ altogether with his members is—for the church's sake, which is his body—the fullness of him. When, therefore, God's hand is on him, that we depart not from God, assuredly God's work reaches to us (for this is God's hand). By this work of God we are caused to be abiding in Christ with God—not, as in Adam, departing from God. For "in Christ we have obtained a lot, being predestinated according to his purpose who works all things." This, therefore, is God's hand, not ours, that we depart not from God. That, I say, is his hand who said, "I will put my fear in their hearts that they depart not from me." *PREDESTINATION OF THE SAINTS* 2.14.²⁹

²⁶NPNF 1 5:422*. ²⁷Eph 1:11. ²⁸Ps 80:17-18. ²⁹NPNF 1 5:530*.





THE LORD GUARANTEES HIS COVENANT
JEREMIAH 33:1-26

OVERVIEW: When a person knows God's name, he or she hopes in him (AUGUSTINE) who sprang forth from the righteous branch as one of us, but without our failings (LEO THE GREAT). They know that God will not fail his covenant (THEODORET). Human plans will fail, but God's plan endures forever (CASSIODORUS).

33:2 *The Lord Is His Name*

GOD'S NAME BRINGS HOPE. AUGUSTINE: "And let them who know your name hope in you"¹ when they shall have ceased hoping in wealth and in the other enticements of this world. For the soul indeed that seeks where to fix its hope, when it is torn away from this world, the knowledge of God's name seasonably receives. For

¹Ps 9:10.

the mere name of God has now been published everywhere. When you know someone, you know his name. For the name is not a name for its own sake but for that which it signifies. Now it has been said, "The Lord is his name." Therefore those who willingly submit to God as his servants have known this name. EXPLANATIONS OF THE PSALMS 9.II.²

33:14-16 *The Righteous Branch*

THE PROMISE SPRINGS FORTH. LEO THE GREAT: But the majesty of the Son of God, in which he is equal with the Father in its garb of a slave's humility, feared no diminution, required no augmentation. And the very effect of his mercy, which he expended on the restitution of humanity, he was able to bring about solely by the power of his Godhead, thus rescuing the creature that was made in the image of God from the yoke of his cruel oppressor. But because the devil had not shown himself so violent in his attack on the first man as to bring him over to his side without the consent of his free will, the voluntary sin and hostile desires of humanity had to be destroyed in such a way that the standard of justice should not stand in the way of the gift of grace. And therefore in the general ruin of the entire human race there was but one remedy in the secret of the divine plan which could help the fallen, and that was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of original transgression, to prevail for the rest both by his example and his merits. Still further, because this was not permitted by natural generation, and because there could be no offspring from our faulty stock without seed, of which the Scripture says, "Who can make a clean thing conceived of an unclean seed? Is it not you who are alone?" David's Lord was made David's Son, and sprang from the fruit of the promised branch—One without fault, the twofold nature coming together into one Person, that by one and the same conception and birth might spring our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was present both true Godhead for the performance

of mighty works and true humanity for the endurance of sufferings. SERMON 28.3.³

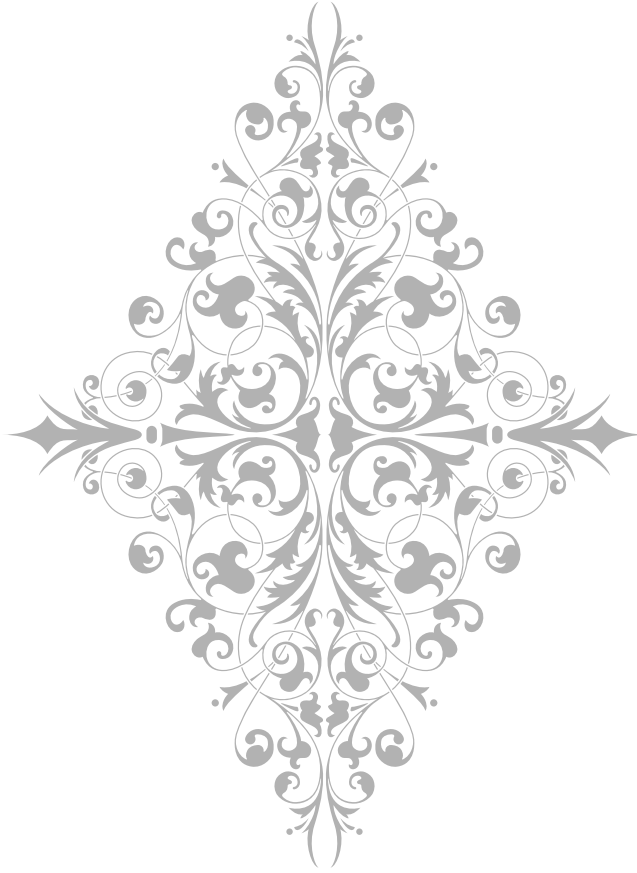
33:18-25 *This Covenant Cannot Be Broken*

THE NEW COVENANT FULFILLS THIS PROPHECY. THEODORET OF CYR: We see the fulfillment of this prophecy as well. When the new covenant was given, in keeping with the divine promise, the priesthood was also given according to the order of Melchizedek, and those to whom it was promised offer the spiritual sacrifice to God continually. Then he says, as it is impossible for day to become night, so it is impossible for the Davidic monarchy to be destroyed. The fulfillment of this prophecy is also clear: Christ, who is of David according to the flesh, does not occupy the throne here below. He does, however, govern all things as he sits next to the Father. This is precisely what he also says about the priests and the Levites, noting that their line will be compared with the host of heaven and the sand of the sea. The facts confirm what is said: the whole land and sea are full of high priests and the deacons performing the liturgy of the Levites. ON JEREMIAH 7.33.18.⁴

THE LORD'S GOOD COUNSEL STANDS FOREVER. CASSIODORUS: "But the counsel of the Lord stands forever. The thoughts of his heart are for all time." Just as he said that the debased plans of people are to be made vain, so now he says that the dispositions of the Lord remain forever. While the sinner and the mortal person experience transient things, the eternal Lord established what will never be blameworthy. As Isaiah says, "All my counsel shall be enduring, and all that I meditated I shall achieve."⁵ Jeremiah too says the same thing: "If my covenant were not under guard day and night, I should not have issued the laws of heaven and earth." EXPLANATION OF THE PSALMS 32.II.⁶

²NPNF 1 8:35**. ³NPNF 2 12:142*. ⁴PG 81:676-77. ⁵Is 46:10.

⁶ACW 51:319.



[JERUSALEM'S COMING DESTRUCTION
JEREMIAH 34:1-7]

[ZEDEKIAH'S OATH AND ITS VIOLATIONS
JEREMIAH 34:8-22]

THE RECHABITES' EXAMPLE

JEREMIAH 35:1-19

OVERVIEW: Leaders prepare for their calling by solitude, like the Rechabites, the sons of Jonadab (JEROME). God continued to call for repentance and obedience as the Rechabites had displayed, sending numerous servants then, and now, to call his people to repentance and faith (IRENAEUS). The obedience the Rechabites displayed at a time when obedience was sorely lacking in Israel is all the more remarkable and should have been imitated by Judah (THEODORET).

35:6-7 *The Abstinance of the Rechabites*

THE DERIVATION OF THE MONASTIC CALLING.

JEROME: The sons of Jonadab, we are told, drank neither wine nor strong drink and dwelled in tents pitched wherever night overtook them. According to the Psalter, they were the first to undergo captivity; for, when the Chaldaeans began to ravage Judah, they were compelled to take refuge in cities.

Others may think what they like and follow each his own bent. But to me a town is a prison and solitude paradise. Why do we long for the bustle of cities, we whose very name speaks of loneliness? To fit him for the leadership of the Jewish people, Moses was trained for forty years in the wilderness. And it was not until after these that the shepherd of sheep became a shepherd of people. The apostles were fishers on Gennesaret before they became "fishers of people."¹ But at the Lord's call they forsook all that they had, father, net and ship, and bore their cross daily without so much as a rod in their hands. LETTER 125.7-8.²

35:12-17 *Imitate the Rechabites*

GOD SENT THE PROPHETS AND THE APOSTLES.

IRENAEUS: The Lord clearly shows all that there is one King and Lord, the Father of all, of whom he had previously said, "Neither will you

swear by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King."³ He had from the beginning prepared the marriage for his Son and used, with the utmost kindness, to call, by the instrumentality of his servants, the people of the former dispensation to the wedding feast. When they would not obey, he still invited them by sending out other servants. Yet even then they did not obey him but even stoned and killed those who brought them the message of invitation. He accordingly sent forth his armies and destroyed them and burned down their city. But he called together from all the highways, that is, from all nations, guests to the marriage feast of his Son, as also he says by Jeremiah: "I have sent also to you my servants the prophets to say, Return now, everyone, from his very evil way, and amend your doings." And again he says by the same prophet: "I have also sent to you my servants the prophets throughout the day and before the light. Yet they did not obey me or incline their ears to me. And you shall speak this word to them: This is a people that does not obey the voice of the Lord or receive correction. Faith has perished from their mouth."⁴ The Lord, therefore, who has called us everywhere by the apostles, is he who called those of old by the prophets, as appears by the words of the Lord. Although they preached to various nations, the prophets were not from one God and the apostles from another, but, proceeding from one and the same, some of them announced the Lord, others preached the Father. Others again foretold the advent of the Son of God, while yet others declared him as already present to those who then were far off. AGAINST HERESIES 4.36.5.⁵

THE MODEL OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES.

THEODORET OF CYR: Two things are worth

¹Mt 4:19. ²NPNF 2 6:247. ³Mt 5:35. ⁴Jer 7:25. ⁵ANF 1:516-17**.

marveling at: the law given by the father and the obedience rendered by the children and descendants. For they loved a life free from care and possessions and—what is most unexpected—put little stock in their property, even though they had children, because they made themselves dependent on the divine hope as far as they were concerned. But if these people embraced the consummate philosophy during the time of the law (which had no perfection because of the weakness of those who were given the law), what sort of people would they have been if they had heard the law of the gospel? But the God of all

commands the prophet to tell all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “These people refuse to drink wine because they keep the commandment of their father, but you do not conduct yourselves according to my laws, although you receive the teachings of the prophets day and night. For this reason, I will bring on you all kinds of calamities, but the best of good things are promised to the offspring of Rechab, who keep the command of their father.” ON JEREMIAH 7:35.6-7.⁶

⁶PG 81:681.



THE SCROLL
JEREMIAH 36:1-32

OVERVIEW: Schism is punished more severely than burning a book of prophecy or idolatry (AUGUSTINE). Many prophetic writings have been lost or destroyed (CHRYSOSTOM), but burning can never destroy the divine Word (THEODORET).

36:23 *The King Threw the Scroll into the Fire*

A SACRILEGE COMMITTED. AUGUSTINE: Doubtless you are not unaware that in the early history of the chosen people the sacrilege of idolatry was committed¹ and a prophetic book burned by a scornful king. But the crime of schism would not be punished more severely than any of these acts unless it were considered more grievous. Surely you remember how the earth opened and swallowed up alive the authors of schism and how fire coming down from heaven destroyed those who followed them.² But neither the making and adoring of an idol nor the burning of a sacred book deserve to meet such vengeance. LETTER 51.³

SOME PROPHETIC WRITINGS ARE LOST.

CHRYSOSTOM: And what manner of prophet said this? Do not be curious nor too busy, for many of the prophetic writings have been lost. This may be seen from the history of the Chronicles.⁴ For being negligent and continually falling into ungodliness, some they suffered to perish, others they themselves burned up and cut to pieces. The latter fact Jeremiah relates. The former, he who composed the fourth book of Kings, saying that after⁵ a long time the book of Deuteronomy was hardly found, buried somewhere and lost. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 9.6.⁶

BURNING CANNOT HURT THE DIVINE WORD.

THEODORET OF CYR: The God of all orders Jeremiah to write the former words in another book. The sheet of paper was burned, but the divine law remained unharmed. So also when the body assumed by the Word suffered, the Word remained free from suffering. ON JEREMIAH 7.36.⁷

¹Ex 32:1-6. ²Num 16:31-35. ³FC 12:238-39**. ⁴2 Chron 9:29. ⁵2 Kings 22:8. ⁶NPNF 1 10:58. ⁷PG 81:684.



[JERUSALEM TO BE DESTROYED
JEREMIAH 37:1-10]



JEREMIAH'S IMPRISONMENT
AND RELEASE
JEREMIAH 37:11-21

OVERVIEW: God lifts up and saves (BASIL). Jeremiah was as happy in captivity as he was free. But he brought the people hope, even when they imprisoned him (AMBROSE). Jeremiah was ultimately proven right and released (THEODORET).

37:15 *Jeremiah Imprisoned*

GOD BRINGS LOW, SUSTAINS AND UPLIFTS.

BASIL THE GREAT: Thus there is the expression in Exodus: "From the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the captive woman who was in the pit."¹ But they even threw Jeremiah also into a pit. His brothers through jealousy confined Joseph in a pit without water.² Each act, therefore, either draws us downward by oppressing us with

sin or lifts us upward by raising us on wings toward God. Therefore, you have saved me, I who formerly lived a wicked life, and have separated me from those who go down to the dark and frigid region. The meaning of the words "you have upheld me" is to say, "you have led me back from my downward course, so as not to give my enemies an occasion to rejoice over me." HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 14.3 (Ps 29).³

JEREMIAH, DANIEL BROUGHT THE PEOPLE COMFORT. AMBROSE: One could judge that merit and virtue could be evident even in captivity. For Jeremiah was not less happy in captivity,

¹Ex 12:29. ²Gen 37:24. ³FC 46:217*.

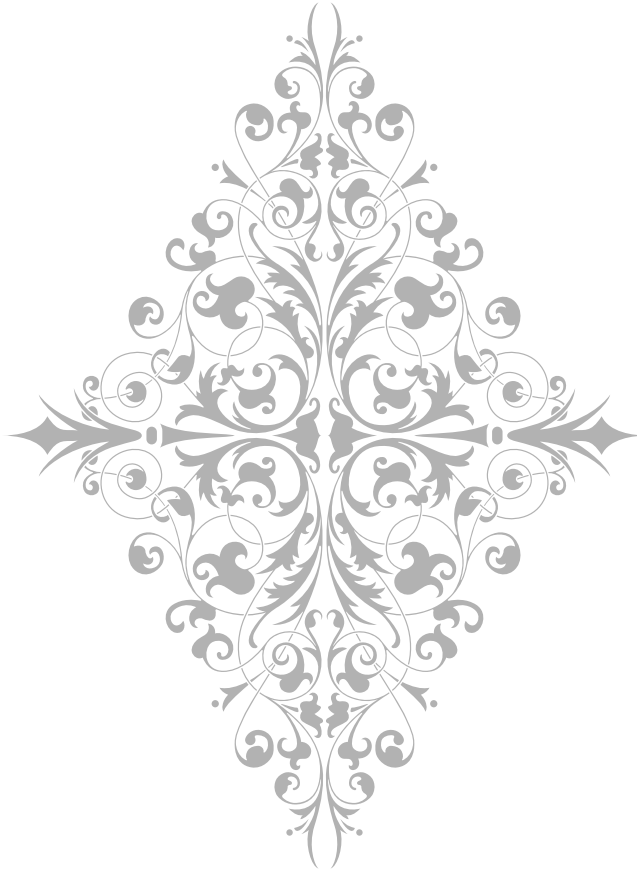
nor was Daniel⁴ or Esdras,⁵ nor were Anania and Azaria and Misael less happy than if they had not fallen into captivity.⁶ They entered into captivity in such a way that they brought to their people both present consolations in captivity and the hope of escaping from it.⁷ JACOB AND THE HAPPY LIFE 8.36.⁸

37:19-21 *Where Are the False Prophets Now?*

JEREMIAH RELEASED. THEODORET OF CYR: Jer-

emiah said, "Now that matters have proven the truthfulness of my prophecy and the falsehood of your prophets, you must now judge rightly and punish those who lied, not him who warned you of the truth beforehand." Then he asked to be released from the house of the scribe. ON JEREMIAH 8.37.⁹

⁴Dan 1:6. ⁵1 Esd 7:6. ⁶Dan 3:19-26. ⁷Jer 37-38. ⁸FC 65:142. ⁹PG 81:688.





JEREMIAH IMPRISONED IN A CISTERN JEREMIAH 38:1-28

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah praised God from the pit (CHRYSOSTOM). He was alone because no one shared his purpose. Those who take a prophetic stance are often found alone, which is all the more reason to listen (JEROME). The Holy Spirit can use such prophetic calls from God's Word to teach us (ISAAC). Having violated his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah chose not to listen to God's call through Jeremiah to honor the oath he had sworn in God's name and thus to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar (THEODORET).

38:5-6 Jeremiah Thrown into the Cistern

THE FAITHFUL MUST SOMETIMES SUFFER.

CHRYSOSTOM: How distressed I am, mind you, when I call to mind that on the festival days the multitudes assembled resemble the broad expanse of the sea, but now not even the smallest part of that multitude is gathered together here. Where are they now who oppress us with their presence on the feast days? . . . Now if they make the summer season their excuse, for I hear of their saying things of this kind, "the present stifling heat is excessive, the scorching sun is intolerable, we cannot bear being trampled and crushed in the crowd and to be steaming all over with perspiration and

oppressed by the heat and confined space.” . . . What then am I to say to those who advance these pretexts? I would remind them of the three children in the furnace and the flame, who when they saw the fire encircling them on all sides, enveloping their mouth and their eyes and even their breath, did not cease singing that sacred and mystical hymn to God, in company with the universe but standing in the midst of the pyre, sent up their song of praise to the common Lord of all with greater cheerfulness than they who abide in some flowery field.¹ Together with these three children I should think it proper to remind them also of the lions that were in Babylon, and of Daniel and the den:² and not of this one only but also of another den, and the prophet Jeremiah and the mire in which he was smothered up to the neck. **HOMILY TO THOSE WHO HAD NOT ATTENDED THE ASSEMBLY 2.**³

JEREMIAH WAS A COURAGEOUS, SOLITARY WITNESS. **JEROME:** Why am I making such a point of all this? Because a monk should not look at the crowd of sinners but reflect on the way of life and the fewness of the saints. The whole of Judea was led into captivity. Nebuchadnezzar had come, and thousands of people were displaced into Babylonia as prisoners. Jeremiah alone was left praising God, and they threw him into a muddy cistern; nevertheless, the soul of this one man was more precious than that of all the people. Would you know what one person can do? Jesus, son of Nave,⁴ was alone, although the whole world was inhabited. There were, to be sure, countless multitudes, but he was alone. Alone he commanded the sun and the moon, and they stood still. A man gives an order, and heaven gives heed. Heaven listened to him because he was listening to the Lord. Jeremiah was in captivity, but there were also with him great numbers of exiles. What does he say? “I sat alone, because you filled me with indignation.”⁵ How were you alone in the city? I say, I was alone because I had no one with whom to share my purpose. **HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 54 (Ps 143).**⁶

MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS TEACH US. **JEROME:** They have Lazarus in Moses and the prophets. Moses was Lazarus; he was a poor man. He was naked. He esteemed the poverty of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Pharaoh.⁷ They also have the prophets. They have Jeremiah, who is thrown into a cistern of mud and who fed on the bread of tribulation. They have all the prophets. Let them hear them. Every day Moses and the prophets are preaching against your five brothers. Let them teach them. Let them instruct them. Let them summon the eye. What do they say to it? Do not look on the carnal, but discern the spiritual. “What we have seen with our eyes,” says the apostle, “what we have heard, what our hands have handled: of the Word of God.”⁸ He instructs the ear, too, the sense of smell, of taste. All the prophets and all the saints teach these brothers. **HOMILY 86, ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 16.19-31.**⁹

38:17 Surrender to Babylon

ZEDEKIAH DISHONORED HIS OATH. **THEODORET OF CYR:** He had often spoken these things previously. We must investigate why in the world he promises safety to those who go out of the city but threatens destruction to those who do not go out. When Nebuchadnezzar had elevated Zedekiah to the kingship, the latter had sworn an oath to him that he would pay tribute and maintain a favorable disposition to the one who had appointed him. But when a short time had passed, he violated the terms of the agreement and both did not pay the tribute and appealed to Egypt for help. Since he had taken these oaths not by some idols lacking any souls but by the Creator of all, and yet he had dared to violate them, the Lord God then ordered him to go out to the Chaldeans and in this way to render service for his perjury. **ON JEREMIAH 8.38.**¹⁰

¹Song of the Three Children 66. ²Dan 6:24. ³NPNF 1 9:224-25.

⁴Joshua, son of Nun. ⁵Jer 15:17. ⁶FC 48:390-91. ⁷Heb 11:26.

⁸1 Jn 1:1. ⁹FC 57:206. ¹⁰PG 81:689.



[THE FALL OF JERUSALEM
JEREMIAH 39:1-10]

[The relative paucity of patristic commentary beyond chapter 39 is no doubt due to at least two factors: (1) The metaphors, images and material of chapters 1–38 recommend themselves more readily to instruction and pastoral care, and (2) chapters 39–51 are rarely cited in the New Testament.]

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CARE FOR JEREMIAH
JEREMIAH 39:11-14

OVERVIEW: Nebuchadnezzar and Ebedmelech, who were foreigners, paid more attention to Jeremiah's words than his own people did (THEODORET).

39:12 *Nebuchadnezzar Ensures Jeremiah Is Cared For*

FOREIGNERS LISTEN TO THE PROPHET. THEODORET OF CYR: Both Nebuchadnezzar the king and Ebedmelech the Ethiopian increased the condemnation of the Jews. Although they were foreigners, they respected the prophet, but the Jews (who had been raised on the words of the prophets) did not want to pay attention to the divine words, but they subjected the prophets to punishments of every kind. The promise of

God surely obtained its fulfillment. When God appointed him a prophet, he promised to make him irresistible and like an iron pillar and a bronze wall because on the one hand they would wage war against him but on the other hand they would not prevail. Nebuzaradan and all the company of rulers summoned Jeremiah from the prison and handed him over to Gedaliah, whom he had ordered to rule over the remnant in Judah. And the prophet thought that it was worth noting that the things spoken beforehand by God concerning Ebedmelech were fulfilled. For with him, nothing is uncared for or lacking reward. ON JEREMIAH 8.39.¹

¹PG 81:692.



[GOD'S WORD TO EBEDMELECH
JEREMIAH 39:15-18]

JEREMIAH IS RELEASED BY NEBUZARADAN
JEREMIAH 40:1-6

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah was liberated by the enemies of Israel at Nebuchadnezzar's request not because he was consecrated from birth but because he was the true temple of God (JEROME). The other nations learned from God's dealings with Israel that he is the true God (THEODORET).

40:1 *Jeremiah Is Freed*

THE TRUE TEMPLE IS CARED FOR. JEROME: Jeremiah, who was¹ sanctified in the womb and was known in his mother's belly, enjoyed the high privilege because he was predestined to the blessing of virginity. And when all were captured and even the vessels of the temple were plundered by the king of Babylon, he alone was² liberated by the enemy, did not know the

insults of captivity and was supported by the conquerors; and Nebuchadnezzar, though he gave Nebuzaradan no charge concerning the Holy of Holies, did give him charge concerning Jeremiah. For that is the true temple of God and that is the Holy of Holies, which is consecrated to the Lord by pure virginity. AGAINST JOVINIANUS I.33.³

40:3 *The Promised Punishment Arrives*

NATIONS LEARN. THEODORET OF CYR: And here it is clear that God chose Israel from the beginning as a kindness to the other nations. For the miracles that took place because of them amazed all and clearly taught that their God

¹Jer 1:5. ²Jer 39:11; 40:1. ³NPNF 2 6:371.

alone was the true God. And again their misfortunes accused them of their wickedness and proclaimed the righteous verdict of God. Thus, for example, Nebuzaradan said that the Jews

deservedly suffered punishment and God had acted justly. ON JEREMIAH 8.40.⁴

⁴PG 81:693.



[CAPTAINS SPEAK WITH GEDALIAH
THE GOVERNOR
JEREMIAH 40:7-16]

[ISHMAEL OVERTAKEN BY JOHANAN
JEREMIAH 41:1-18]

ISRAEL FLEES TO EGYPT
JEREMIAH 42:1-22

OVERVIEW: God delays responding to Israel's request from Jeremiah so that they might understand the extent of his anger (THEODORET).

42:2 Pray to God for Us

A DELAYED RESPONSE FOR ISRAEL'S BENEFIT.
THEODORET OF CYR: Their words are full of piety but do not agree with their actions. When ten days had passed, the prophet obtained his reply. But I think that the delay of the response

was for the benefit of those who had made the request, so that they might know how God barely received the supplication of the prophet. Accordingly, the prophet says that God had ordered for them to stay in that land. He says, “I

will deem you worthy of all care.” ON JEREMIAH 8.42.¹

¹PG 81:697.



EGYPT'S INVASION FORETOLD JEREMIAH 43:1-13

OVERVIEW: God uses Nebuchadnezzar as his servant, permitting him to deal with Israel and with Egypt as God wants him to (THEODORET). Nebuchadnezzar would be allowed to invade Egypt and destroy its gods and idols, which

were symbolized in the images engraved on the great obelisks of the city. This destruction was made complete when God became incarnate in Christ and came to Egypt and the Egyptian idols trembled before the child (EPHREM).

43:13 *He Shall Break the Obelisks of Heliopolis*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR IS GOD'S SERVANT.

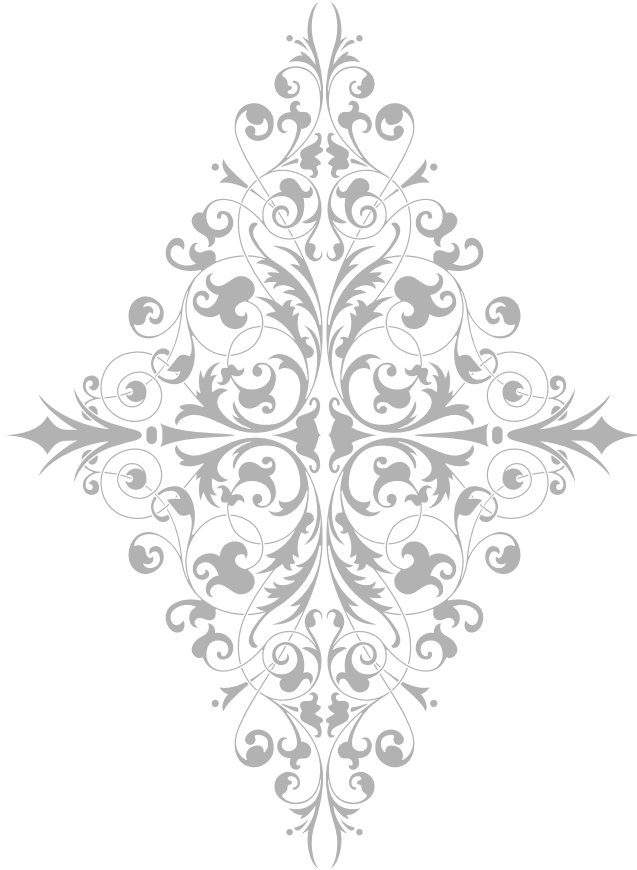
THEODORET OF CYR: The city had two names. It was called both On and Heliopolis. Exodus also taught this, for it says that the children of Israel built cities for Pharaoh: Pithom, Raamses and On, which is Heliopolis. God calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant, not because he is a servant in appearance or disposition but because he is a servant by nature: creation is the servant of the Creator. At the same time he teaches that Nebuchadnezzar does these things because God permits him to. ON JEREMIAH 8.43.¹

THE COMING OF CHRIST AND THE DESTRUCTION OF IDOLS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "He shall break the obelisks of the city of the sun, which is in Egypt, and the temples of the gods of the Egyptians he shall burn with fire." The city of the sun is Egyptian Heliopolis, which was known for excessive demonic veneration and worship of futile idols. It had tall obelisks of amazing size. The height of each was up to sixty cubits, the capitals on the top of the obelisks were from shining brass that weighed up to a thousand or more pounds. On these obelisks were standing images and likenesses of people and animals that the Gentiles were worshiping. Also, those obelisks were inscribed with sacred writings of pagan

mysteries. It was written about these obelisks that the Lord would break them. It does not speak so much about divine destruction and demolition of these obelisks as such, as about the destruction of the worship of demons and idols, images of those who were engraved on those obelisks. It was demolished, destroyed and stopped when the Lord Christ was incarnated and came to this world. This is exactly what Isaiah proclaimed when he said, "The Lord is seated on the light cloud and comes to Egypt, and handmade Egyptian idols will tremble in front of his face."² The cloud on which the Lord is riding symbolizes for us the virgin Mary, who gave birth to God; it also symbolizes the living and clear message of the Lord's gospel and the holy name of Christ that was proclaimed by the apostles (these divine preachers). On them, as on the light cloud, the Lord was seated and was proclaimed to the ends of the earth. Also, these clouds mystically symbolize holy prophets. Just as Isaiah writes that God, in a figurative image of the vineyard, was talking about the people of Israel and that he would break their fence and "order the clouds that they rain no rain on it,"³ so likewise in this passage clouds mean prophets who rain a heavenly rain on us. COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 43.13.⁴

¹PG 81:701. ²Is 19:1. ³Is 5:6. ⁴ESOO 2:144-45.







GOD ADDRESSES JEWS WHO FLED TO EGYPT
JEREMIAH 44:1-30

OVERVIEW: Inspired prophets foretold that the Jews would be punished because of their idolatry. God sent Jeremiah into Egypt as an affectionate father calls his child so that Israel might not suffer total disaster and fall into complete idolatry (CHRYSOSTOM). And yet, due to their persistent evil, God spoke through his prophets and made the land a desolation which none could escape (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA) because of the evil they had done (SALVIAN). He reminds them through Jeremiah of the “strength” of their ancestors and then threatens them with his own true strength. But they hardly take notice and openly and foolishly proceed to contradict words that are obviously divinely authored (THEODORET).

44:1-7 Judah Ignores Jeremiah

PUNISHMENT FOR IDOLATRY IN EGYPT. CHRYS-

SOSTOM: What was the reason for this? It was because the Jews were so arrogant and obstinate. They immediately forgot what God had done for them; they ascribed his kindness to demons and reckoned that his blessings had come from them. Even when the sea was divided for them, as they went forth from Egypt, and while other wonderful things were happening to them, they forgot the God who was performing these miracles and attributed them to others who were not gods. For they said to Aaron, “Make for us gods who will be our leaders.”¹ And they said to Jeremiah, “We will not listen to what you say in the name of the Lord. Rather, we will continue doing what we had proposed: we will burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, as we and our ancestors, our kings and princes

¹Ex 32:1.

have done. Then we had enough food to eat and we were well off; we suffered no misfortune. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we are in need of everything and are being destroyed by the sword and by hunger.” The inspired prophets, then, foretold what would happen to the Jews so that they would ascribe none of the events to idols but would believe that both punishments and blessings always come from God: the punishment came for their sins and the blessings because of God’s love and kindness. *DISCOURSES AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS* 5.4.4.²

44:8-10 Idolatry in Egypt

EXAMPLE OF GOD’S LONG-SUFFERING. *CHRYSOSTOM*: Then, since they kept on in a state of incurable madness and were not to be sobered even by the rest being carried away, he first exhorts them to remain there. But when they kept not up to this but deserted to Egypt, this indeed God allowed them but requires of them not to desert to pagan religion as well as to Egypt. But when they did not comply in this either, he sends the prophet along with them, so that they might not after all suffer total disaster. For since they did not follow him when he called, he next follows them to discipline them and prevent their being hurried further into vice, as a father full of affection does to a child who takes all treatment in the same peevish way, conducting him about everywhere with himself and following him about. This was the reason why God sent not Jeremiah only into Egypt but also Ezekiel into Babylon, and they did not refuse to go. *HOMILIES ON ROMANS* 14.³

44:14 None Will Escape

NO ESCAPE FROM GOD’S WRATH. *CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA*: When God inflicts the punishment, no one can save those in harm’s way. Wherever they go, his wrath will follow. *FRAG-*

*MENTS ON JEREMIAH IN CATENA.*⁴

44:21-22 No Longer Bearing Your Abominations

GOD JUDGES EVIL CULTURES. *SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER*: God spoke to sinners through his prophet, because “the Lord remembered these things and,” he says, “he ascended over his heart, and the Lord was not able to bear more because of the evil of your endeavors and the abominations that you have done; and your land is made into a desolation, a wonder and a curse.” Through these things, therefore, it has already happened that the greater part of the Roman world is become a desolation, a wonder and a curse. *THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD* 6.8.⁵

REMINDERS OF STRENGTHS AND FAILURES. *THEODORET OF CYR*: He reminds them (as they have it fresh in their memory) of all the evils perpetuated by their ancestors and by their kings and mighty people, and he reminds them of the misfortunes of all kinds brought to bear against them. And he threatens them, calling himself the Lord of hosts and the God of Israel, so that they might hear the greatness of his authority and learn of his care for their ancestors and so that they might show reverence and fear. *ON JEREMIAH* 8.44.⁶

CHOOSING TO CONTRADICT DIVINE WORDS. *THEODORET OF CYR*: But none of these things struck fear in these wretched, no, three-times wretched individuals, but they all clamored—men and women alike, but especially the Babylonians—“We cannot endure your words.” What is even worse than this is that, although they thought that these words were divine, they openly contradicted them. *ON JEREMIAH* 8.44.⁷

²FC 68:111. ³NPNF 1 11:448. ⁴PG 70:1456. ⁵FC 3:165-66. ⁶PG 81:701. ⁷PG 81:704.



COMFORT FOR BARUCH

JEREMIAH 45:1-5

OVERVIEW: Not only did the Lord preserve Jeremiah, but he also offers comfort to Baruch throughout this short prophecy that reminds Judah of the earlier warning that Jeremiah had dictated to him (THEODORET).

45:2 *What the Lord Says to Baruch*

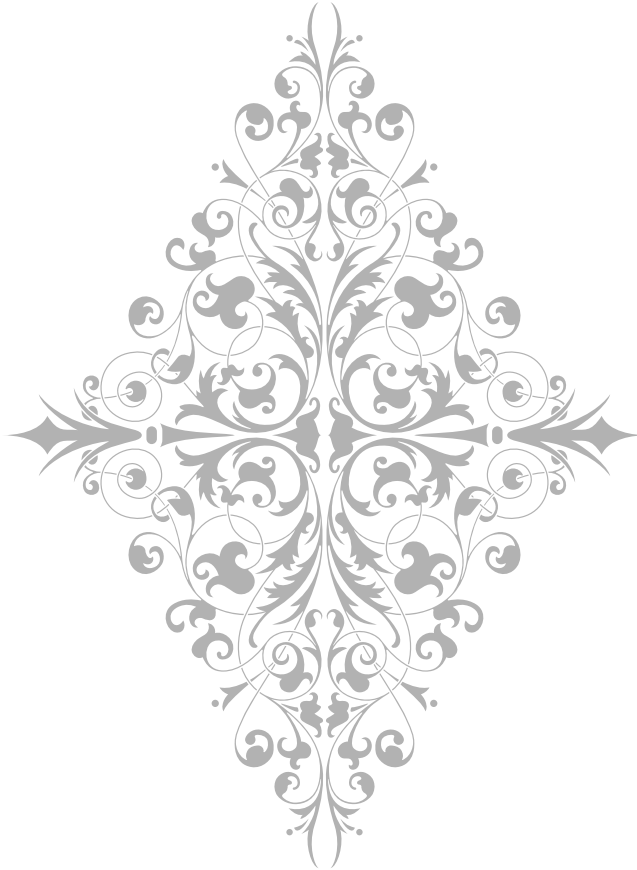
REMINDER OF EARLIER WARNINGS. THEODORET OF CYR: Joining this history interwoven with the prophecy, in this way he reminds them of the earlier warning that he was commanded to say to Baruch in the days of Jehoiakim. ON JEREMIAH 8.45.¹

The Lord comforts Baruch, who was serving the prophet, writing the oracles, complaining about the hardships and feeling vexed. He commands him to bear nobly his life full of pain. He says, “If I am now uprooting, cutting off and handing over to all sorts of punishments all the people whom I led out of Egypt and planted in this land, are you distraught because you alone are not spending your life in tranquility? But you should not do this. I will still take care of you, and, when I bring punishment on them, I will bring you comfort. And wherever you live, you will have my care.” ON JEREMIAH 8.45.²

BARUCH COMFORTED. THEODORET OF CYR:

¹PG 81:705. ²PG 81:708







A PROPHECY ABOUT EGYPT
JEREMIAH 46:1-28

OVERVIEW: God our Savior is invincible and so are we when we fight with him on our side (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). Unfortunately for Egypt, it chose to oppose God, and so God opposed Egypt and its gods (THEODORET).

46:2-3 Egypt: Prepare Your Shields

BATTLE ON BEHALF OF CHRIST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Therefore as the prophet Jeremiah has said, Take up arms and shields. Especially as the right hand of God our Savior is invincible in the battle, and as most wise Paul has said, he does not permit people to be tried more than they can bear, but with the trial he will make also the way out, that they may be able to endure patiently.¹ COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 41.²

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATIONS.

THEODORET OF CYR: After completing his prophecies concerning the people of Israel, he foretells what will happen to the other nations, teaching that he is Creator, God and Lord of all. First, he recounts those things that pertain to Egypt and teaches the time of this prophecy. The prediction was fulfilled after the death of the pharaoh Neco. Neco killed Josiah by the Euphrates River and was himself killed by the king of the Babylonians. ON JEREMIAH 9.46.³

46:25 Punishment on Amon

GOD THREATENS THE GODS OF EGYPT.

THEODORET OF CYR: The Egyptians call Zeus Ammon. For this reason it is also called the Ammonian land. They have furnished the largest

¹1 Cor 10:13. ²CGSL 179. ³PG 81:708.

sacred precinct for this deity. He calls Ammon “Egypt’s son” on the grounds that Ammon was a god created by it, since a statue is something made by human hands. Thus, he threatens to give Ammon and their other gods to the Babylonians, for he says this: “And on Pharaoh and on Egypt and on its gods and those who trust

in them, he says that the enemy will overcome them all alike—the king, rulers, idols and bodyguards.” Once Egypt has been given over to the king of the Babylonians, he will recover his earlier dominion. ON JEREMIAH 9.46.⁴

⁴PG 81:716.



A PROPHECY AGAINST THE PHILISTINES
 JEREMIAH 47:1-7

OVERVIEW: Jeremiah now directs his prophecies against the foreign nation of Philistia, which will be attacked by Nebuchadnezzar, “the sword of the Lord” (THEODORET).

THE PHILISTINE FOREIGNERS. THEODORET OF CYR: Now he directs his prophecy against

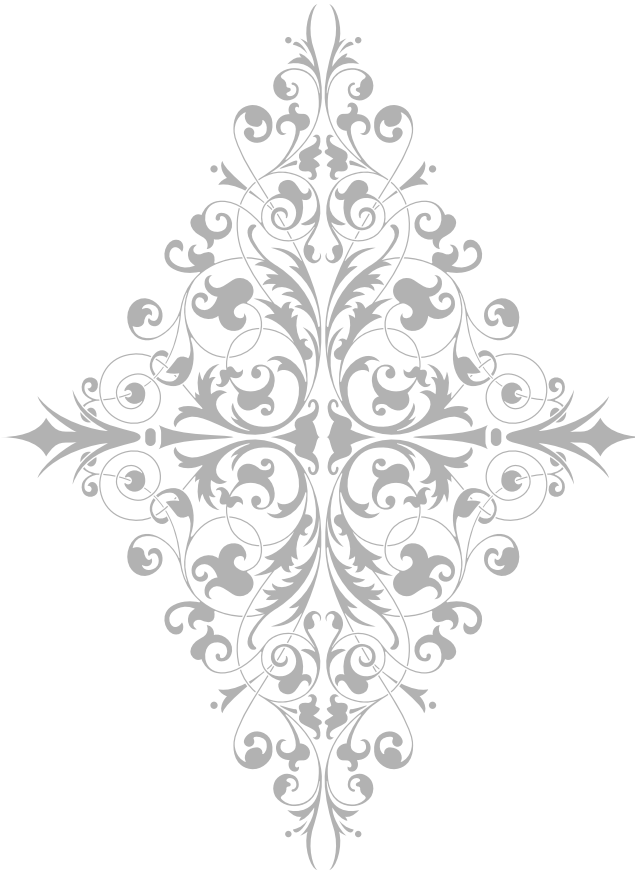
foreigners. He calls the inhabitants of Ashkelon, Gaza, Azotus, Gath and Ekron “foreigners.” He says that the prediction took place before Pharaoh struck Gaza, and he likens the army of the Babylonians to a flooding river swollen by rain and melted snow. Cities will be overwhelmed by this flood; their inhabitants will be destroyed

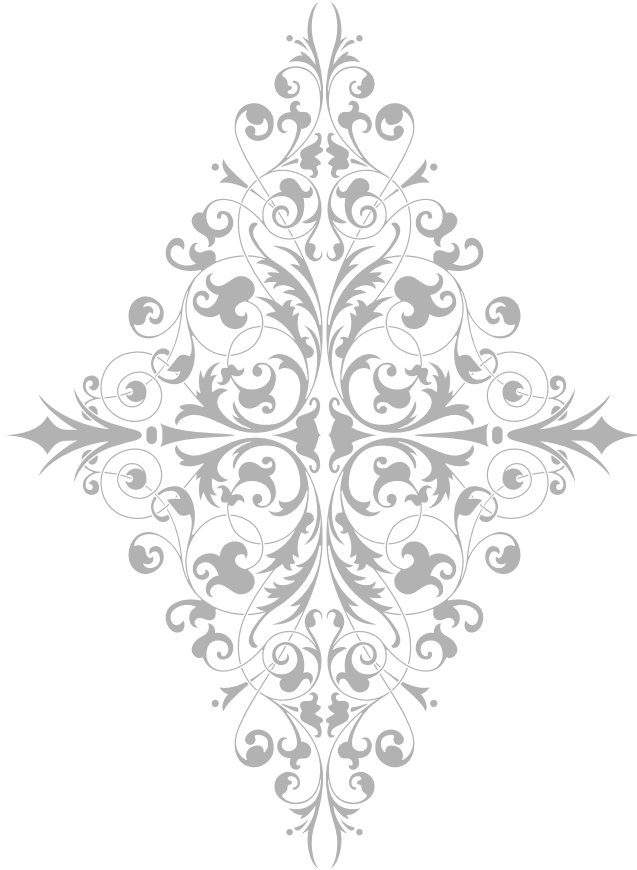
and lament and be unable to bear the din of the arms and chariots. ON JEREMIAH 9.47.¹

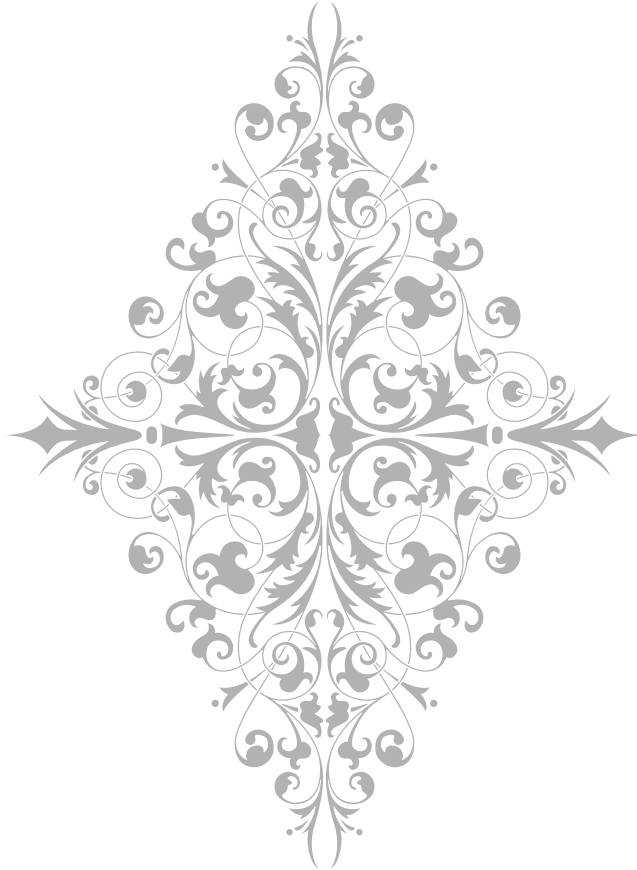
THE SWORD OF THE LORD. THEODORET OF CYR: He calls Nebuchadnezzar “the sword of the Lord,” for he does those things by God’s

permission, and the impious pay the penalty for their ungodliness at one another’s hands. ON JEREMIAH 9.47.²

¹PG 81:716. ²PG 81:717.









A PROPHECY AGAINST MOAB JEREMIAH 48:1-47

OVERVIEW: The prophet exhorts the servant of God to work in obedience and diligence. Those negligent in the Lord's work are cursed (BASIL). Proper liturgical posture is reflective of how one does the work of God (CAESARIUS). Display diligence in your work, allowing grace to grow and righteousness to increase (SULPITIUS). The work of the ministry, though seemingly trivial, is exalted and leads to the kingdom of heaven (BASIL). Sins of omission are punishable, but also condemned are those who leave good works undone or who perform them negligently (BASIL). The Chris-

tian rejoices in the light of justice, glorifying God with his being (JEROME). The prophet admonishes those who fail to preach the law to kill sin where it is perceived and observed (GREGORY THE GREAT). The Lord knows the arrogant and boastful hearts of the proud (JEROME). God punishes, hoping for repentance and not final judgment (APHRAHAT).

48:10 *Lax in Work*

USE THE LORD'S GIFTS DILIGENTLY. BASIL THE GREAT: It is hazardous for a superior to be delin-

quent, since he holds the position of arbiter in everything. It is both injurious and detrimental for those under their charge when they are disobedient. It is especially perilous if, in addition, the one who is in a superior position is scandalous. Each one who shows in his own place a tireless zeal, fulfilling the apostle's precept, "in carefulness not slothful,"¹ merits praise for his promptness. But for negligence he deserves the opposite, that is, unhappiness and woe. For the prophet says, "Cursed is the one who does the work of the Lord negligently." THE LONG RULES 24.²

DUE DILIGENCE. BASIL THE GREAT: What condemnation, then, ought we to expect to fall on those who are frivolous and irresponsible in the management of goods that are already consecrated to the Lord? Are they not liable to the sentence of doom pronounced on the negligent, as it is written, "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord negligently"? THE LONG RULES 9.³

BE ATTENTIVE TO GOD'S MERCY. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: I exhort and admonish you, dearly beloved, that whenever the priest prays at the altar or when the deacon intones the prayer in a loud voice, you devoutly bow your bodies as well as your hearts. I have carefully noted that when the deacon says the usual *flectamus genua*,⁴ most of the people frequently remain standing like straight columns. This is not at all proper or right for Christians who are praying in church, because the deacon does not pray for us from you. Since those words are addressed to you in particular and most of all to the negligent, it is just for you to devoutly obey them. Let that prayer become a remedy for those who obey it but evidence against those who do not, according to the words, "Cursed is one who does the work of God carelessly." We also ought to fear and perfectly accomplish what the apostle said: "Be attentive in prayer, being vigilant," and "pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks."⁵ SERMON 77.I.⁶

GOD EMBRACES THE SINCERE SOUL. SULPI-

TIUS SEVERUS [DUB.]: When you repeat a psalm, consider whose words you are repeating and delight yourself more with true contrition of soul than with the pleasantness of a thrilling voice. For God sets a higher value on the tears of one thus praising him than on the beauty of his voice; as the prophet says, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."⁷ Now, where there is fear and trembling, there is no lifting up of the voice but humility of mind with lamentation and tears. Display diligence in all your doings; for it is written, "Cursed is the one who carelessly performs the work of the Lord." Let grace grow in you with years; let righteousness increase with age; and let your faith appear the more perfect the older you become. LETTERS OF SULPITIUS SEVERUS 2.19.⁸

SERVICE AND HUMILITY ARE GREAT VIRTUES.

BASIL THE GREAT: Do not allow another to do the work that is rightly yours, so that the reward as well may not be taken from you and given to another and he be enriched with your wealth while you are put to shame. Perform the duties of your ministry decently and with care as if you were serving Christ, for "cursed," says the prophet, "is everyone who does the work of the Lord negligently." Fear, as if the eye of the Lord were on you, the perversity that arises from fastidiousness and contempt, even though the task in hand seems to you a menial one. The work of the ministry is an exalted work and leads to the kingdom of heaven. ON RENUNCIATION OF THE WORLD.⁹

SINS OF OMISSION ARE SERIOUS. BASIL THE GREAT: Elsewhere, he expresses his condemnation more vividly: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels."¹⁰ Then he alleges not the commission of any forbidden act but the omission of commended ones, saying, "For I was hungry,

¹Rom 12:11. ²FC 9:286-87. ³FC 9:258. ⁴Lat "Let us kneel."

⁵1 Thess 5:17-18. ⁶FC 31:355. ⁷Ps 2:11. ⁸NPNF 2 11:67. ⁹FC 9:29. ¹⁰Mt 25:41.

and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink,”¹¹ and so on. There are many passages like that that one might find to prove that not only are those who do wicked things worthy of death—for whom has been prepared the inextinguishable fire as well—but that along with these those are condemned who leave good works undone or who perform them negligently. For it is written, “Cursed is every person who does the work of the Lord negligently.” CONCERNING BAPTISM 2.6.¹²

CALLED TO THE ABUNDANT LIFE. JEROME: “Awake, lyre and harp.” O psaltery, O harp, you were made and fashioned to give praise to God; awake my harp and give praise; why do you lie idle? O monk, you are standing there in body; why is your soul listless, why are you not chanting praises to the Lord? “Cursed is one who is remiss in doing the Lord’s work.” If you are a psaltery, if you are a harp, why are you so mute and not glorifying God? “I will wake the dawn.” There is not blessing and praising God in darkness but only in light. I am going to say something startling. Even if we arise in the nighttime, we are blessing God in light. For the Christian, it is never night; for the Christian, the sun of justice is ever rising. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 34.¹³

DEPLOY GOD’S HEALING WORD. GREGORY THE GREAT: If persons by no means ignorant of the medicinal art were to see a sore that required lancing and yet refused to lance it, certainly by their mere inactivity they would

be guilty of a brother’s death. Let them see, then, in how great guilt they are involved who, knowing the sores of souls, neglect to cure them by the lancing of words. And so, it is well said through the prophet, “Cursed is one who keeps back his sword from blood.” For to keep back the sword from blood is to hold back the word of preaching from the killing of the carnal life. Of which sword it is said again, “And my sword shall devour flesh.”¹⁴ PASTORAL RULE 3.25.¹⁵

48:29-30 Moab’s Pride

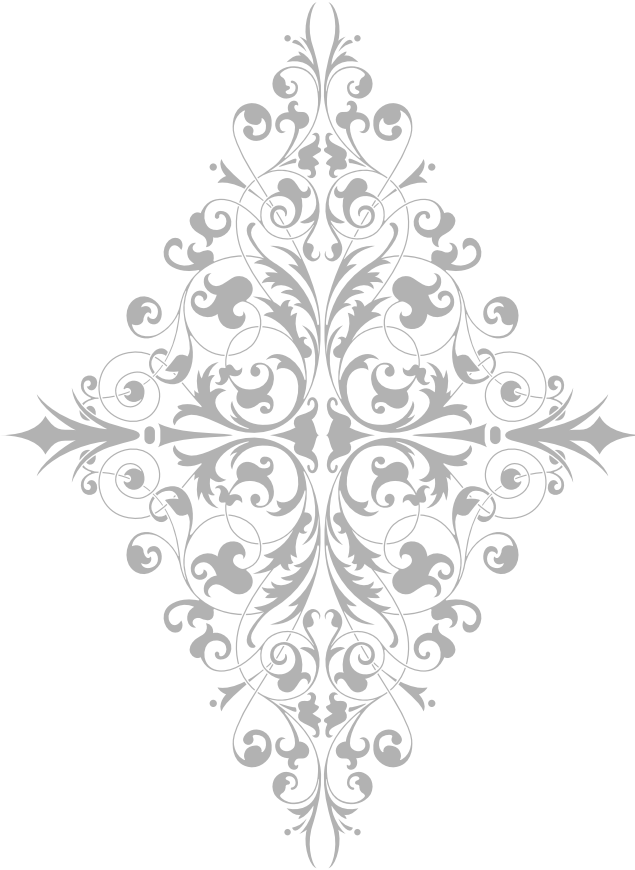
THE HEARTS OF THE PROUD. JEROME: Let heretics give heed. . . . “His haughtiness and his arrogance and his pride and the loftiness of his heart I know,” says the Lord, “because his strength is not according to the loftiness of his boasts.” AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.29.¹⁶

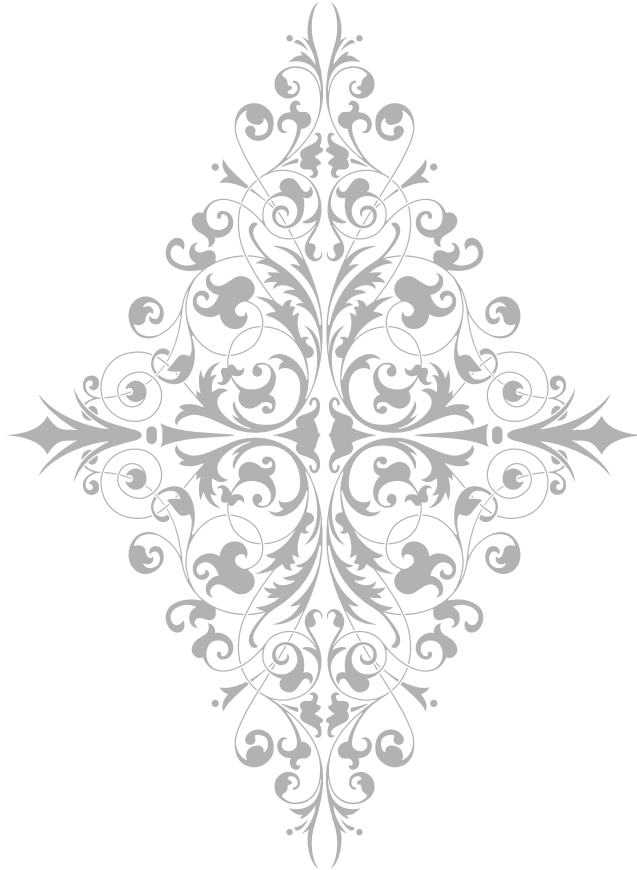
48:47 Moab’s Fortunes Restored

PUNISHMENT MEANT TO ENCOURAGE REPENTANCE. APHRAHAT: It is written that when Jeremiah caused the nations and kingdoms to drink the cup of wrath, he said concerning each one of the cities, that after they shall drink the cup, I will turn back the captivity of Elam, of Tyre, of Sidon, of the children of Ammon, and of Moab and of Edom.¹⁷ DEMONSTRATIONS 21.6.¹⁸

¹¹Mt 25:42. ¹²FC 9:404-5. ¹³FC 48:246. ¹⁴Deut 32:42. ¹⁵NPNF 2 12:53. ¹⁶FC 53:343. ¹⁷Jer 25:15-27; 48:47; 49:6, 39. ¹⁸NPNF 2 13:394-95.







PROPHECIES AGAINST THE NATIONS
JEREMIAH 49:1-39

OVERVIEW: God stirs up the nations to rally against Edom (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). He sends envoys to the nations, ministering angels who stir up the enemy for battle (THEODORET). One whose refuge is the Rock of Christ is able to do battle against the one who reigns in this world, namely, the devil (JEROME). As we remember our former slavery under Satan and sin, we will be grateful for our present freedom and life under Christ and be careful to preserve that freedom (EPHREM).

49:10 *Esau's Punishment*

GOD RALLIES ALLIES FOR ISRAEL AGAINST EDM. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Jeremiah refers to these angels as a fortification, although Symmachus interprets this [word] as a message, but one could also consider it in the sense of a “siege.” Taking it this way, God calls together many nations for war as a sign against Idumea and the angels are set in motion by him. And, having been set in motion by God for war, they incite others to fight [with them], as Obadiah says. For the surrounding nations were allied with Israel against Idumea. Therefore, turning to the Idumeans, he says, “See I have made you small among the nations and utterly contemptible. You will fall into calamities, ignorant of what is happening to you because you exalted yourself high above your station. Thus it is true that “Idumea will be deserted” and also what follows, which is said in a similar way by Obadiah: “And the house of Esau will be stubble and [Israel] shall descend on him, and there will be no torch bearer in the house of Esau.”¹ This is similar to the adage we find in the profane books, “No torch bearer was spared by them” referring to those who were cut down and utterly destroyed. For the one who held the torch

would go out in front of the fighting army to lead them into battle—and there was no one to carry the law against the hand of this enemy [i.e., the angels]. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH IN CATENA.²

49:14 *An Envoy to the Nations*

DIVINE COMMANDS SENT. THEODORET OF CYR: He used the phrase “he sent messengers to the nations” to mean “command.” It is also likely that by divine command ministering angels stirred up the enemy. Remember that the divine David also says, “He sent forth on them the wrath of his anger; anger, wrath and distress, a dispatch by means of wicked angels.”³ He calls them “wicked,” not as such by nature but as communicating punishment as a benefit. We, too, are in the habit of calling the calamities that befall us evil. Likewise an angel wiped out the firstborn of the Egyptians.⁴ In the same way, other calamities were sent against Israel when David took a census of the people.⁵ There are many other such examples you could find in the divine Scripture. ON JEREMIAH 9.49.14.⁶

49:16 *The Pride of Edom Brought Low*

CHRIST IS OUR ROCK AND REFUGE. JEROME: “Fir trees are the home of the heron.” The heron is a mighty bird; they say, too, that it overpowers the eagle and feeds on it. It is not like other birds that build their nests and fly to them in the evening; wherever darkness overtakes the heron, there it sleeps. Allegorically, the monk does not have a cell, but wherever he finds one, there, too, he stays. His battle is with the devil, who reigns

¹Obad 18. ²PG 70:1456. ³Ps 78:49. ⁴See Ex 11. ⁵See 2 Sam 24:15-17. ⁶PG 81:732.

in this world; like the heron, he prevails over the eagle, the king of the birds, just as it is written: “Though you go as high as the eagle, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord,” for, according to Ezekiel,⁷ the eagle is the devil. “The high mountains are for the stags.”⁸ This animal kills serpents and eats them; therefore, the mountains are the right habitat for the slayer of the wise serpent, the serpent that, in the garden or paradise, was wiser than all the beasts, the serpent that deceived Eve. “The cliffs are a refuge for rock badgers.” One who is fearful has a rock fastness for his refuge; the rock, moreover, is Christ.⁹ *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 30 (PS 103).*¹⁰

49:39 Restoring the Fortunes of Elam

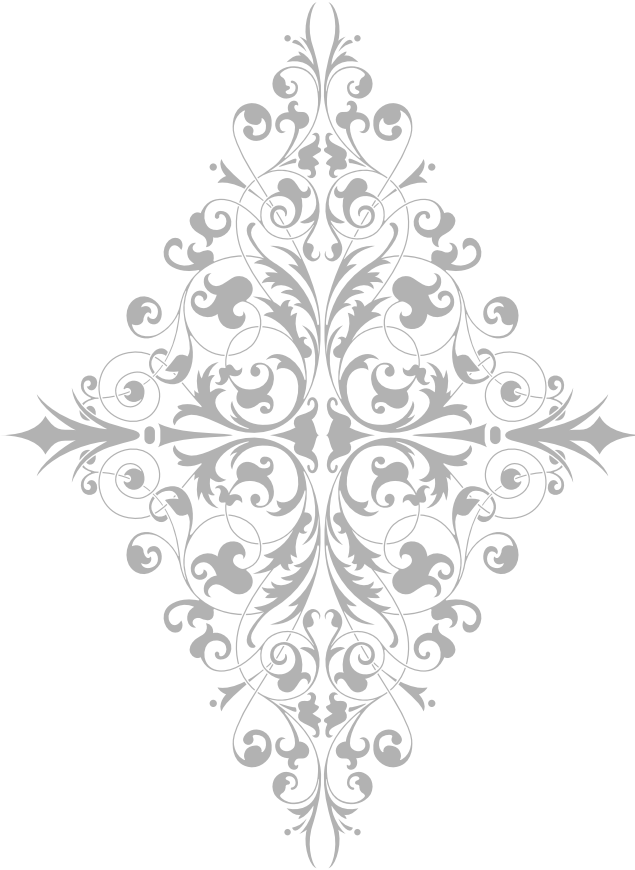
REMEMBER YOUR SLAVERY. *EPHREM THE SYRIAN:* “It shall come to pass in later days that I will bring back the captives of Elam,” which refers to the time after seventy years of Jewish exile, when Cyrus, after destroying the Chaldean kingdom, would return all captured and enslaved people to their native lands. The divine

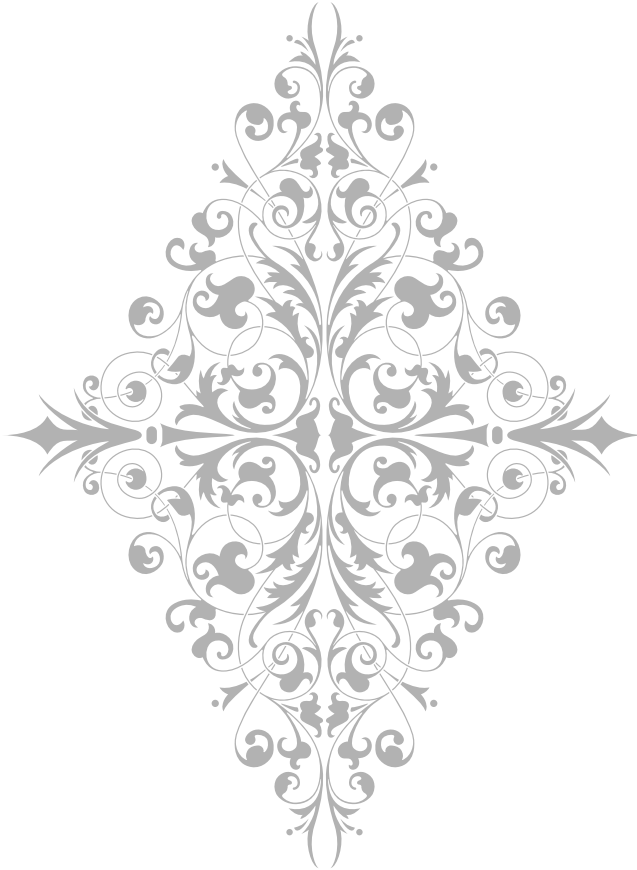
Paul says, “Whatever was written of old was written for our instruction.”¹¹ Thus, the Holy Spirit ordered Jeremiah and other prophets to record events of the captivity and of the return of magnificent and great nations in their own time, so that we would have a clear and vivid depiction of our slavery under the burden of Satan, as well as providing us with a picture of the divine household of our Lord who, through his death, bestowed on us life and redemption.

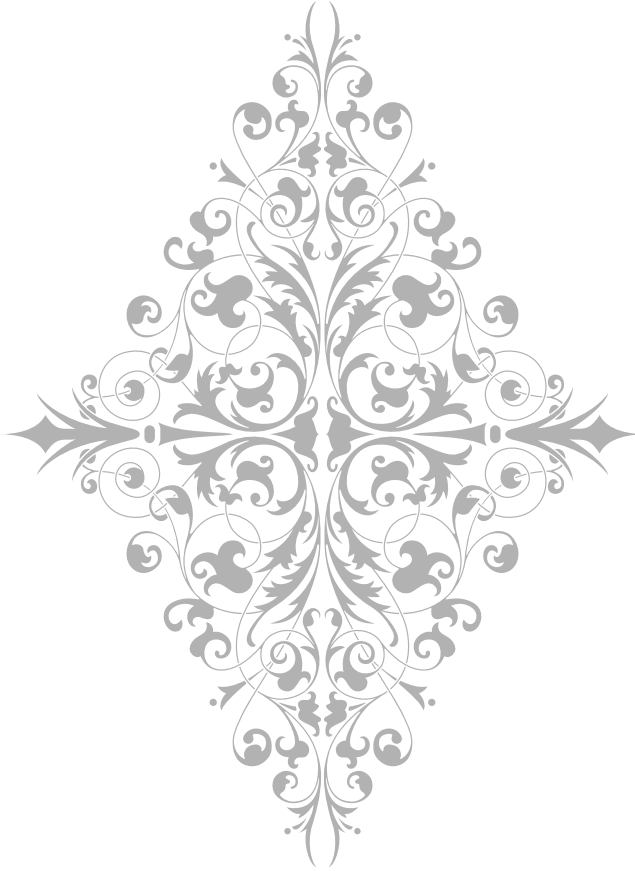
Moreover, the Holy Spirit instructs us that a human being should not complain about the truth of God when wicked people experience great calamities. But we always must think about the severe judgment that happened to great nations and listen to the prophet who exhorts us, saying, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling, so that he will not be angry and you will not perish from his way. For his wrath may soon be kindled.”¹² *COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 49:39.*¹³

⁷Ezek 17. ⁸Ps 104:18 (103:18 LXX). ⁹1 Cor 10:4. ¹⁰FC 48:226. ¹¹Rom 15:4. ¹²Ps 2:11-12. ¹³ESOO 2:158.











A PROPHECY AGAINST BABYLON

JEREMIAH 50:1-46

OVERVIEW: Wandering sheep are in danger of being devoured by the roaring lion of the devil (ORIGEN). This makes all the more grievous the fact that the shepherds of Judah, both kings and priests, led their people astray (THEODORET). But when the people finally returned, after being chastised by Babylon, the Lord granted them pardon, and no sin or iniquity could be found among them (JEROME). This should be a lesson to us to act with care, for evil vices may disguise themselves as honorable virtues, and there is need to repent of them (JEROME). Christ, who loved all humankind, endured your judgment, enduring the hammer of the whole earth in order to redeem you for himself (LEANDER). However, even before his advent, Christ the Savior had proclaimed through Jeremiah his victory over the hammer (i.e., Satan) that opposes the Lord. Those who tempt and oppose the Lord will become like a ship overtaken by misfortune that suffers a bitter wreck (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). The Lord opposes not only the doctrine of the proud but also their hearing and actions, which are of no profit (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS).

50:6 *Shepherds Lead Their Sheep Astray*

DANGER AWAITS STRAYING SHEEP. ORIGEN: He said the sheep is like one who has gone astray. And also in the Gospel he said, "The Son

of man came to search for and save the lost."¹ And also in the parable only one is lost out of the hundred that the shepherd who dwelled with them came to find, who also, after laying it on his shoulders, returned it to the ninety-nine.² For we are all one body and one sheep. He who is the feet and the head and the rest is the shepherd who, after he came, brought together bone with bone and joint with joint, and after he united them, he took them up to his country. And the unity arises through love and truth and the choice of good. Thus to his own Word he united all. But if some who are disobedient have appeared, they have acquired an incurable condition. Thus every Israelite is one according to the true relationship. For we are all one body and one loaf of bread, and we partake of one spirit. But a sheep that goes astray is one who in word and practice does not join the hunt of what is proper, either by not seeking or by not finding. And the one who knows and does what concerns knowledge does not go astray. But the one who goes astray is driven out by lions. For your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.³ And also already young lions roaring to seize and seek from God food for themselves lay snares for the righteous. FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH 28.⁴

¹Lk 19:10. ²Lk 15:3-5. ³1 Pet 5:8. ⁴FC 97:295.

THE LOST SHEEP AND THEIR LOST SHEPHERDS.

THEODORET OF CYR: Then he likens them to lost sheep. He ascribes the cause for the destruction of the sheep to the shepherds. He calls “shepherds” not only their kings but also their priests. And he saw how they prepared them to wander: “They drove them to the mountains and made them wander; they have gone from mountain to hill and have forgotten their fold.” He calls the shrines of the idols “hills” and “mountains” for in them they worshiped the idols. And he calls the temple of God a “fold” because they had there the enjoyment of good things. This wandering handed them over to the enemy inasmuch as they sinned against the Lord. ON JEREMIAH 10.50.⁵

50:20 Israel’s Guilt Will Not Be Found

COMPLETE FORGIVENESS. JEROME: Listen to the same prophet: “At that time,” the Lord says, “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none, and the sin of Judah and there shall be none found.” AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.29.⁶

50:23 The Shattered Hammer of Babylon**TEMPTATIONS DISGUISE THEMSELVES.**

JEROME: If you take precautions to save your daughter from the bite of a viper, why are you not equally careful to shield her from “the hammer of the whole earth”? Or to prevent her from drinking of the golden cup of Babylon? Or keep her from going out with Dinah to see the daughters of a strange land? Or save her from the tripping dance and from the trailing robe? No one administers poison until he has rubbed the rim of the cup with honey; so the better to deceive us, vice puts on the mien and the semblance of virtue. LETTER 107.⁷

THE BLOOD OF JESUS REDEEMS THE WORLD.

LEANDER OF SEVILLE: To the same extent that God’s gift of a dowry is more generous, just so is his love more immense. For he deeply loves the

one whom he espoused with his own blood. And for this, he preferred to have his body opened by wounds through the thrust of a sword, that he might buy your purity for himself and consecrate your chastity. He loved equally all humankind, so that, just as his death is our life and his humility is the curing of our pride, so our integrity was bought with his wounds, for he wished to be struck himself rather than to permit us to be struck by the “hammer of the whole earth.”⁸ “You have been bought with a price,” says the apostle; “do not become the slaves of people.”⁹ Why should you, a virgin, wish to give a man a body already redeemed by Christ? One has redeemed you, and you wish to marry another? Do you enjoy liberty at the cost of another’s freedom and condemn yourself to voluntary servitude? If the whole world is inscribed as a dowry, what is more precious than the blood of Christ by which the world was redeemed? Weigh the reward and the cost, that you may know that he who redeemed is worth more than that which he redeemed. THE TRAINING OF NUNS. PROLOGUE.¹⁰

CHRIST’S VICTORY OVER SATAN.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Let us trample Satan under foot. Let us raise the shout of victory over him now that he is thrown and fallen. Let us exult over the crafty reptile, caught in an inextricable snare. Let us, too, say of him in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, “How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! You are found and also caught because you have stood against the Lord.” Long ago, that is, before the time of the advent of Christ the Savior of all, the universal enemy had somewhat grand and terrible notions about himself. . . . Therefore, as I said, human nature, as victorious in him, wins the crown. And this in ancient times the Son proclaimed, where, by one of the holy prophets, he thus addresses Satan, “Behold, I am against you, O destroying moun-

⁵PG 81:740. ⁶FC 53:344. ⁷LCC 5:338. ⁸Cf. Jerome Translation of Origen’s Homilies on Jeremiah 3.1 (PL 25:606). ⁹1 Cor 7:23. ¹⁰FC 62:186.

tain, says the Lord, that destroys all the earth.”¹¹
COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 12.¹²

50:24 *Trapped*

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS ARE CONDEMNED.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Now had you been truly desirous of learning, you would have heard from him the things that lead on to eternal life; but as you wickedly tempted him, you will hear nothing more than those commands only that were given to them of old time by Moses. For “what,” said he, “is written in the law? How do you read it?” And on the lawyer’s repeating what is enacted in the law, as if to punish his wickedness and reprove his malicious purpose, Christ, as knowing all things, said, “You have answered rightly; do this, and you shall live.”¹³ The lawyer has missed his prey; he has shot wide of the mark, his wickedness is unsuccessful, the sting of envy has ceased, the net of deceit is torn asunder, his sowing bears no fruit, his toil gains no profit; and like some ship that misfortune has overwhelmed, he has suffered a bitter wreck. Let us, therefore, cry out against him in the words of Jeremiah, “You are found and caught, because you have stood up against the Lord.” COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 68.¹⁴

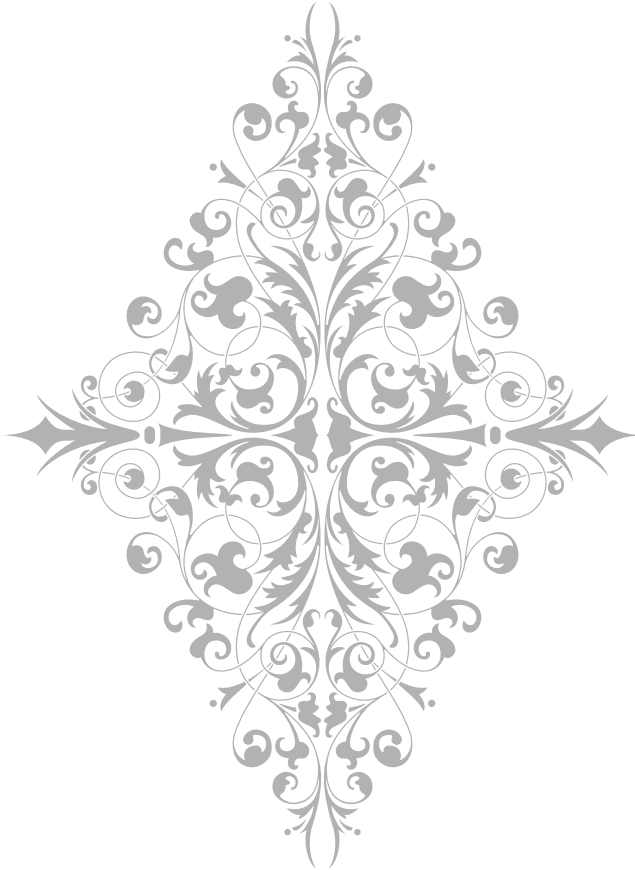
50:31 *The Lord Opposes the Proud*

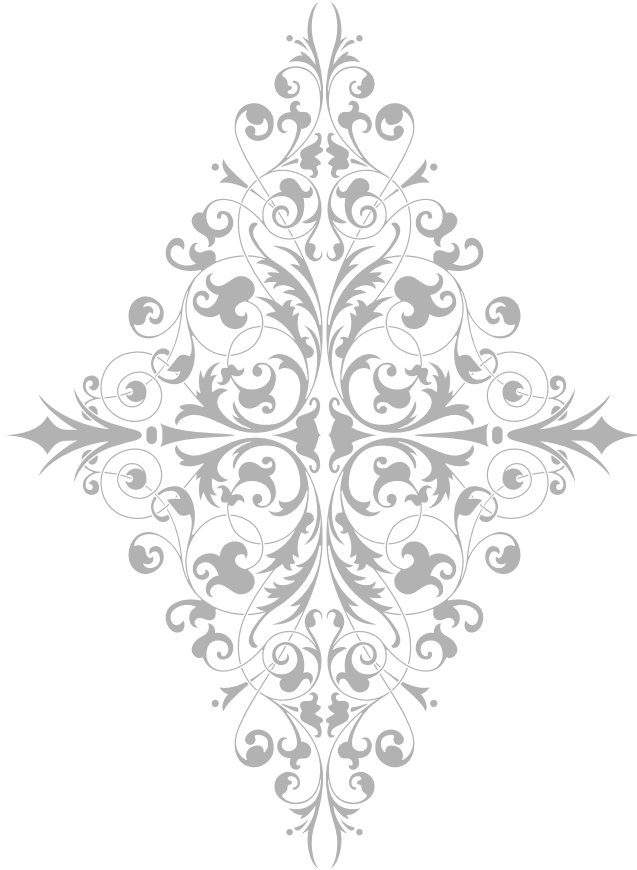
PAY ATTENTION TO WORDS AND ACTIONS.

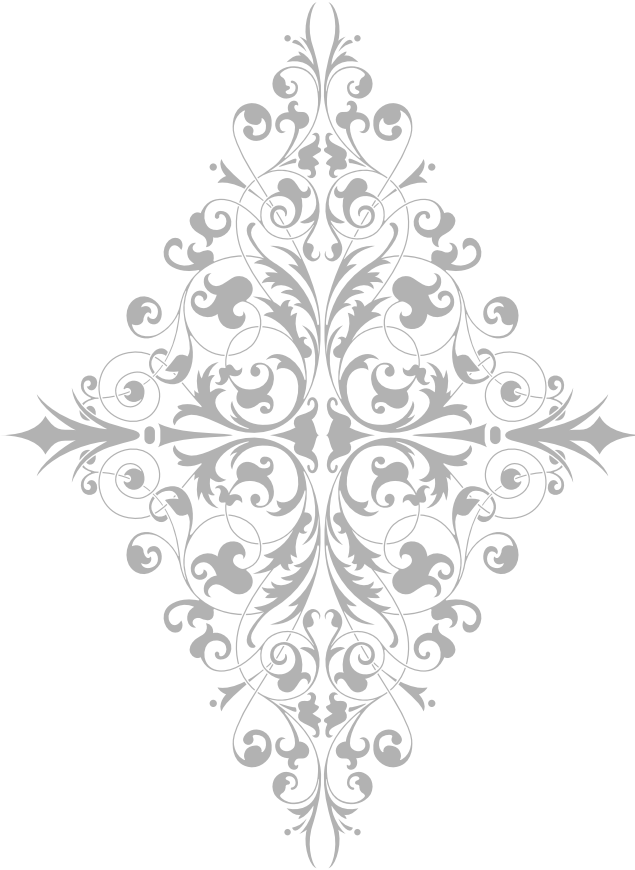
GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: I am to speak against persons who pride themselves on their eloquence; so, to begin with a text of Scripture, “Behold, I am against you, O proud one,” not only in your system of teaching but also in your hearing and in your tone of mind. For there are certain persons who have not only their ears and their tongues but even, as I now perceive, their hands too, itching for our words; who delight in profane babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called and arguments about words that tend to no profit;¹⁵ for so Paul, the preacher and establisher of the “Word cut short,”¹⁶ the disciple and teacher of the fishermen, calls all that is excessive or superfluous in discourse. But as to those to whom we refer, would that they, whose tongue is so verbose and clever in applying itself to noble and approved language, would likewise pay some attention to actions. For then perhaps in a little while they would become less sophisticated and less absurd and strange acrobats of words, if I may use a ridiculous expression about a ridiculous subject. FIRST THEOLOGICAL ORATION I(27).I.¹⁷

¹¹Jer 51:25. ¹²CGSL 85**. ¹³Lk 10:28. ¹⁴CGSL 289. ¹⁵1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim 2:14, 16. ¹⁶Rom 9:28; Is 10:23. ¹⁷LCC 3:128.











THE FALL OF BABYLON

JEREMIAH 51:1-64

OVERVIEW: We, along with Judah, are called to flee from Babylon with all of its sinful desires because Christ has overcome Babylon, Rome and all the powers of the earth (JEROME). God gives himself in the sweet gift of the Fountain of life, but some desire to return to the golden cup of Babylon and its gift of death (PROSPER) as they seek the wisdom and eloquence of this world rather than the Lord (JEROME). This was true even for Jerusalem, which chose to imitate Babylon rather than follow the Law and the prophets God had given (CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA). And yet, the Lord was there at the beginning of life demonstrating his wisdom, glory and power as the creator of all things (TERTULLIAN). Through analogies of creation, we can also see God's apostles and prophets working in the world as they spread out like clouds over the earth with the gospel message (JEROME).

Jeremiah describes Babylon as a mountain because of its preeminence and power. He calls it corrupt, however, because of its ungodli-

ness and wickedness (THEODORET). The Lord has promised to have mercy on his church and to deliver it from present-day Babylonians such as the Arians (AMMON). The prophet spoke of the infection caused by the wickedness of evil people and warned against it (CHRYSOSTOM). He concludes the present prophecy, however, by also noting how Babylon will fall and never rise again (APHRAHAT). The captives of Judah could take comfort in Babylon's fall, knowing they were now free from this enemy (THEODORET).

51:6 Flee Babylon

BE FAITHFUL TO GOD. JEROME: The Lord's command was given through Jeremiah: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every person his soul." To the day of its death the nation never returned to Chaldea or regretted the fleshpots of Egypt or its strong-smelling meats. Accompanied by its virgin bands, it became a fellow citizen of the Savior; and now that it has ascended from

its little Bethlehem to the heavenly realms it can say to the true Naomi: "Your people shall be my people and your God my God."¹ LETTER 108.32.²

CHRIST HAS OVERCOME EVERY EARTHLY POWER. JEROME: Turn back also to Jeremiah and pay heed to what he has written of like import: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver everyone his soul." For "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit."³ It is true that Rome has a holy church, trophies of apostles and martyrs, a true confession of Christ. The faith has been preached there by an apostle, heathenism has been trodden down, the name of Christ is daily exalted higher and higher. LETTER 46.12.⁴

51:7 *Babylon Was a Gold Cup*

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE: Indeed, since the sum total of all God's bounty and the soul of all virtues are given with this ineffable gift, all other gifts are granted us to enable the yearning of the faithful soul to strive effectively after perfect charity. As this is not only from God but is God, it makes steadfast, persevering and unconquerable all those whom it floods with its delight. But people who do not know the sweetness of these waters and still drink of the torrents of this world, people who even after touching with the lips and tasting of the fountain of life still like to get drunk with the golden cup of Babylon, are completely deceived by their own judgment and fall through their own fault. If they persist in this slothfulness, they themselves throw off what they had received. For without charity it is easy to lose all gifts, which same gifts are useless without charity. THE CALL OF ALL NATIONS 2.II.⁵

BEWARE OF PHILOSOPHIES AND THEIR PRIDE. JEROME: Church people are truly rustic and simple people, but all the heretics are Aristotelian and Platonic. Briefly, that you may know that gold is the usual simile for worldly

eloquence, that the heretic's tongue, for example, is as brilliant as gold, hear the words of the prophet: "Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord." Note how he describes the Babylon of confusion. This world, therefore, is that golden cup. All nations drink from that cup of gold. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS II.⁶

CONFUSION OF HUMAN REASON. JEROME: "Strangers with the inhabitants of Tyre." Where we have *alienigenae* [foreigners], the Hebrew text has *Philistim*, which is interpreted, a cup of poison, for heretics are all drunk from the cup of Babylon, of which Jeremiah says, "The golden cup of Babylon that made the whole earth drunk." Note: "the golden cup of Babylon." Babylon connotes confusion: "a cup truly golden," the teachings of philosophers and the eloquence of orators. Who, indeed, has not been misled by the philosophers? Who has not been seduced by the orators of this world? Theirs is a golden cup, the splendor of eloquence on the outside but within full of poison that they could never conceal except under the gleam of gold. You taste the sweetness of their eloquence, to be sure, and do not suspect the fatal poison. "Strangers with the inhabitants of Tyre." Tyre stands for "narrowness." Truly, there is no room there, not the wide open heart of Christ, as the apostle says to the Corinthians: "In us there is no lack of room for you, but in your heart there is no room for us."⁷ HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 62.⁸

51:9 *We Would Have Healed Babylon*

JERUSALEM CALLED BABYLON. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: Jerusalem here is called Babylon, noted among the surrounding countries as the one who worked the hardest at imitating Babylon, and in no way lagging behind these other countries. Indeed, having arrived at almost a state of perfection in this regard, it tolerated no respect for the law or benefit from prophetic instruction.

¹Ruth 1:16. ²NPNF 2 6:211. ³Rev 18:2. ⁴NPNF 2 6:64. ⁵ACW 14:107-8. ⁶FC 48:86. ⁷2 Cor 6:12. ⁸FC 57:40.

FRAGMENTS ON JEREMIAH IN CATENA.⁹

51:15 God's Power and Wisdom at Creation

GOD'S GLORY IS ENHANCED BY HIS MIGHTY DEEDS. TERTULLIAN: For this is proved by Jeremiah when he says, "God has made the earth by his power; he has established the world by his wisdom and has stretched out the heavens by his understanding." These are the energies by the exercise of which he made this universe.¹⁰ His glory is greater if he labored. At length on the seventh day he rested from his works. Both one and the other were after his manner. AGAINST HERMOGENES 45.¹¹

PROPHETS AND APOSTLES ARE LIKE SPREADING CLOUDS. JEROME: "His lightnings illumine the world," Jeremiah says. "The Lord who established the world by his wisdom and brings up clouds from the end of the earth; he makes the lightning flash in the rain." "His lightnings illumine the world." The philosophers, who are always discoursing on the nature of things, say that unless the winds cause a collision among the clouds, fire cannot escape from them; but when they have been aroused to a kind of rivalry in thundering, lightning flashes forth. We can observe a similar phenomenon in producing fire from stones. We have called attention to this to note more easily a similar marvel in the mystery of the Savior. We have our clouds, prophets and apostles, as another psalm says: "Your truth, to the clouds." If to the clouds of this sky he transmits his truth, what does the prophet mean in still another psalm when he says, "Truth shall spring out of the earth"? Now, "your truth, to the clouds" is certainly a figure of the prophets and the apostles. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 73.¹²

51:25 The Destroying Mountain of Babylon

BABYLON A CORRUPT MOUNTAIN. THEODORET OF CYR: He calls Babylon a mountain because of

the preeminence of its power. He calls it corrupt because of its ungodliness and wickedness. ON JEREMIAH 10.51.¹³

51:44-45 Run from Babylon

THE ARIANS ARE LIKE BABYLON. THEODORE OF TABENNESI (VIA AMMON): "Theodore to the beloved brothers in Mount Nitria: priests, deacons and monks, greetings in the Lord. I want you to know that "the pride of" the Arians "has gone up" to God and that "God has visited his people and seeing the afflictions" that they endure he has had mercy on them. He has promised to have mercy on his church and to deliver it from these afflictions. The time has come, therefore, when the church will be delivered from these persecutions. Indeed, God said of the Arians, "I will punish Babylon and will take from its mouth what it has swallowed." And of the church, "Who is there among you that saw this house in its former glory?" "For the last glory of this house is going to surpass the first." Therefore, brothers, "since we have these promises," comfort those who are suffering from the Arians in those parts, that no one's faith may be turned aside, for "the sins of the" Arians "have not yet ended." A LETTER OF BISHOP AMMON 32.¹⁴

SEPARATE FROM WILLFUL SINNERS. CHRYSOSTOM: Therefore, Paul also urged us to this and said, "Expel the wicked man from your midst" and "so that he who has done this deed might be put away from your midst." Indeed, bad companionship is a terrible thing, a terrible thing! A pestilence does not infect and scabies corrupt those tainted as quickly as the wickedness of evil people does those affected by this malady. For "evil companionships corrupt good morals." The prophet also said, "Go out of the midst of them, and separate yourselves from

⁹PG 70:1457. ¹⁰Ps 65:7 (64:7 LXX). ¹¹ANF 3:502. ¹²FC 57:111.

¹³PG 81:749. ¹⁴CS 46:101.

them."¹⁵ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 57.¹⁶

51:64 *Babylon Will Rise No More*

BABYLON CONTINUES IN DESOLATION.

APHRAHAT: And with regard to Babylon Jeremiah said, Babylon shall fall and shall not rise. And behold! To this day it continues in desolation and will do so forever. DEMONSTRATIONS 21.6.¹⁷

COMFORT FOR JUDAH. THEODORET OF CYR: The Lord ordered these things to happen to comfort the Judean captives so that, when they had learned about Babylon's capture and their own freedom, they might have as their consolation the hope of these good things. ON JEREMIAH 10.51.¹⁸

¹⁵Jer 51:45; cf. 1 Cor 15:33. ¹⁶FC 41:104. ¹⁷NPNF 2 13:395. ¹⁸PG 81:757.



THE FALL OF JERUSALEM JEREMIAH 52:1-34

OVERVIEW: No one is saved by his own resources but only by faith and the kindness of God, even in times of destruction (CHRYSOSTOM).

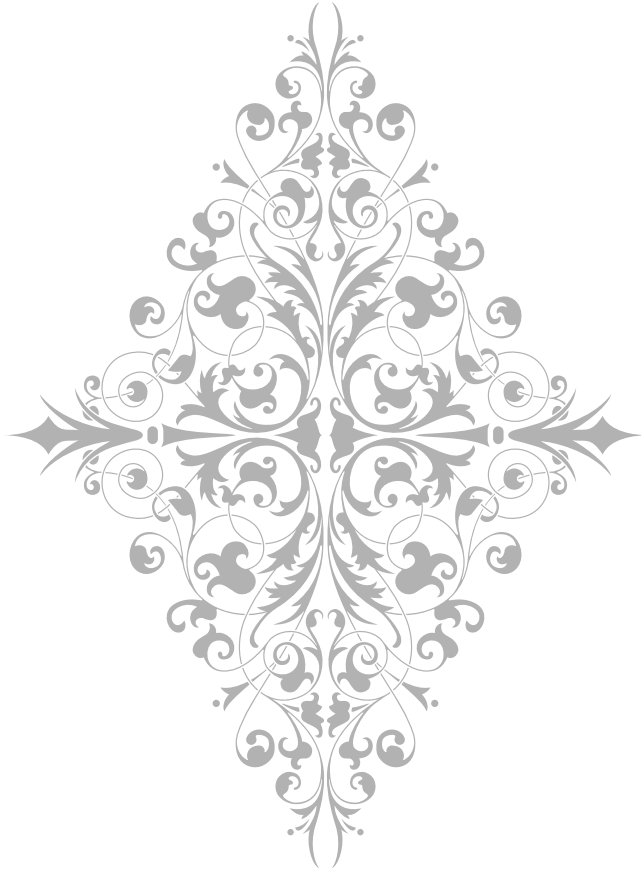
52:15-16 *A Remnant Remains*

THE LORD PROVIDES IN TIME OF NEED

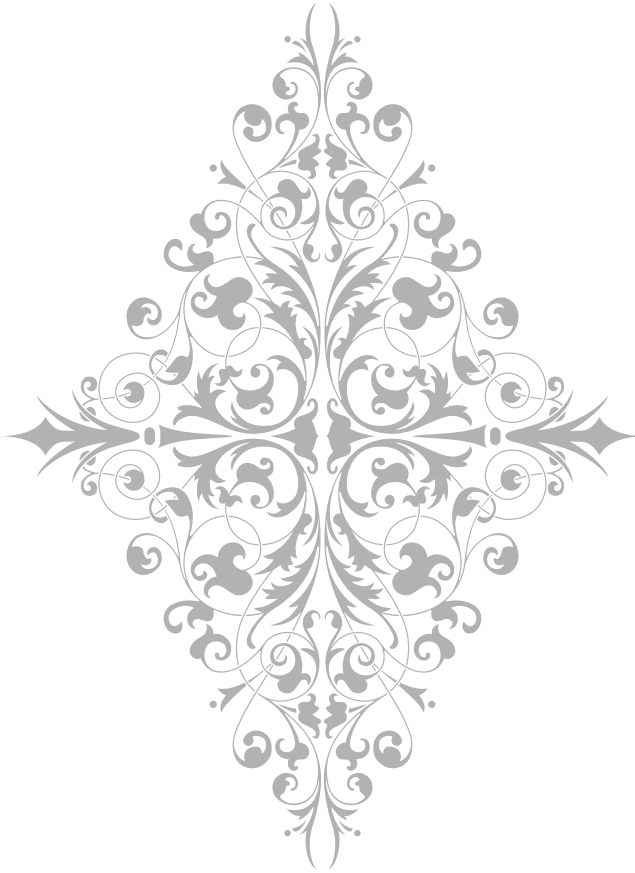
CHRYSOSTOM: And as Isaiah said before, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have been as Sodom and would have been made like to Gomorrah."¹ Here again he shows another thing, that not even those few were saved by their own resources. They too would

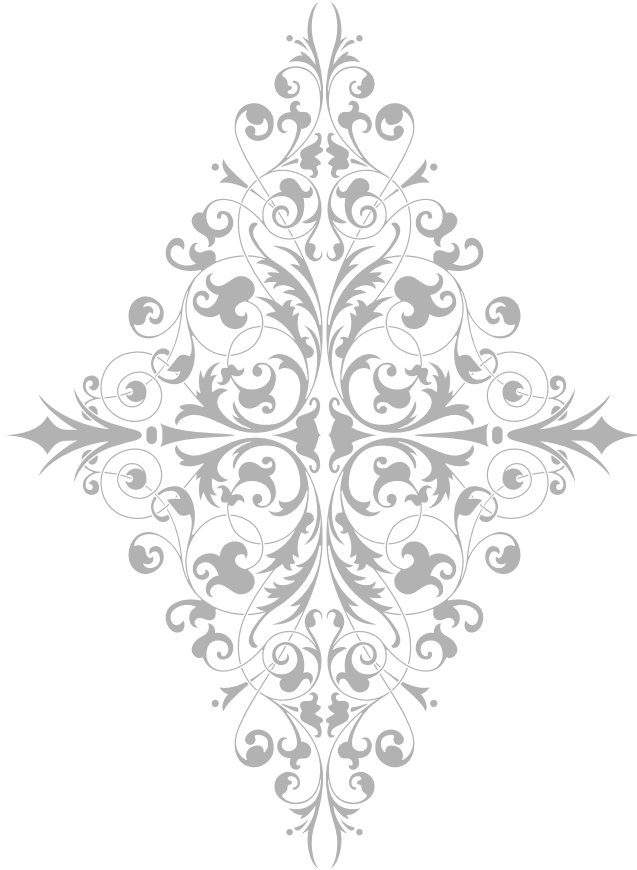
have perished and met with Sodom's fate, that is, they would have had to undergo utter destruction. They (of Sodom) were destroyed root and branch and left not even the slightest remnant of themselves. They too, he means, would have been like these, unless God had used much kindness to them and had saved them by faith. This happened also in the case of the visible captivity, the majority having been taken away captive and perished and some few only being saved. HOMILIES ON ROMANS 16.²

¹Rom 9:29; Is 1:9. ²NPNF 1 11:470.



L A M E N T A T I O N S







A LAMENT FOR ZION LAMENTATIONS 1:1-22

OVERVIEW: Lamentations is a book of poetry, with each of the first four chapters arranged as an acrostic and each subject to a different poetic meter (JEROME). It is a book of laments that understands that, although discipline brings about mourning, that mourning also is heard by God, and the afflictions we experience will ultimately lead us to salvation (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). In the midst of our mourning, Christ comes as our intercessor, pleading on our behalf before the Father and pointing out to us the future life that awaits us in the paradise above (GREGORY OF NYSSA). Meanwhile, we must sojourn here below in the midst of heresy and other aberrations of God's kingdom (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). Jeremiah understood the importance of repentance for Zion, who mourned its situation, even as we in the Zion of today, the church, should not forget that repentance is salutary in the life of a Christian and in the church and that repentance is to be accompanied by forgiveness and comfort (AMBROSE). Leaders in the church who have fallen also need compassion, but there is often little to be found (GREGORY THE GREAT).

1:1-2 A Full City Emptied

LAMENTATIONS AS AN ACROSTIC. JEROME: As for Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, who can fully understand or adequately explain them? The first of them seems to compose not a prophecy but a gospel. The second speaks of a rod of an almond tree¹ and of a seething pot with its face toward the north,² and of a leopard that

has changed its spots.³ He also goes four times through the alphabet in different meters.⁴ LETTER 53.8.⁵

CENSURE AND DISCIPLINE MEANT FOR OUR SALVATION. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Bringing someone to his senses is censure, which makes one think. And he does not abstain from this form of instruction either, but says by Jeremiah, "How long shall I cry, and you not hear? So your ears are uncircumcised." O blessed forbearance! And again, by the same: "All the heathen are uncircumcised, but this people is uncircumcised in heart," "for the people are disobedient children," he says, "in whom faith does not exist." . . . Bewailing one's fate is latent censure and artfully helps to bring salvation, albeit under stealth. He made use of this by Jeremiah: "How did the city sit solitary that was full of people! She that ruled over territories became as a widow; she came under tribute; weeping, she wept in the night." . . . In the end, the system God pursues to inspire fear is the source of salvation. And it is the prerogative of goodness to save: "The mercy of the Lord is on all flesh, while he reproveth, corrects and teaches as a shepherd does his flock. He pities those who receive his instruction and those who eagerly seek union with him." . . . "For according to the greatness of his mercy, so is his rebuke."⁶ For it is indeed noble not to sin, but it is good also for

¹Jer 1:11. ²Jer 1:13. ³Jer 13:23. ⁴In the first four chapters of Lamentations, each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. ⁵NPNF 2 6:101. ⁶Sir 16:12.

the sinner to repent, just as it is best to be always in good health but well to recover from disease. So he commands by Solomon, "Strike your son with the rod, that you may deliver his soul from death."⁷ And again, "Do not abstain from chastising your son but correct him with the rod, for he will not die."⁸ For reproof and rebuke, as also the original term implies, are the stripes of the soul, chastising sins, preventing death and leading to self-control for those who are out of control.

. . . And so we, too, who in our lives are sick with shameful lusts and reprehensible excesses and other inflammatory effects of the passions, need the Savior. And he administers not only mild but also stringent medicines. The bitter roots of fear then arrest the eating sores of our sins. This is why fear is also salutary, if bitter. Sick, we truly stand in need of the Savior; having wandered, of one to guide us; blind, of one to lead us to the light; thirsty, "of the fountain of life, of which whoever partakes shall no longer thirst";⁹ dead, we need life; sheep, we need a shepherd; we who are children need a tutor, while universal humanity stands in need of Jesus; so that we may not continue intractable and sinners to the end and thus fall into condemnation but may be separated from the chaff and stored up in the paternal garner. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR I.9.¹⁰

1:4 *The Roads to Zion Mourn*

CHRIST INTERCEDES IN THE MIDST OF OUR MOURNING. GREGORY OF NYSSA: "Call for the mourning women,"¹¹ the prophet Jeremiah says. In no other way can the burning heart cool down, swelling as it is with its affliction, unless it relieves itself by sobs and tears. . . . You have heard certain mournful and lamenting words of Jeremiah that he used to mourn Jerusalem as a deserted city and how among other expressions of passionate grief he added this, "The ways of Zion do mourn."¹² These words were uttered then, but now they have been realized. For when the news of our calamity¹³ shall have been spread abroad, then will the ways be full of mourn-

ing crowds and the sheep of his flock will pour themselves forth and like the Ninevites utter the voice of lamentation,¹⁴ or, rather, will lament more bitterly than they. For in their case their mourning released them from the cause of their fear, but with these no hope of release from their distress removes their need of mourning. I know, too, of another utterance of Jeremiah, which is reckoned among the books of the Psalms. It is that which he made over the captivity of Israel. The words run thus: "We hung our harps on the willows and condemned ourselves as well as our harps to silence."¹⁵ I make this song my own. For when I see the confusion of heresy, this confusion is Babylon.¹⁶ And when I see the flood of trials that pours in on us from this confusion, I say that these are "the waters of Babylon by which we sit down and weep" because there is no one to guide us over them. Even if you mention the willows, and the harps that hung there, that part also of the figure shall be mine. For, in truth, our life is among willows, the willow being a fruitless tree, and the sweet fruit of our life having all withered away. Therefore we have become fruitless willows, and the harps of love we hung on those trees are idle and the strings no longer vibrate. "If I forget you, O Jerusalem," he adds, "may my right hand be forgotten." Suffer me to make a slight alteration in that text. It is not we who have forgotten the right hand but the right hand that has forgotten us; and the "tongue has cleaved to the roof of" his own "mouth" and barred the passage of his words, so that we can never again hear that sweet voice. But let me have all tears wiped away, for I feel that I am indulging more than is right in this sorrow for our loss.

Our Bridegroom has not been taken from us. He stands in our midst, although we see him not. The Priest is within the holy place. He has entered into that within the veil, where our fore-runner Christ has entered for us.¹⁷ He has left

⁷Prov 23:14. ⁸Prov 23:13. ⁹Jn 4:13-14. ¹⁰ANF 2:229-30*. ¹¹Jer 9:17. ¹²Lam 1:4. ¹³That is, the death of Meletius, for whom this funeral oration was written. ¹⁴Jon 3:5. ¹⁵Ps 137 (136 LXX). ¹⁶Gen 11:9.

behind him the curtain of the flesh. No longer does he pray to the type or shadow of the things in heaven, but he looks on the very embodiment of these realities. No longer through a glass darkly does he intercede with God, but face to face he intercedes with him; and he intercedes for us¹⁸ and for the “negligences and ignorances” of the people. He has put away the coats of skin,¹⁹ no need is there now for the dwellers in paradise to wear such garments as these; but he wears the clothing that the purity of his life has woven into a glorious dress. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death”²⁰ of such an individual, or rather it is not death but the breaking of bonds, as it is said, “You have broken my bonds asunder.” Simeon has been allowed to leave.²¹ He has been freed from the bondage of the body. The “snare is broken, and the bird has flown away.”²² He has left Egypt behind, this material life. He has crossed not this Red Sea of ours but the black, gloomy sea of life. He has entered on the land of promise and holds lofty conversations with God on the mountain. He has loosed the sandal of his soul, that with the pure step of thought he may set foot on that holy land where there is the vision of God. Having therefore this consolation, you who are conveying the bones of our Joseph to the place of blessing should listen to the exhortation of Paul: “Do not mourn as others who have no hope.”²³ FUNERAL ORATION ON MELETIUS.²⁴

A LAMENT OVER THE CURRENT STATE OF HERESY. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: In the early days of the church, all was well. The present elaborate, far-fetched and artificial treatment of theology had not made its way into the schools of divinity, but playing with pebbles that deceive the eye by the quickness of their changes or dancing before an audience with varied and effeminate contortions were looked on as all one with speaking or hearing of God in a way unusual or frivolous. But since the Sextuses and Pyrrhos, and the antithetic style, like a dire and malignant disease, have infected our churches,

and babbling is reputed culture, and, as the book of the Acts says of the Athenians, we spend our time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.²⁵ O, what Jeremiah will bewail our confusion and blind madness; he alone could utter lamentations befitting our misfortunes.

The beginning of this madness was Arius (whose name is derived from frenzy). He paid the penalty of his unbridled tongue by his death in a profane spot, brought about by prayer not by disease, when he like Judas burst asunder²⁶ for his similar treachery to the Word. Then others, catching the infection, organized an art of impiety and, confining Deity to the Unbegotten, expelled from Deity not only the Begotten but also the proceeding one, and honored the Trinity with communion in name alone or even refused to retain this for it. Not so that blessed one who was indeed a man of God and a mighty trumpet of truth: but being aware that to contract the three persons to a numerical unity is heretical and the innovation of Sabellius, who first devised a contraction of Deity; and that to sever the three persons by a distinction of nature is an unnatural mutilation of Deity; he both happily preserved the unity, which belongs to the Godhead, and religiously taught the Trinity, which refers to personality, neither confounding the three persons in the unity nor dividing the substance among the three persons but abiding within the bounds of piety by avoiding excessive inclination or opposition to either side. ON THE GREAT ATHANASIUS, ORATION 21.12-13.²⁷

1:16-20 *A Comforter Is Far from Me*

REPENTANCE IS A GREAT REMEDY. AMBROSE: Repentance came by John, grace by Christ. He, as the Lord, gives the one; the other is proclaimed, as it were, by the servant. The church,

¹⁷Heb 6:19-20. ¹⁸See 1 Cor 13:12. ¹⁹Gen 3:21. ²⁰Ps 116:15-16 (115:6-7 LXX). ²¹Lk 2:30; Gen 43:23. ²²Ps 124:7. ²³1 Thess 4:13. ²⁴NPNF 2 5:516-17. ²⁵Acts 17:21. ²⁶Acts 1:18. ²⁷NPNF 2 7:272-73*.

then, keeps both that it may attain to grace and not cast away repentance, for grace is the gift of One who confers it; repentance is the remedy of the sinner.

Jeremiah knew that penitence was a great remedy, which he in his Lamentations took up for Jerusalem and brings forward Jerusalem itself as repenting when he says, "She wept sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks, nor is there one to comfort her of all who love her. The ways of Zion do mourn." And he says further, "For these things I weep, my eyes have grown dim with weeping, because he who used to comfort me is gone far from me." We notice that he thought this the bitterest addition to his woes, that he who used to comfort the mourner was gone far from him. How, then, can you take away the very comfort by refusing to repentance the hope of forgiveness?

But let those who repent learn how they ought to carry it out, with what zeal, with what affection, with what intention of mind, with what shaking of the inmost bowels, with what conversion of heart: "Behold," he says, "O Lord, that I am in distress; my bowels are troubled by my weeping; my heart is turned within me."

Here you recognize the intention of the soul, the faithfulness of the mind, the disposition of the body: "The elders of the daughters of Zion sat," he says, "on the ground, they put dust on their heads, they girded themselves with haircloth, the princes hung their heads to the ground, the virgins of Jerusalem fainted with weeping, my eyes grew dim, my bowels were troubled, my glory was poured on the earth."²⁸

So, too, did the people of Nineveh mourn and escaped the destruction of their city.²⁹ Such is the remedial power of repentance, that God seems because of it to change his intention. To escape is, then, in your own power; the Lord wants to be asked, he wants people to hope in him, he wants supplication to be made to him. You are a human being, and you want to be

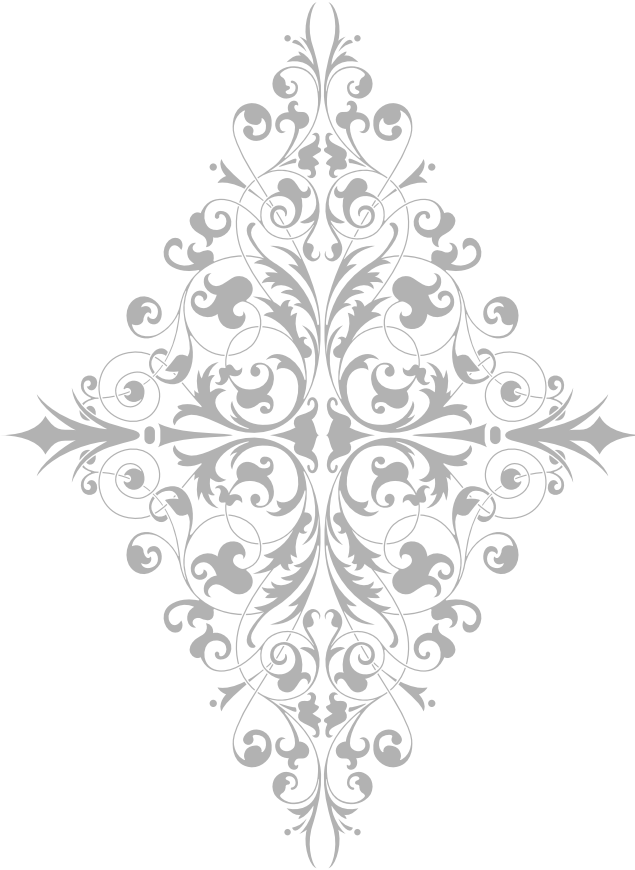
asked to forgive, and you think that God will pardon you without asking him?

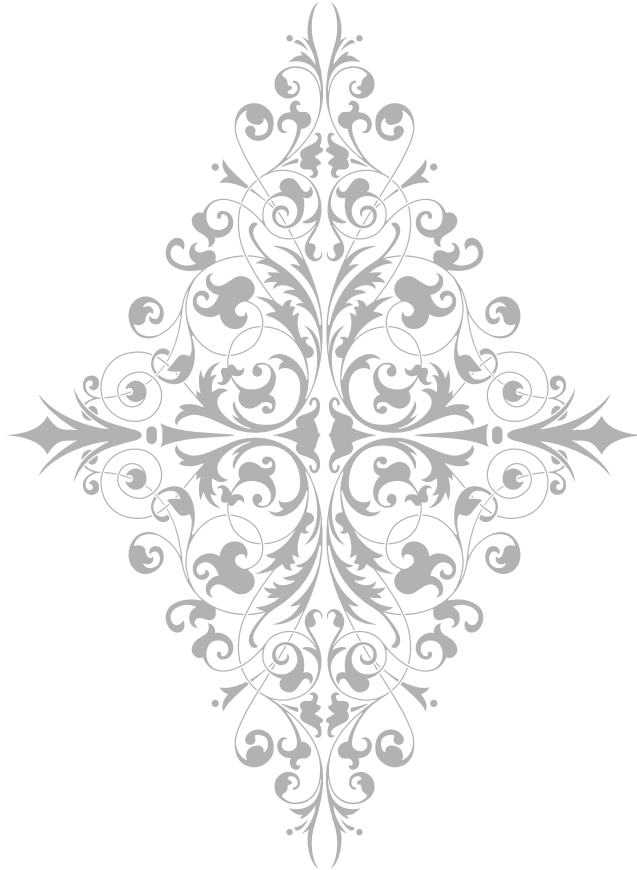
The Lord wept over Jerusalem, that, inasmuch as it would not weep itself, it might obtain forgiveness through the tears of the Lord. He wills that we should weep in order that we may escape, as you find it in the Gospel: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves."³⁰ CONCERNING REPENTANCE 2.6.44-49.³¹

A LAMENT FOR A FALL FROM A POSITION OF AUTHORITY. GREGORY THE GREAT: In describing loftily the sweetness of contemplation, you have renewed the groans of my fallen state, since I hear what I have lost inwardly while mounting outwardly, though undeserving, to the topmost height of rule. Know then that I am stricken with so great sorrow that I can scarcely speak, for the dark shades of grief block up the eyes of my soul. Whatever is beheld is sad; whatever is thought delightful appears to my heart lamentable. For I reflect to what a dejected height of external advancement I have mounted in falling from the lofty height of my rest. And, being sent for my faults into the exile of employment from the face of my Lord, I say with the prophet, in the words, as it were of destroyed Jerusalem, "He who should comfort me has departed far from me." But when, in seeking something similar to express my condition and title, you frame periods and declamations in your letter, certainly, dearest brother, you call an ape a lion. Herein we see that you do as we often do, when we call many whelps leopards or tigers. For I, my good man, have, as it were, lost my children, since through earthly cares I have lost works of righteousness. Therefore "call me not Naomi that is fair; but call me Mara, for I am full of bitterness."³² LETTER 6.³³

²⁸Lam 2:10-11. ²⁹Jon 3:5. ³⁰Lk 23:28. ³¹NPNF 2 10:351**.

³²Ruth 1:20. ³³NPNF 2 12:76*.





ZION'S ALIENATION FROM YAHWEH LAMENTATIONS 2:1-22

OVERVIEW: When the church comes under a cloud of strife and internal fighting, as Zion of old, the Lord will cast down its glory even as he did Zion's (EUSEBIUS). But fear of strife should not make the shepherds of the church afraid of speaking the truth, even as God implored the leaders, especially the priests and prophets of Judah, to speak the truth to their people. But these same shepherds should also use discretion when they speak lest they suppress what they should say or utter what they should not (GREGORY THE GREAT). If righteousness and truth terrify the person who hears it, mercy and peace should encourage that same person to seek salvation. Those who do not seek that peace and depart from the church are to be mourned and prayed for that they might repent and return to salvation (JEROME). There are many different types of tears that may be shed, but those that are most beneficial are those shed in repentance that then will yield to tears of joy (CASSIAN).

2:1-2 Zion Under a Cloud

THE CHURCH UNDER A CLOUD OF STRIFE.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: No envy hindered the progress of these affairs that advanced gradually and grew and increased day by day. Nor could any evil demon slander them or hinder them through human counsels, so long as the divine and heavenly hand watched over and guarded his people as worthy.

But on account of the abundant freedom, we fell into laxity and sloth. We envied and reviled each other and were almost, as it were, taking up arms against one another. Rulers assailed rulers with words like spears, and people forming parties against people and monstrous hypocrisy and dissimulation rising to the greatest height of wickedness, the divine judgment with forbear-

ance, as is its pleasure, while the multitudes yet continued to assemble, gently and moderately harassed the episcopacy.

This persecution began with the brothers in the army. But as if without sensibility, we were not eager to make the Deity favorable and propitious; and some, like atheists, thought that our affairs were unheeded and ungoverned; and thus we added one wickedness to another. And those esteemed our shepherds, casting aside the bond of piety, were excited to conflicts with one another and did nothing else than heap up fights and threats and jealousy and enmity and hatred toward each other, like tyrants eagerly endeavoring to assert their power. Then, truly, according to the word of Jeremiah, "The Lord in his wrath darkened the daughter of Zion, and cast down the glory of Israel from heaven to earth and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger. The Lord also overwhelmed all the beautiful things of Israel and threw down all his strongholds."

And according to what was foretold in the Psalms, "He has made void the covenant of his servant, and profaned his sanctuary to the earth—in the destruction of the churches—and has thrown down all his strongholds and has made his fortresses cowardice. All that pass by have plundered the multitude of the people; and he has also become a reproach to his neighbors. For he has exalted the right hand of his enemies, and has turned back the help of his sword and has not taken his part in the war. But he has deprived him of purification and has cast his throne to the ground. He has shortened the days of his time, and besides all, has poured out shame on him."¹

All these things were fulfilled in us when

¹Ps 89:39-45.

we saw with our own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down to the very foundations. We saw the divine and sacred Scriptures committed to the flames in the midst of the marketplaces and the shepherds of the churches basely hidden here and there, and some of them were captured ignominiously and mocked by their enemies. When also, according to another prophetic word, "Contempt was poured out on rulers, and he caused them to wander in an untrodden and pathless way."² ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY 8.1.6-8.2.1.³

2:14 *False and Deceptive Visions*

SHEPHERDS SHOULD BE UNAFRAID OF SPEAKING THE TRUTH. GREGORY THE GREAT: The ruler should be discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech, lest he either utter what ought to be suppressed or suppress what he ought to utter. For, as incautious speaking leads into error, so indiscreet silence leaves in error those who might have been instructed. For often improvident rulers, fearing to lose human favor, shrink timidly from speaking freely the things that are right, and, according to the voice of the Truth,⁴ serve to the custody of the flock by no means with the zeal of shepherds but in the way of hirelings; since they fly when the wolf comes if they hide themselves under silence. For hence it is that the Lord through the prophet upbraids them, calling them, "Dumb dogs that cannot bark."⁵ Hence again he complains, saying, "You have not gone up against the enemy, neither opposed a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord."⁶ Now to go up against the enemy is to go with free voice against the powers of this world for defense of the flock; and to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord is out of love of justice to resist bad people when they contend against us. For a shepherd to have feared to say what is right, what else is it but to have turned his back in keeping silence? But surely, if he puts himself in front for the flock, he opposes a wall against the enemy for the house of Israel. Hence again to the sinful people it is

said, "Your prophets have seen false and foolish things for you: neither did they discover your iniquity, to provoke you to repentance." For in sacred language, teachers are sometimes called prophets, in that, by pointing out how fleeting present things are, they point out the things that are to come. And these are the ones the divine discourse convinces of seeing false things, because, while fearing to reprove faults, they vainly flatter evildoers by promising security; neither do they discover the iniquity of sinners, since they refrain their voice from chiding. For the language of reproof is the key of discovery, because by chiding it discloses the fault of which even he who has committed it is often himself unaware. PASTORAL RULE 2.4.⁷

2:18 *Tears Streaming Like a Torrent*

A FLOOD OF TEARS. JEROME: Think how great that weeping must be that deserves to be compared with a flood of waters. Whoever so weeps and says with the prophet Jeremiah, "let not the apple of my eye cease," shall straightway find the words fulfilled of him: "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."⁸ If righteousness and truth terrify him, mercy and peace may encourage him to seek salvation. LETTER 122.3.⁹

WEEP FOR THOSE WHO DEPART FROM THE CHURCH. JEROME: The Savior also wept over the city of Jerusalem because its inhabitants had not repented;¹⁰ and Peter washed out his triple denial with bitter tears,¹¹ thus fulfilling the words of the prophet: "rivers of waters run down my eyes."¹² Jeremiah too laments over his impenitent people, saying, "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for . . . my people!"¹³ And farther on he gives a reason for his lamentation: "do not

²Ps 107:40. ³NPNF 2 1:323-24*. ⁴Jn 10:12. ⁵Is 56:10. ⁶Ezek 13:5. ⁷NPNF 2 12:11. ⁸Ps 85:10. ⁹NPNF 2 6:227*. ¹⁰Lk 19:41. ¹¹Lk 22:62. ¹²Ps 119:136. ¹³Jer 9:1.

weep for the dead," he writes, "neither bemoan him, but weep bitterly for him that goes away, for he shall return no more."¹⁴ The Jew and the Gentile therefore are not to be bemoaned, for they have never been in the church and have died once for all (it is of these that the Savior says, "Let the dead bury their dead"¹⁵); weep rather for those who by reason of their crimes and sins go away from the church and who, suffering condemnation for their faults, shall no more return to it. It is in this sense that the prophet speaks to ministers of the church, calling them its walls and towers and saying to each in turn, "O wall, let tears run down." In this way, it is prophetically implied, you will fulfill the apostolic precept: "Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep."¹⁶ By your tears you will melt the hard hearts of sinners until they too weep. However, if they persist in evildoing they will find these words applied to them: "I . . . planted for you a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to me?"¹⁷ He says again, "saying to a stock, you are my father; and to a stone, you have brought me forth; for they have turned their back to me, and not their face."¹⁸ He means they would not turn toward God in penitence but in the hardness of their hearts turned their backs on him to insult him. Wherefore also the Lord says to Jeremiah, "Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree and there has played the harlot." And I said after she had played the harlot and "had done all these things, Turn to me, but she returned not."¹⁹

How hardhearted we are, and how merciful God is! Even after our many sins, he urges us to seek salvation. Yet not even so are we willing to turn to better things. LETTER 122.I-2.²⁰

TEARS MAY SERVE DIFFERENT PURPOSES.

JOHN CASSIAN: Not every kind of shedding of tears is produced by one feeling or one virtue. For in one way does that weeping originate that

is caused by the pricks of our sins striking our heart, of which we read, "I have labored in my groaning, every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears."²¹ And again, "Let tears run down like a torrent day and night; give yourself no rest, and do not let the apple of your eye cease." In another, that which arises from the contemplation of eternal good things and the desire of that future glory, owing to which even richer well-springs of tears burst forth from uncontrollable delights and boundless exultation, while our soul is thirsty for the mighty living God, saying, "When shall I come and appear before the presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night,"²² declaring with daily crying and lamentation, "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged," and, "Too long has my soul been a sojourner."²³

In another way do the tears flow forth, which without any conscience of deadly sin yet still proceed from the fear of hell and the recollection of that terrible judgment, with the terror of which the prophet was smitten and prayed to God, saying, "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no one living be justified."²⁴ There is too another kind of tears, which are caused not by knowledge of one's self but by the hardness and sins of others; whereby Samuel is described as having wept for Saul. Both the Lord in the Gospel and Jeremiah in former days wept for the city of Jerusalem, the latter thus saying, "O, that my head were water and my eyes a fountain of tears! And I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."²⁵ Or also such as were those tears of which we hear in Psalm 101: "For I have eaten ashes for my bread and mingled my cup with weeping."²⁶ And these were certainly not caused by the same feeling as those that arise in Psalm 6 from the person of the penitent but were due to the anxieties of this life and its distresses and

¹⁴Jer 22:10. ¹⁵Mt 8:22. ¹⁶Rom 12:15. ¹⁷Jer 2:21. ¹⁸Jer 2:27. ¹⁹Jer 3:6-7. ²⁰NPNF 2 6:226*. ²¹Ps 6:6. ²²Ps 42:2-3 (41:3-4 LXX). ²³Ps 120:5-6. ²⁴Ps 143:2 (142:2 LXX). ²⁵Jer 9:1. ²⁶Ps 102:9 (101:10 LXX).

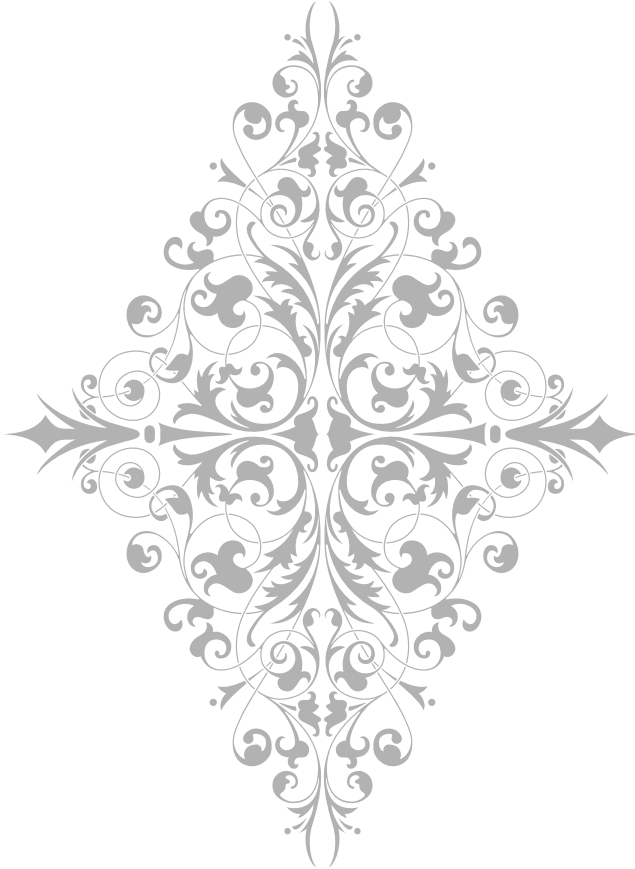
losses, by which the righteous who are living in this world are oppressed. And this is clearly shown not only by the words of the psalm itself but also by its title, which runs as follows in the character of that poor person of whom it is said in the Gospel that “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”²⁷ “A prayer of the poor when he was in distress and poured forth his prayer to God.”²⁸ CONFERENCE 1.9.29.²⁹

FORCED TEARS ARE NOT BENEFICIAL. JOHN CASSIAN: From these tears those are vastly different that are squeezed out from dry eyes while the heart is hard, and although we cannot believe that these are altogether fruitless (for the attempt to shed them is made with a good intention, especially by those who have not yet been able to attain to perfect knowledge or to

be thoroughly cleansed from the stains of past or present sins), yet certainly the flow of tears ought not to be thus forced out by those who have already advanced to the love of virtue, nor should the weeping of the outward person be with great labor attempted, as even if it is produced it will never attain the rich copiousness of spontaneous tears. For it will rather cast down the soul of the suppliant by his endeavors, and humiliate him, and plunge him in human affairs and draw him away from the celestial heights, wherein the awed mind of one who prays should be steadfastly fixed, and will force it to relax its hold on its prayers and grow sick from barren and forced tears. CONFERENCE 1.9.30.³⁰

²⁷Mt 5:3. ²⁸Ps 102:1. ²⁹NPNF 2 11:397*. ³⁰NPNF 2 11:397-98.







PERSONAL LAMENTATIONS AND PRAYERS

LAMENTATIONS 3:1-66

OVERVIEW: Lamentations speaks of the goodness of the Lord for those who wait for him, confirming that the God of the Old Testament is not evil but good (ORIGEN). He will take care of those who wait on him (THEODORET). And so, it is a good thing for young people to bear difficulties in their youth, even though it is not pleasant at the time, since these difficulties will train them for what lies ahead (METHODIUS). Afflictions are with us, whether young or old, rich or poor. One need only look at the lives of leaders or the wealthy to see that not even they are exempt from trials, but they only benefit from them if they learn from these trials (CHRYSOSTOM). God had foretold through Jeremiah that those who follow him would experience persecution but also that in the face of that persecution they are to turn the other cheek, even as Jesus had said (ORIGEN). Such a life of self-denial prophesied in the Old Testament was a precur-

sor to the ascetic lifestyle many chose in the church of the New Testament (JEROME).

We hear of the gift of forgiveness in the laments (CYPRIAN), which tells us that God's anger is meant to turn us around, not to destroy us (AMBROSE). Therefore we should not look on the tribulations we undergo as punishment so much as perfecting our patience (ATHANASIUS) as we imitate God's mercy and patience toward us (AUGUSTINE). As "prisoners of the earth," that is, those who are enslaved to evil desires, we can take heart in the fact that we have been freed by Christ (ORIGEN). We cannot blame the evil that we do, or that is in the world, on God (ORIGEN). Therefore, we should lift up our hearts to God in prayer and fasting, as Jeremiah exhorts us, rather than fattening our hearts in laziness in spiritual matters (TERTULLIAN). Our prayers and laments will be accompanied by channels of tears, with the different tears shed correspond-

ing to the different sins and sadness, as well as joy, in our lives (GREGORY THE GREAT).

3:25 *Those Who Wait on God*

GOD IS GOOD, NOT EVIL. ORIGEN: "There is none good but one, God the Father."¹ This word they² declare is peculiar to the Father of Christ, who, however, is different from the God who is creator of all things, to which creator he gave no appellation of goodness. Let us see now if, in the Old Testament, the God of the prophets and the Creator and Legislator of the word is not called good. What are the expressions that occur in the psalms? "How good is God to Israel, to the upright in heart!"³ and, "Let Israel now say that he is good, that his mercy endures for ever,"⁴ the language in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him." As therefore God is frequently called good in the Old Testament, so also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is styled just in the Gospels. Finally, in the Gospel according to John, our Lord, when praying to the Father, says, "O just Father, the world has not known you."⁵ And lest perhaps they should say that it was owing to his having assumed human flesh that he called the Creator of the world Father and styled him just, they are excluded from such a refuge by the words that immediately follow, "The world has not known you." But, according to them, the world is ignorant of the good God alone. For the world unquestionably recognizes its Creator, the Lord saying that the world loves what is its own. Clearly, then, he whom they consider to be the good God is called just in the Gospels. Anyone may at leisure gather together a greater number of proofs, consisting of those passages, where in the New Testament the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is called just, and in the Old also, where the Creator of heaven and earth is called good; so that the heretics, being convicted by numerous testimonies, may perhaps some time be put to the blush. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 2.5.4.⁶

3:26 *Wait Quietly for the Lord*

GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THOSE WHO WAIT ON HIM. THEODORET OF CYR: Up then, I beseech you, let us fight for the Lord's sheep. Their Lord is near. He will certainly appear and scatter the wolves and glorify the shepherds. "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him." Let us not murmur at the storm that has arisen, for the Lord of all knows what is good for us. Wherefore also when the apostle asked for release from his trials he would not grant his supplication but said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."⁷ Let us then bravely bear the evils that befall us; it is in war that heroes are discerned, in conflicts that athletes are crowned, in the surge of the sea that the art of the helmsman is shown, in the fire that the gold is tried. And let us not, I beseech you, heed only ourselves; let us rather have forethought for the rest, and that much more for the sick than for the whole, for it is an apostolic precept that exclaims, "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak."⁸ Let us then stretch out our hands to them that lie low, let us tend their wounds and set them at their post to fight the devil. Nothing will so vex him as to see them fighting and striking again. Our Lord is full of lovingkindness. He receives the repentance of sinners. Let us hear his words: "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."⁹ So he prefaced his words with an oath, and he who forbids oaths to others swore himself to convince us how he desires our repentance and salvation. Of this teaching the divine books, both the old and the new, are full, and the precepts of the holy Fathers teach the same.

But not as though you were ignorant have I written to you; rather have I reminded you of

¹Mt 19:17. ²That is, the heretical Gnostics. ³Ps 73:1. ⁴Ps 118:2. ⁵Jn 17:25. ⁶ANF 4:280-81. ⁷2 Cor 12:9. ⁸1 Thess 5:14. ⁹Ezek 33:11.

what you know, like those who standing safe on the shore help those who are tossed by the storm and show them a rock, or give warning of a hidden shallow or catch and haul in a rope that has been thrown. "And the God of peace shall bring Satan under your feet shortly"¹⁰ and shall gladden our ears with news that you have passed from storm to calm, at his word to the waves, "peace be still."¹¹ And you also should offer prayers for us, for you who have undergone peril for his sake can speak with greater boldness. LETTER 78.¹²

3:27 Bear the Yoke in Your Youth

THE BENEFIT OF HARDSHIPS AT A YOUNG AGE. METHODIUS: Therefore, it is becoming that we should kindle the unquenchable light of faith in the heart, and gird our loins with purity and watch and ever wait for the Lord so that, if he should will to come and take any of us away in the first period of life, or in the second or in the third, and should find us most ready and working what he appointed, he may make us to lie down in the bosom of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Now Jeremiah says, "It is good for a person that he bear the yoke in his youth" and "that his soul should not depart from the Lord." It is good, indeed, from youth, to submit the neck to the divine hand and not to shake off, even to old age, the Rider who guides with pure mind, when the evil one is ever dragging down the mind to that which is worse. For who is there who does not receive through the eyes, through the ears, through the taste and smell and touch, pleasures and delights, so as to become impatient of the control of continence as a driver, who checks and vehemently restrains the horse from evil? Another who turns his thoughts to other things will think differently; but we say that he offers himself perfectly to God who strives to keep the flesh undefiled from childhood, practicing virginity; for it speedily brings great and much-desired gifts of hopes to those who strive for it, drying up the corrupting lusts

and passions of the soul. SYMPOSIUM OR THE BANQUET OF THE TEN VIRGINS 5.3.¹³

THE TRIALS AND BENEFITS OF AFFLICTION.

CHRYSOSTOM: For affliction is an unbroken bond, the increase of love, the occasion for reserve and piety. Hear the words of David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes."¹⁴ And again another prophet, who says, "It is good for a person that he bears the yoke in his youth." And again, "Blessed is the one whom you chasten, O Lord."¹⁵ And another who says, "Despise not the chastening of the Lord."¹⁶ And "if you come near to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for temptation. And Christ also said to his disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer."¹⁷ And again, "You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."¹⁸ And again, "Narrow and straitened is the way."¹⁹ Do you see how tribulation is everywhere lauded, everywhere assumed as needful for us? For if in the contests of the world, no one without this receives the crown unless he fortifies himself by work, by abstinence from the finer things of life, by living according to rule, by being vigilant, and innumerable other things, much more so here. For whom will you name as an instance? The king? Not even he lives a life free from care, but one burdened with much tribulation and anxiety. For look not to his diadem but to his sea of cares, by which the crown is produced for him. Nor look to his purple robe but to his soul, which is darker than that purple. His crown does not so closely bind his brow, as care does his soul. Nor look to the multitude of his spearmen but to the multitude of his disquietudes. For it is not possible to find a private house laden with so many cares as a king's palace. Violent deaths are each day expected, and a vision of blood is seen as they sit down to eat and drink. Nor can we say

¹⁰Rom 16:20. ¹¹Mk 4:39. ¹²NPNF 2 3:274-75. ¹³ANF 6:326.

¹⁴Ps 119:71. ¹⁵Ps 94:12. ¹⁶Prov 3:11. ¹⁷Jn 16:33. ¹⁸Jn 16:20. ¹⁹Mt 7:14.

how often he is disturbed in the night and leaps up, haunted with visions. And all this in peace; but if war should overtake him, what could be more piteous than such a life as this! What evils has he from those that are his own, I mean, those who are under his dominion. In actuality, the pavement of a king's house is always full of blood, the blood of his own relations. . . . But as I said, life cannot be without pain. For if in the affairs of this world even he who is accounted most happy, if the king is burdened with so many misfortunes, what do you think must be true of private life? *HOMILIES ON PHILIPPIANS 15.*²⁰

THE CONSISTENCY OF DIVINE PRECEPTS.

ORIGEN: Celsus then extracts from the gospel the precept, "To him who strikes you once, you shall offer yourself to be struck again," although without giving any passage from the Old Testament that he considers opposed to it. On the one hand, we know that "it was said to them in old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,"²¹ and on the other, we have read, "I say to you, Whoever shall strike you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also."²² But as there is reason to believe that Celsus produces the objections that he has heard from those who wish to make a difference between the God of the gospel and the God of the law, we must say in reply, that this precept, "Whoever shall strike you on the one cheek, turn to him the other," is not unknown in the older Scriptures. For thus, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, it is said, "It is good for a person that he bear the yoke in his youth: he sits alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it on him. He gives his cheek to him that strikes him; he is filled full with reproach." There is no discrepancy, then, between the God of the gospel and the God of the law, even when we take literally the precept regarding the blow on the face. So, then, we infer that neither "Jesus nor Moses has taught falsely." The Father in sending Jesus did not "forget the commands that he had given to Moses": he did not "change his mind, condemn his own laws and send by

his messenger counter instructions." *AGAINST CELSUS 7.25.*²³

JEREMIAH PREFIGURES THE LIFE OF THE ANCHORITE.

JEROME: Anchorites go from the monasteries into the deserts with nothing but bread and salt. Paul introduced this way of life; Anthony made it famous, and—to go farther back still—John the Baptist set the first example of it. The prophet Jeremiah describes one such in the words "It is good for a person that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it on him. He gives his cheek to him who strikes him; he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever." The struggle of the anchorites and their life—in the flesh, yet not of the flesh—I will, if you wish, explain to you at some other time. I must now return to the subject of covetousness, which I left to speak of the monks. With them before your eyes you will despise not only gold and silver in general but earth itself and heaven. United to Christ, you will sing, "The Lord is my portion." *LETTER 22.36.*²⁴

3:31-33 The Lord Will Not Cast Off Forever

ALL SINS FORGIVEN. *CYPRIAN [DUB]:* That all sins may be forgiven him who has turned to God with his whole heart. . . . "The Lord will not reject forever; and when he has made low, he will have pity according to the multitude of his mercy. Because he will not bring low from his whole heart, neither will he reject the children of humankind."²⁵ *EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE.*²⁶

GOD'S ANGER MEANT TO TURN US FROM SIN.

AMBROSE: Is it not evident that the Lord Jesus is angry with us when we sin in order that he may convert us through fear of his indignation?

²⁰NPNF 1 13:253-54*. ²¹Ex 21:24. ²²Mt 5:39. ²³ANF 4:620-21.

²⁴NPNF 2 6:38. For a similar description of the life of an ascetic, see John Cassian *Conferences* 2.18.7; 2.19.8 (NPNF 2 11:482, 492).

²⁵Lam 3:31-33. ²⁶ANF 5:592-93.

His indignation, then, is not the carrying out of vengeance but rather the working out of forgiveness, for these are his words: "If you shall turn and lament, you shall be saved."²⁷ He waits for our lamentations here, that is, in time, that he may spare us those that shall be eternal. He waits for our tears that he may pour forth his goodness. So in the Gospel, having pity on the tears of the widow, he raised her son. He waits for our conversion that he may himself restore us to grace, which would have continued with us had no fall overtaken us. But he is angry because we have by our sins incurred guilt in order that we may be humbled; we are humbled in order that we may be found worthy rather of pity than of punishment.

Jeremiah, too, may certainly teach us this when he says, "For the Lord will not cast off forever; for after he has humbled, he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, he who has not humbled from his whole heart or cast off the children of humankind." This passage we certainly find in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and from it, and from what follows, we note that the Lord humbles all the prisoners of the earth under his feet, in order that we may escape his judgment. But the one who does not bring down the sinner even to the earth with his whole heart is also the one who raises the poor even from the dust and the needy from the dunghill. For he does not wholeheartedly bring down those he intends to forgive.

But if he does not wholeheartedly bring down every sinner, how much less does he wholeheartedly bring down someone who has not sinned with his whole heart! For as he said of the Jews, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me,"²⁸ so perhaps he may say of some of the fallen, "They denied me with their lips, but in their heart they are with me. It was pain that overcame them, not unfaithfulness that turned them aside."²⁹ But some without cause refuse pardon to those whose faith the persecutor himself confessed up to the point of striving to overcome it by torture. They denied the Lord once but confess him daily; they denied

him in word but confess him with groans, with cries and with tears; they confess him with willing words, not under compulsion. They yielded, indeed, for a moment to the temptation of the devil, but even the devil afterwards left those whom he was unable to claim as his own. He yielded to their weeping, he yielded to their repentance, and after making them his own lost those whom he attached when they belonged to Another. CONCERNING REPENTANCE 1.5.22-24.³⁰

TRIBULATION PERFECTS PATIENCE. ATHANASIUS: But all those who call their lands by their own names and have wood and hay and stubble³¹ in their thoughts; such as these, since they are strangers to difficulties, become aliens from the kingdom of heaven. Had they however known that "tribulation perfects patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed," they would have exercised themselves, after the example of Paul. He said, "I bring my body into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."³² They would easily have borne the afflictions that were brought on them to prove them from time to time, if the prophetic admonition had been listened to by them: "It is good for a person to take up your yoke in his youth. He shall sit alone and shall be silent, because he has taken your yoke on him. He will give his cheek to him who strikes him. He will be filled with reproaches. The Lord does not cast away forever. When he abases, he is gracious, according to the multitude of his tender mercies." For though all these things should proceed from the enemies, stripes, insults, reproaches, yet shall they avail nothing against the multitude of God's tender mercies; for we shall quickly recover from them since they are merely temporal, but God is always gracious, pouring out his tender mercies on those who please him. Therefore, my beloved, we should not look at these temporal things but fix our atten-

²⁷See Jn 16:20. ²⁸Is 29:13. ²⁹Mt 15:8. ³⁰NPNF 2 10:333. ³¹1 Cor 3:12. ³²1 Cor 9:27.

tion on those that are eternal. Though affliction may come, it will have an end; though insult and persecution, yet are they nothing to the hope that is set before us. For all present matters are trifling compared with those that are future; the sufferings of this present time not being worthy to be compared with the hope that is to come.³³ For what can be compared with the kingdom? Or what is there in comparison with life eternal? Or what is all we could give here, to that which we shall inherit yonder? For we are “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”³⁴ Therefore it is not right, my beloved, to consider afflictions and persecutions but the hopes that are laid up for us because of persecutions. *FESTAL LETTERS* 13.4.³⁵

3:34 Prisoners of the Earth Crushed

IMITATE GOD’S MERCY AND PATIENCE.

AUGUSTINE: Regarding patience in not offering resistance, a person is praised who “gives his cheek to him who strikes him and who is filled full with reproach.” Of love to enemies it is said, “If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.”³⁶ This also is quoted by the apostle.³⁷ In the psalm, too, it is said, “I was a peacemaker among them who hated peace,”³⁸ and in many similar passages. In connection also with our imitating God in refraining from taking revenge and in loving even the wicked, there is a passage containing a full description of God in this character, for it is written, “To you alone ever belongs great strength, and who can withstand the power of your arm? For the whole world before you is as a little grain of the balance; yes, as a drop of the morning dew that falls down on the earth. But you have mercy on all, for you can do all things and wink at the sins of people, because of repentance. For you love all things that are and abhorred nothing that you have made; for never would you have made anything if you had hated it. And how could anything have endured, if it had not been your will? or been preserved, if not called by you? But you spare all; for they are yours, O Lord, you lover of souls. For your good Spirit is in

all things; therefore chasten little by little those who offend. Warn them by reminding them of the ways in which they have offended, so that learning their wickedness, they may believe in you, O Lord.”³⁹ Christ exhorts us to imitate this long-suffering goodness of God, who makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust; that we may not be careful to revenge but may do good to them who hate us, and so may be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.⁴⁰ From another passage in these ancient books we learn that, by not exacting the vengeance due to us, we obtain the remission of our own sins. By not forgiving the debts of others, we incur the danger of being refused forgiveness when we pray for the remission of our own debts: “He who revenges shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sin in remembrance. Forgive your neighbor the hurt that he has done to you; so shall your sins also be forgiven when you pray. One person bears hatred against another, and does he seek pardon of the Lord? He shows no mercy to a person who is like himself; and does he ask forgiveness of his own sins? If he who is but flesh nourishes hatred and asks for favor from the Lord, who will entreat for the pardon of his sins?”⁴¹ *REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN* 19.28.⁴²

PRISONERS OF THE EARTH CAN BE FREED.

ORIGEN: When Celsus adds, “We must therefore believe that people are entrusted to certain beings who are the keepers of this prison house,” our answer is that the souls of those who are called by Jeremiah “prisoners of the earth,” when eager in the pursuit of virtue, are even in this life delivered from the bondage of evil; for Jesus declared this, as was foretold long before his advent by the prophet Isaiah, when he said that “the prisoners would go forth, and those who were in darkness would show themselves.”⁴³ And

³³See Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17. ³⁴Rom 8:17. ³⁵NPNF 2 4:540. ³⁶Prov 25:21. ³⁷Rom 12:20. ³⁸Ps 120:6. ³⁹Wis 11:21–12:2. ⁴⁰Mt 5:44, 48. ⁴¹Sir 28:1-5. ⁴²NPNF 1 4:250-51*. ⁴³Is 49:9.

Jesus, as Isaiah also foretold of him, arose as “a light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,”⁴⁴ so that we may therefore say, “Let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us.”⁴⁵ If Celsus, and those who like him are opposed to us, had been able to sound the depths of the Gospel narratives, they would not have counseled us to put our confidence in those beings whom they call “the keepers of the prison house.” It is written in the Gospel that a woman was bowed together and could not lift up herself. And when Jesus beheld her and perceived from what cause she was bowed together, he said, “Ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”⁴⁶ And how many others are still bowed down and bound by Satan, who hinders them from looking up and who would have us to look down also! And no one can raise them up, except the Word that came by Jesus Christ and that inspired the prophets: And Jesus came to release those who were under the dominion of the devil; and, speaking of him, he said with that depth of meaning that characterized his words, “Now is the prince of this world judged.” We are, then, indulging in no baseless calumnies against demons but are condemning their agency on earth as destructive to humankind, and we show that, under cover of oracles and bodily cures and such other means, they are seeking to separate from God the soul that has descended to this “body of humiliation, and those who feel this humiliation exclaim, “O wretched being that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”⁴⁷ AGAINST CELSUS 8.54.⁴⁸

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF EVIL. ORIGEN: Celsus in the next place, as if he were able to tell certain secrets regarding the origin of evils but chose rather to keep silence and say only what was suitable to the multitude, continues as follows: “It is sufficient to say to the multitude regarding the origin of evils, that they do not proceed from God but cleave to matter and dwell

among mortal things.” It is true, certainly, that evils do not proceed from God; for according to Jeremiah, one of our prophets, it is certain that “out of the mouth of the most High proceeds not evil and good.”⁴⁹ But to maintain that matter, dwelling among mortal things, is the cause of evils, is in our opinion not true. For it is the mind of each individual that is the cause of the evil that arises in him, and this is evil (in the abstract); while the actions that proceed from it are wicked, and there is, to speak with accuracy, nothing else in our view that is evil. I am aware, however, that this topic requires very elaborate treatment, which (by the grace of God enlightening the mind) may be successfully attempted by one who is deemed by God worthy to attain the necessary knowledge on this subject. AGAINST CELSUS 4.66.⁵⁰

3:41 Lift Up Your Hearts

HEARTS LIFTED UP, NOT FATTENED. TERTULLIAN: One [Elijah] whose “heart” was habitually found “lifted up” rather than fattened up, who in forty days and as many nights maintained a fast above the power of human nature while spiritual faith supplied strength (to his body), both saw with his eyes God’s glory, and heard with his ears God’s voice and understood with his heart God’s law, while he taught him even then (by experience) that humankind lives not on bread alone but on every word of God; in that the people, though fatter than he, could not constantly contemplate even Moses, fed as he had been on God, or his leanness, sated as it had been with God’s glory! Deservedly, therefore, even while in the flesh, did the Lord show himself to him, the colleague of his own fasts, no less than to

⁴⁴Is 9:2. ⁴⁵Ps 2:3. ⁴⁶Lk 13:11, 16. ⁴⁷Rom 7:24. ⁴⁸ANF 4:660.

⁴⁹Lam 3:38 (LXX). The Septuagint provides a different interpretation of this passage than the Hebrew and RSV, which ask a question, “Is it not from the mouth of the most High that good and evil come?” expecting the answer yes, the exact opposite of the Septuagint, which assumes neither good nor evil come from the mouth of the most High. ⁵⁰ANF 4:527.

Elijah. For Elijah had, by this fact primarily, that he had imprecated a famine, already sufficiently devoted himself to fasts: "The Lord lives," he said, "before whom I am standing in his sight, if there shall be dew in these years and rain shower."⁵¹ Subsequently, fleeing from threatening Jezebel, after one single meal of food and drink, which he had found on being awakened by an angel, he too, in a space of forty days and nights, his belly empty, his mouth dry, arrived at Mount Horeb; where, when he had made a cave his inn, with how familiar a meeting with God was he received! "What are you doing here, Elijah?"⁵² Much more friendly was this voice than, "Adam, where are you?"⁵³ For the latter voice was uttering a threat to a fed man, the former soothing a fasting one. Such is the prerogative of circumscribed food, that it makes God tent fellow with a man—peer, in truth, with peer! For if the eternal God will not hunger, as he testifies through Isaiah, this will be the time for a person to be made equal with God, when he lives without food. ON FASTING 6.⁵⁴

3:48 Rivers of Tears

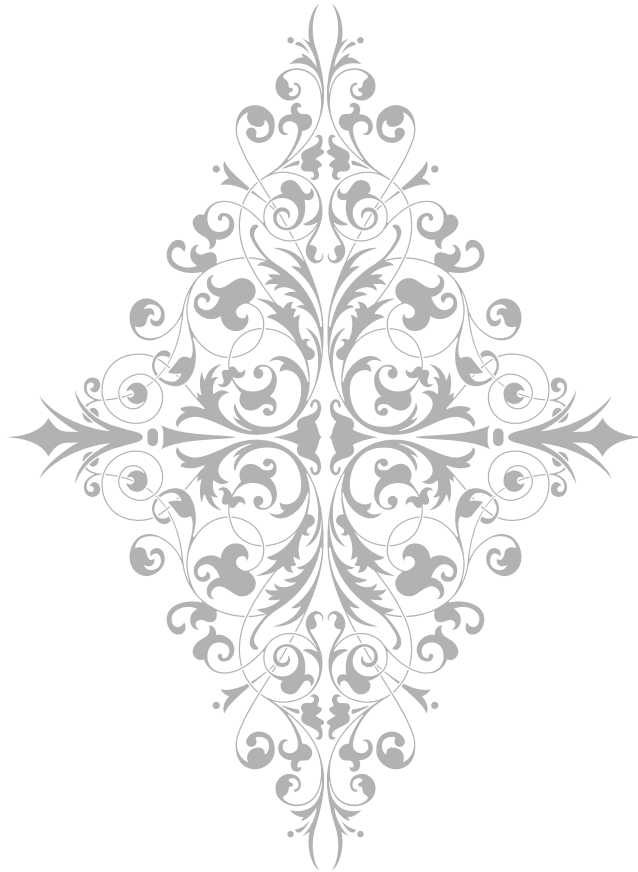
DIFFERENT TEARS AT DIFFERENT TIMES FOR DIFFERENT SINS. GREGORY THE GREAT: Differently to be admonished are those who deplore sins of deed and those who deplore sins of thought. For those who deplore sins of deed are to be admonished that perfected lamentations should wash out consummated evils, lest they be bound by a greater debt of perpetrated deed than they pay in tears of satisfaction for it. For

it is written, "He has given us drink in tears by measure,"⁵⁵ which means that each person's soul should in its penitence drink the tears of compunction to such extent as it remembers itself to have been dried up from God through sins. They are to be admonished to bring back their past offenses incessantly before their eyes and so to live that these may not have to be viewed by the strict judge.

Hence David, when he prayed, saying, "Turn away your eyes from my sins,"⁵⁶ had said also a little before, "My fault is ever before me," as if to say, I plead with you not to regard my sin, since I myself cease not to regard it. Thus also the Lord says through the prophet, "And I will not be mindful of your sins, but you should be mindful of them."⁵⁷ They are to be admonished to consider one at a time all their past offenses, and, in bewailing the defilements of their former wandering one by one, to cleanse at the same time their entire selves with tears. Thus it is well said through Jeremiah, when the several transgressions of Judah were being considered, "My eye has shed channels of waters. For indeed we shed channeled waters from our eyes, when to our several sins we give separate tears. For the mind does not sorrow at one and the same time alike for all things; but, while it is more sharply touched by memory now of this fault and now of that, being moved concerning all in each, it is purged at once from all. PASTORAL RULE 3.29.⁵⁸

⁵¹1 Kings 17:1. ⁵²1 Kings 19:1-13. ⁵³Gen 3:9. ⁵⁴ANF 4:105-6. ⁵⁵Ps 80:5 (79:6 LXX). ⁵⁶Ps 51:3. ⁵⁷Is 43:25-26. ⁵⁸NPNF 2 12:60*







A LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM'S FALL LAMENTATIONS 4:1-22

OVERVIEW: The failed leadership in Jerusalem led to the destruction of the city and is a warning to today's leaders not to get caught up in the business success of the world but to focus on the honor of God and right worship of him (GREGORY THE GREAT). The horrible curse endured by the children during the siege of Jerusalem is ended as the child, born of the virgin, has broken the curse of sin and death by his advent (JEROME). Jerusalem's sin in rejecting God and the many other sins it heaped on that one were worse than the sins of Sodom (JEROME). Its subsequent rejection of the Christ added to its sin even more (ATHANASIUS). Christ had grown up in Nazareth, which was one of the reasons the Jewish leaders gave for rejecting him. As his followers, we are called Nazarites because such a name indicates that although we were once defiled by the darkness of sin (TERTULLIAN), we have now been made whiter than pure milk through the forgiveness he brings in the waters

of baptism (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). The tragedy Jerusalem experienced during the siege can hardly be imagined. Although we have not had to experience such punishment in this life regarding our own sins, which are as bad as Jerusalem's, we should remember that there is still a worse punishment reserved in hell for those who do not repent (CHRYSOSTOM).

When Jeremiah speaks in his lament of the Lord's anointed being captured in the pits of the enemy, he not only was talking about Judah's king, who had been taken captive by the Babylonians. He was also referring, albeit in an indirect way, to the future anointed Lord, the Christ, who would be taken captive by his own people (TERTULLIAN) and suffer for us (AUGUSTINE) as he was delivered over for our corruption so that he might redeem us (RUFINUS) by his crucifixion, whose form was prophesied by Jeremiah and other prophets (JUSTIN). When he was seized by them, it was prophesied that God's people

would live under his shadow among the Gentiles (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, ORIGEN). This existence was only a shadow of the future existence of God's saints in glory (ORIGEN), just as Christ prophesied in the Old Testament was only a shadow, type and image of his future advent as the one who is faithful and true and righteous and the Savior of his people (ORIGEN). While here on earth, his life was also like a shadow that is trampled under foot as those who crucified him walked all over him at his passion. Just as a shadow derives from a body, so the body of Christ at his incarnation derives from his Spirit (IRENAEUS, ORIGEN). His Spirit is present with him now, even as it was at the time of Jeremiah, since God has always been understood as Spirit (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, AMBROSE), and he gives that Spirit to his church today as we celebrate during the season of Pentecost and then, after the celebration, enter into a time of fasting and lament that is fitting after a time of rejoicing (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS).

4:1 *How the Gold Has Grown Dim*

THE DESTROYED TEMPLE SYMBOLIZES FAILED LEADERSHIP. GREGORY THE GREAT: With what conscience can the overseer of souls avail himself among other people of his pastoral dignity, while engaged himself in the earthly cares that it was his duty to reprehend in others? And this indeed is what the Lord, in the wrath of just retribution, menaced through the prophet, saying, "And there shall be like people, like priest."¹ For the priest is as the people when one who bears a spiritual office acts as do others who are still under judgment with regard to their carnal pursuits. And this indeed the prophet Jeremiah, in the great sorrow of his charity, deploras under the image of the destruction of the temple, saying, "How is the gold become dim! The most excellent color is changed; the stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the head of every street." For what is expressed by gold, which surpasses all other metals, but the excellence of holiness? What by the most

excellent color but the reverence that is about religion, to all people lovely? What are signified by the stones of the sanctuary but persons in sacred orders? What is figured under the name of streets but the latitude of this present life? For, because in Greek speech the word for latitude is *platos*, streets (*plateoe*) have been so called from their breadth, or latitude. But the Truth in person says, "Broad and spacious is the way that leads to destruction."² Gold, therefore, becomes dim when a life of holiness is polluted by earthly doings; the most excellent color is changed when the previous reputation of persons who were believed to be living religiously is diminished. For, when anyone after a habit of holiness mixes himself up with earthly doings, it is as though his color were changed, and the reverence that surrounded him grew pale and disregarded before the eyes of people. The stones of the sanctuary also are poured out into the streets, when those who, for the ornament of the church, should have been free to penetrate internal mysteries as it were in the secret places of the tabernacle seek out the broadways of secular causes outside. For indeed to this end they were made stones of the sanctuary that they might appear in the vestment of the high priest within the Holy of Holies. But when ministers of religion exact not the Redeemer's honor from those that are under them by the merit of their life, they are not stones of the sanctuary in the ornament of the pontiff. And truly these stones of the sanctuary lie scattered through the streets when persons in sacred orders, given up to the latitude of their own pleasures, cleave to earthly businesses. And it is to be observed that they are said to be scattered, not in the streets but at the head of the streets; because, even when they are engaged in earthly matters, they desire to appear at the top so as to occupy the broad ways in their enjoyment of delight, and yet to be at the top of the streets in the dignity of holiness. PASTORAL RULE 2.7.³

¹Hos 4:9. ²Mt 7:13. ³NPNF 2 12:17-18⁷.

4:4 *Starving Young Children*

THE CURSE IS BROKEN. JEROME: What good will marriage be to me if it is to end in slavery to the haughtiest of kings? What good will little ones be to me if their lot is to be that which the prophet sadly describes: "The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread and no one breaks it unto them"? In those days, as I have said, the virtue of continence was found only in men: Eve still continued to travail with children. But now that a virgin has conceived⁴ in the womb and has borne to us a child of whom the prophet says that "government shall be on his shoulder, and his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father,"⁵ now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly on women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman. As soon as the Son of God set foot on the earth, he formed for himself a new household there; that, as he was adored by angels in heaven, angels might serve him also on earth. LETTER 22.21.⁶

4:6 *Sodom More Righteous Than Jerusalem*

JERUSALEM WORSE THAN SODOM. JEROME: Need we be surprised that, when saints are compared, some are better, some worse, since the same holds good in the comparison of sins? To Jerusalem, pierced and wounded with many sins, it is said, "Sodom is justified by you."⁷ It is not because Sodom, which has sunk forever into ashes, is just in itself, that it is said by Ezekiel, "Sodom shall be restored to its former estate,"⁸ but that, in comparison with the more accursed Jerusalem, it appears just. For Jerusalem killed the Son of God; Sodom through fullness of bread and excessive luxury carried its lust beyond all bounds. The publican in the Gospel who struck his breast as though it were a collection of his worst thoughts and, conscious

of his offenses, dared not lift up his eyes, is justified rather than the proud Pharisee. And Tamar in the guise of a harlot deceived Judah, and in the estimation of this man himself who was deceived, was worthy of the words, "Tamar is more righteous than I."⁹ All this goes to prove that not only in comparison with divine majesty are people far from perfection, but also when compared with angels and other people who have climbed the heights of virtue. You may be superior to someone whom you have shown to be imperfect and yet be outstripped by another; and consequently you may not have true perfection, which, if it is perfect, is absolute. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 1.17.¹⁰

THOSE WHO REJECTED CHRIST. ATHANASIUS: But what need have we of many words? Our Lord and Savior, when he was persecuted by the Pharisees, wept for their destruction. He was injured, but he threatened¹¹ not; not when he was afflicted, not even when he was killed. But he grieved for those who dared to do such things. He, the Savior, suffered for humankind, but they despised and cast from them life and light and grace. All these were theirs through that Savior who suffered in our stead. And truly for their darkness and blindness, he wept. For if they had understood the things that are written in the psalms, they would not have been so vainly daring against the Savior, the Spirit having said, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" And if they had considered the prophecy of Moses, they would not have hanged him who was their Life.¹² And if they had examined with their understanding the things that were written, they would not have carefully fulfilled the prophecies that were against themselves, so as for their city to be now desolate, grace taken from them and they themselves without the law, being no longer called children

⁴Is 7:14. ⁵Is 9:6. ⁶NPNF 2 6:30. ⁷Lam 4:6. ⁸Ezek 16:55. ⁹Gen 38:26. ¹⁰NPNF 2 6:457. ¹¹The Syriac is "was persecuted," which supplies no good sense. ¹²Ps 2:1; Deut 28:66.

but strangers. For thus in the Psalms was it before declared, saying, "The strange children have acted falsely by me." And by Isaiah the prophet, "I have begotten and brought up children, and they have rejected me."¹³ And they are no longer named the people of God and a holy nation, but rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, having exceeded in this even the iniquity of the Sodomites, as the prophet also says, "Sodom is justified before you."¹⁴ For the Sodomites raved against angels, but these against the Lord and God and King of all, and these dared to slay the Lord of angels, not knowing that Christ, who was killed by them, lives. But those Jews who had conspired against the Lord died, having rejoiced a very little in these temporal things and having fallen away from those which are eternal. They were ignorant of this—that the immortal promise has not respect to temporal enjoyment but to the hope of those things that are everlasting. For through many tribulations and labors and sorrows, the saint enters into the kingdom of heaven; but when he arrives where sorrow and distress and sighing shall flee away, he shall thenceforward enjoy rest; as Job, who, when tried here, was afterwards the familiar friend of the Lord. But the lover of pleasures, rejoicing for a little while, afterwards passes a sorrowful life like Esau, who had temporal food but afterwards was condemned by it. FESTAL LETTERS 10.5.¹⁵

4:7 Nazarites Made Purer Than Snow¹⁶

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST PURER THAN SNOW.

TERTULLIAN: The Christ of the Creator had to be called a Nazarene according to prophecy; thus the Jews also designate us, on that very account, Nazarenes after him. For we are they of whom it is written, "Its Nazarites were whiter than snow," even they who were once defiled with the stains of sin and darkened with the clouds of ignorance. But to Christ the title Nazarene was destined to become a suitable one, from the hiding place of his infancy, for which he went down and dwelled at Nazareth, to escape from

Archelaus the son of Herod. AGAINST MARCION 4.8.¹⁷

GOING TO THE FONT, WHITER THAN MILK.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Take my advice, my friend, and be slow to do evil but swift to your salvation; for readiness to evil and tardiness to good are equally bad. If you are invited to a revel, be not swift to go; if to apostasy, leap away; if a company of evildoers say to you, "Come with us, share our blood guiltiness, let us hide in the earth a righteous person unjustly,"¹⁸ do not lend them even your ears. Thus you will make two very great gains; you will make known to the other his sin, and you will deliver yourself from evil company. But if David the Great says to you, Come and let us rejoice in the Lord,¹⁹ or another prophet, Come and let us ascend into the mountain of the Lord,²⁰ or our Savior himself, Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,²¹ or, Arise, let us go hence, shining brightly, glittering above snow, whiter than milk, shining above the sapphire stone, let us not resist or delay. Let us be like Peter and John, and let us hasten,²² as they did to the sepulcher and the resurrection, so we to the font; running together, racing against each other, striving to be first to obtain this blessing. ON HOLY BAPTISM, ORATION 40.25.²³

4:10 Boiling Their Own Children!

THE CURRENT AND FUTURE HELL.

CHRYSOSTOM: What were Israel's sufferings in Palestine, famines, pestilences, wars, captivities, under the Babylonians and under the Assyrians, and their miseries from the Macedonians and those under Hadrian and Vespasian? I have something that I wish, beloved, to relate to you; no, do not run away! Or rather I will tell you another thing before it. There was once a famine, it says, and

¹³Ps 18:45; Is 1:2. ¹⁴Ezek 16:48; Lam 4:6. ¹⁵NPNF 2 4:529-30*.

¹⁶LXX. ¹⁷ANF 3:354*. ¹⁸Prov 1:11. ¹⁹Ps 95:1. ²⁰Mic 4:2. ²¹Mt 11:28. ²²Jn 20:3. ²³NPNF 2 7:368.

the king was walking on the wall; then a woman came to him and uttered these words: "O king, this woman said to me, Let us roast your son today, and eat him—and tomorrow [do the same to mine]. And we roasted and ate, and now she does not give me hers."²⁴ What can be more dreadful than this calamity? Again, in another place the prophet says, "The hands of the pitiful women have boiled their own children." The Jews then suffered such punishment, and shall we not much rather suffer?

Would you also hear other calamities of theirs? Read over Josephus, and you will learn that whole tragedy, if perchance we may persuade you from these things, that there is a hell. For consider, if they were punished, why are we not punished? Or how is it reasonable that we are not now punished, who sin more grievously than they? Is it not manifest that it is because the punishment is kept in store for us? **HOMILIES ON I THESSALONIANS 8.**²⁵

4:20 *The Breath of Our Nostrils*

CHRIST ALLUDED TO IN THE PROPHETS.

TERTULLIAN: We indeed, who know for certain that Christ always spoke in the prophets, as the Spirit of the Creator (for so says the prophet, "The person of our Spirit, Christ the Lord,"²⁶ who from the beginning was both heard and seen as the Father's vicegerent in the name of God). We are well aware that his words, when upbraiding Israel, were the same as those that it was foretold that he should denounce against him: "You have forsaken the Lord and have provoked the holy One of Israel to anger."²⁷ If, however, you would rather refer to God the whole imputation of Jewish ignorance from the first, instead of to Christ, through an unwillingness on their part to allow that even in ancient times the Creator's word and Spirit—that is to say, his Christ—was despised and not acknowledged by them, you will even in this subterfuge be defeated. For when you do not deny that the Creator's Son and Spirit and Substance is also

his Christ, you must allow that those who have not acknowledged the Father have failed likewise to acknowledge the Son through the identity of their natural substance; for if in Its fullness It has baffled human understanding, much more has a portion of It, especially when partaking of the fullness.²⁸ Now, when these things are carefully considered, it becomes evident how the Jews rejected Christ and killed him; not because they regarded him as a strange Christ but because they did not acknowledge him, as though he were their own. For how could they have understood the strange One, concerning whom nothing had ever been announced, when they failed to understand him about whom there had been a perpetual course of prophecy? That admits of being understood or being not understood, which, by possessing a substantial basis for prophecy, will also have a subject matter for either knowledge or error; while that which lacks such matter admits not the issue of wisdom. So that it was not as if he belonged to another god that they conceived an aversion for Christ and persecuted him, but simply as a man whom they regarded as a wonder-working juggler and an enemy in his doctrines. They brought him therefore to trial as a mere man and one of themselves too—that is, a Jew (only a renegade and a destroyer of Judaism)—and punished him according to their law. If he had been a stranger, indeed, they would not have sat in judgment over him. So far are they from appearing to have understood him to be a strange Christ, that they did not even judge him to be a stranger to their own human nature. **AGAINST MARCION 3.6.**²⁹

CHRIST SUFFERED FOR US. AUGUSTINE:

Jeremiah, in prophesying of Christ, says, "The breath of our mouth, the Lord Christ, was taken in our sins," thus briefly showing both that Christ is our Lord and that he suffered for us. **CITY OF GOD 18.33.**³⁰

²⁴2 Kings 6:28-29. ²⁵NPNF 1 13:358-59*. ²⁶Lam 4:20 (LXX). ²⁷Is 1:4. ²⁸See Col 2:9. ²⁹ANF 3:325-26*. ³⁰NPNF 1 2:379.

THE CHRIST DELIVERED FOR OUR CORRUPTION. RUFINUS: Those who boast about their knowledge of the law will, perhaps, say to us, “You blaspheme in saying that the Lord was subjected to the corruption of death and to the suffering of the cross.” Read, therefore, what you find written in the Lamentations of Jeremiah: “The Spirit of our countenance, Christ the Lord, was taken in our corruptions,³¹ of whom we said, we shall live under his shadow among the nations.” You hear how the prophet says that Christ the Lord was taken, and for us, that is, for our sins, delivered to corruption. Under whose shadow, since the people of the Jews have continued in unbelief, he says the Gentiles lie, because we live not in Israel but among the Gentiles. COMMENTARY ON THE APOSTLES’ CREED 19.³²

THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS. JUSTIN MARTYR: But in no instance did the heathen . . . imitate the act of being crucified because they did not understand it, since all that was said about it in Scripture was in the form of symbols. And crucifixion, as the prophet foretold, is the greatest symbol of Christ’s power and role, as is also proven by the things that fall under our own observation. For consider all the things in the world that use this form or are associated with it. No one travels on the sea unless that trophy that is called a sail remains sound on the ship. No one ploughs the earth without it: diggers and mechanics cannot do their work unless they use tools that have this shape. And the human form differs from that of the irrational animals in nothing else than in its being erect and having the hands extended and having on the face extending from the forehead what is called the nose through which the living creature breathes. And this takes no other form than that of the cross. And so it was said by the prophet, “The breath before our face is the Lord Christ.” And the power of this form is further shown by your own symbols on what are called *vexilla* [banners] and trophies, with which all your state possessions are made, using these as the insignia of

your power and government, even though you do so unwittingly. And with this form you consecrate the images of your emperors when they die, and you name them gods by inscriptions. FIRST APOLOGY 1.55.³³

SEIZING OF THE CHRIST SAVED THE GENTILES. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Read the Lamentations. In those Lamentations, Jeremiah, lamenting you, wrote what is worthy of lamentations. He saw your destruction, he beheld your downfall, he bewailed Jerusalem that then was; for that which exists now shall not be bewailed; for that Jerusalem crucified the Christ, but that which exists now worships him. Lamenting then, he says, “The breath of our countenance, Christ the Lord, was taken in our corruptions.” Am I then stating views of my own? Behold he testifies of the Lord Christ seized by men. And what is to follow from this? Tell me, O prophet. He says, “Of whom we said, ‘Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.’” For he signifies that the grace of life is no longer to dwell in Israel but among the Gentiles. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 8.7.³⁴

4:20b *Under His Shadow*

THE GENTILE CHURCH LIVES UNDER CHRIST’S SHADOW. ORIGEN: As to the mention of that shadow under which the church says that it desired to sit, . . . Jeremiah says, “Under his shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.” You see, then, how the prophet, moved by the Holy Spirit, says that life is afforded to the Gentiles by the shadow of Christ; and indeed how should his shadow not afford us life, seeing that even at the conception of his very body it is said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come on you, and the power of the most High shall overshadow you”? COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS 3.5.³⁵

³¹“Their corruptions” (LXX). ³²NPNF 2 3:551. ³³ANF 1:181-82. ³⁴NPNF 2 7:84. ³⁵ACW 26:182.

THE SHADOW OF A GLORIOUS FUTURE. ORIGEN: Just as in his coming now he fulfilled that law that has a shadow of good things to come, so also by that future glorious advent will be fulfilled and brought to perfection the shadows of the present advent. For thus spoke the prophet regarding it: "The breath of our countenance, Christ the Lord, to whom we said, that under your shadow we shall live among the nations," at the time, that is, when he will more worthily transfer all the saints from a temporal to an everlasting gospel, according to the designation, employed by John in the Apocalypse, of "an everlasting gospel."³⁶ ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 4.1.25.³⁷

THE SHADOW OF CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. ORIGEN: I think, indeed, that Jeremiah the prophet, also, understanding what was the nature of the wisdom of God in him, which was the same also that he had assumed for the salvation of the world, said, "The breath of our countenance is Christ the Lord, to whom we said, that under his shadow we shall live among the nations." And inasmuch as the shadow of our body is inseparable from the body and unavoidably performs and repeats its movements and gestures, I think that he, wishing to point out the work of Christ's soul, and the movements inseparably belonging to it and which accomplished everything according to his movements and will, called this the shadow of Christ the Lord, under which shadow we were to live among the nations. For in the mystery of this assumption the nations live, who, imitating it through faith, come to salvation. David also, when saying, "Be mindful of my reproach, O Lord, with which they reproached me in exchange for your Christ,"³⁸ seems to me to indicate the same. And what else does Paul mean when he says, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God,"³⁹ and again in another passage, "Do you seek a proof of Christ, who speaks in me?"⁴⁰ And now he says that Christ was hidden in God. The meaning of this expression, unless it is shown to be something such as we have pointed out

above as intended by the prophet in the words "shadow of Christ," exceeds, perhaps, the apprehension of the human mind. But we see also very many other statements in Holy Scripture respecting the meaning of the word *shadow*, as that well-known one in the Gospel according to Luke, where Gabriel says to Mary, "The Spirit of the Lord shall come on you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you."⁴¹ And the apostle says with reference to the law that they who have circumcision in the flesh "serve for the similitude and shadow of heavenly things."⁴² And elsewhere, "Is not our life on the earth a shadow?"⁴³ If, then, not only the law that is on the earth is a shadow, but also all our life that is on the earth is the same, and we live among the nations under the shadow of Christ, we must see whether the truth of all these shadows may not come to be known in that revelation, when no longer through a glass and darkly, but face to face, all the saints shall deserve to behold the glory of God and the causes and truth of things. And the pledge of this truth being already received through the Holy Spirit, the apostle said, "Yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet from now on, we know him no more."⁴⁴ ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 2.6.7.⁴⁵

SHADOW, TYPE AND IMAGE. ORIGEN: He who sits on the white horse is called Faithful,⁴⁶ not because of the faith he cherishes but of that which he inspires, because he is worthy of faith. Now the Lord Jehovah, according to Moses, is faithful and true.⁴⁷ He is true also in respect of his relation to shadow, type and image; for such is the Word who is in the opened heaven, for he is not on earth as he is in heaven; on earth he is made flesh and speaks through shadow, type and image. The multitude, therefore, of those who are reputed to believe are disciples of the shadow of the Word, not of the true Word of

³⁶Rev 14:6. ³⁷ANF 4:375*. ³⁸Ps 89:50-51. ³⁹Col 3:3. ⁴⁰2 Cor 13:3. ⁴¹Lk 1:35. ⁴²Heb 8:5. ⁴³Job 8:9. ⁴⁴2 Cor 5:16. See also Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 15.2, where a similar sentiment is expressed. ⁴⁵ANF 4:284*. ⁴⁶Rev 19:11. ⁴⁷Deut 32:4.

God who is in the opened heaven. Therefore Jeremiah says, "The Spirit of our face is Christ the Lord, of whom we said, In his shadow shall we live among the nations." Thus the Word of God who is called faithful is also called true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war, since he has received from God the faculty of judging in very righteousness and very judgment and of apportioning its due to every existing creature. For none of those who have some portion of righteousness and of the faculty of judgment can receive on his soul such copies and impressions of righteousness and judgment as to come short in no point of absolute righteousness and absolute justice, just as no painter of a picture can communicate to the representation all the qualities of the original. This, I conceive, is the reason why David says, "Before you shall no living being be justified."⁴⁸ He does not say, no human, or no angel, but no living being, since even if any being partakes of life and has altogether put off mortality, not even then can it be justified in comparison with you who are, as it were, life itself. Nor is it possible that one who partakes of life and is therefore called living should become life itself, or that one who partakes of righteousness and, therefore, is called righteous should become equal to righteousness itself.

Now it is the function of the Word of God, not only to judge in righteousness but also to make war in righteousness, that by making war on his enemies by reason and righteousness, so that what is irrational and wicked is destroyed, he may dwell in the soul of one who, for his salvation, so to speak, has become captive to Christ and may justify that soul and cast out from it all adversaries. We shall, however, obtain a better view of this war that the Word carries on if we remember that he is an ambassador for the truth, while there is another who pretends to be the Word and is not, and one who calls itself the truth and is not, but a lie. Then the Word, arming himself against the lie, slays it with the breath of his mouth and brings it to naught by the manifestation of his coming.⁴⁹ COMMENTARY

ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 2.4.⁵⁰

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S SHADOW.

IRENAEUS: Jeremiah says, "The Spirit of our face is Christ the Lord; and how was he taken into their nets of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the nations." The Scripture announces that, being Spirit of God, Christ was going to become a passible man, also, as if astonished and amazed at his passion, that he was going to endure the passion in this way, under whose shadow it was said we would live. And it calls his body a "shadow," for just as a shadow derives from a body, so the body of Christ derives from his Spirit. But by "shadow" it also signifies the abasement and contemptibility of his body. Just as the shadow from straight and upright bodies is on the ground and trodden under foot, so also was the body of Christ thrown to the ground and trampled under foot at his passion. Perhaps he also named the body of Christ a "shadow" as having become a shade for the glory of the Spirit and covering it. And also, many times, when the Lord passed by, they placed those in the grip of different diseases beside the way, and those on whom his shadow fell were delivered. PROOF OF THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING 71.⁵¹

THE INCARNATION IS CALLED HIS SHADOW.

ORIGEN: By a certain mystic word in Holy Scriptures, this first coming in the flesh is called his shadow, just as the prophet Jeremiah declares, saying, "The Spirit of our countenance, Christ the Lord, of whom we said to ourselves, 'In his shadow we shall live among the nations.'" HOMILIES ON JOSHUA 8.4.⁵²

"SPIRIT" APPLIES TO ALL THREE PERSONS.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Hold more steadfastly the faith in "One God the Father almighty; and in our Lord Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son; and

⁴⁸Ps 143:2 (142:2 LXX). ⁴⁹2 Thess 2:8. ⁵⁰ANF 9:326. ⁵¹OAP 85-86*. ⁵²FC 105:88.

in the Holy Spirit the Comforter.” Though the word itself and title of Spirit is applied to them in common in the sacred Scriptures, it is said of the Father, God is a Spirit,⁵³ as it is written in the Gospel according to John; and of the Son, a Spirit before our face, Christ the Lord,⁵⁴ as Jeremiah the prophet says; and of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit,⁵⁵ as was said. Yet the arrangement of articles in the faith, if religiously understood, disproves the error of Sabellius also.⁵⁶ CATECHETICAL LECTURES 17.34.⁵⁷

GOD IS SPIRIT. AMBROSE: But what wonder, since both the Father and the Son are said to be Spirit. Of this we shall speak more fully when we begin to speak of the unity of the name. Yet since the most suitable place occurs here, that we may not seem to have passed on without a conclusion, let them read that both the Father is called Spirit, as the Lord said in the Gospel, “for God is Spirit,”⁵⁸ and Christ is called Spirit, for Jeremiah said, “The Spirit before our face, Christ the Lord.”

So, then, the Father is Spirit and Christ is Spirit, for that which is not a created body is spirit, but the Holy Spirit is not commingled with the Father and the Son but is distinct from the Father and from the Son. For the Holy Spirit did not die. He could not die because he had not taken flesh on himself, and the eternal Godhead was incapable of dying, but Christ died according to the flesh. ON THE HOLY SPIRIT 1.9.105-6.⁵⁹

A SPIRITUAL BODY. AMBROSE: The body of God is a spiritual body; the body of Christ is the body of the divine Spirit, for the Spirit is Christ, as we read: “The Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord.” ON THE MYSTERIES 9.58.⁶⁰

OBSERVING PENTECOST IN CHRIST. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: For even now, on the tenth day of the month Gorpiaeus,⁶¹ when they assemble together, they read the Lamentations of Jeremiah, in which it is said, “The Spirit before our face,

Christ the Lord, was taken in their destructions,” and they read Baruch, in whom it is written, “This is our God; no other shall be esteemed with him. He found out every way of knowledge and showed it to Jacob his son and Israel his beloved. Afterwards he was seen on earth and conversed with people.”⁶² And when they read them, they lament and bewail—as they themselves suppose—that desolation that happened through Nebuchadnezzar. However, as the truth shows, they unwillingly make a prelude to that lamentation that will overtake them. But after ten days from the ascension, which from the first Lord’s day is the fiftieth day, you are to keep a great festival, for on that day, at the third hour, the Lord Jesus sent on us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we were filled with his energy, and we “spoke with new tongues, as that Spirit did suggest to us”;⁶³ and we preached both to Jews and Gentiles that he is the Christ of God, who is “determined by him to be the judge of living and dead.”⁶⁴ . . .

Concerning him Jeremiah also did prophesy, saying, “The Spirit before his face, Christ the Lord, was taken in their snares, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.” Ezekiel also, and the following prophets, affirm everywhere that he is the Christ, the Lord, the King, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Angel of the Father, the only-begotten God. He is the one therefore who we also preach to you and declare to be God the Word, who ministered to his God and Father for the creation of the universe. By believing in him, you shall live, but by disbelieving you shall be punished. For “he that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”⁶⁵

Therefore, after you have kept the festival of Pentecost, keep one week more festival, and

⁵³Jn 4:24. ⁵⁴Although in the immediate context this referred to the king who had been taken captive, the Fathers understood this passage as referring to Jesus the Christ, the anointed Lord. ⁵⁵Jn 14:26. ⁵⁶The distinct mention in the creed of three persons excludes the error of Sabellius in confusing them. See Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lecture* 4.8; 16.14. ⁵⁷NPNF 2 7:132. ⁵⁸Jn 4:24. ⁵⁹NPNF 2 10:107. ⁶⁰NPNF 2 10:325. ⁶¹The Jewish month of Elul, when repentance is stressed. ⁶²Bar 3:35-37. ⁶³Acts 2:4. ⁶⁴Acts 10:42. ⁶⁵Jn 3:36.

after that fast; for it is reasonable to rejoice for the gift of God and to fast after that relaxation. . . . Therefore fast, and ask your petitions of God. We enjoin you to fast every fourth day of the week and every day of the preparation, and whatever you have left over because of your fast bestow on the needy. Every sabbath day excepting one, and every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice, for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day, being the day of

the resurrection, or during the time of Pentecost, or, in general, who is sad on a festival day to the Lord. For on them we ought to rejoice and not to mourn. CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 5.3.20.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ANF 7:448-49*.



[LAMENT AT THE PLIGHT
OF THE ISRAELITES
LAMENTATIONS 5:1-22]

APPENDIX

Early Christian Writers and the Documents Cited

The following table lists all the early Christian documents cited in this volume by author, if known, or by the title of the work. The English title used in this commentary is followed in parentheses with the Latin designation and, where available, the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (=TLG) digital references or Cetedoc Clavis numbers. Printed sources of original language versions may be found in the bibliography of works in original languages.

Ambrose

Concerning Repentance (<i>De paenitentia</i>)	Cetedoc 0156
Consolation on the Death of Emperor Valentinian (<i>De obitu Valentiniani</i>)	Cetedoc 0158
Duties of the Clergy (<i>De officiis ministrorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0144
Flight from the World (<i>De fuga saeculi</i>)	Cetedoc 0133
Isaac, or the Soul (<i>De Isaac vel anima</i>)	Cetedoc 0128
Jacob and the Happy Life (<i>De Jacob et vita beata</i>)	Cetedoc 0130
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0160
On His Brother Satyrus (<i>De excessu fratris Satyri</i>)	Cetedoc 0157
On the Christian Faith (<i>De fide</i>)	Cetedoc 0150
On the Holy Spirit (<i>De Spiritu Sancto</i>)	Cetedoc 0151
On the Mysteries (<i>De mysteriis</i>)	Cetedoc 0155
On the Patriarchs (<i>De patriarchis</i>)	Cetedoc 0132
The Prayer of Job and David (<i>De interpellatione Iob et David</i>)	Cetedoc 0134
Six Days of Creation (<i>Exameron</i>)	Cetedoc 0123

Aphrahat

Demonstrations (*Demonstrationes*)

Athanasius

Defense of the Nicene Definition (<i>De decretis Nicaenae synodi</i>)	TLG 2035.003
Discourses Against the Arians (<i>Orationes tres contra Arianos</i>)	TLG 2035.042
Festal Letters (<i>Epistulae festales</i>)	TLG 2035.014
History of the Arians (<i>Historia Arianum</i>)	TLG 2035.009
Letter to the Bishops of Africa (<i>Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae</i>)	TLG 2035.014
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	TLG 2035.110

Augustine

Against Julian (<i>Contra Julianum</i>)	Cetedoc 0351
Against Two Letters of the Pelagians (<i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0346
The Christian Life (<i>De vita christiana [Sp.]</i>)	
City of God (<i>De civitate Dei</i>)	Cetedoc 0313
Confessions (<i>Confessionum libri tredecim</i>)	Cetedoc 0251
Discourse Against the Arians (<i>Contra sermonem Arianorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0702
Enchiridion (<i>Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate</i>)	Cetedoc 0295
Expositions of the Psalms (<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>)	Cetedoc 0283
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0262
On Continence (<i>De continentia</i>)	Cetedoc 0298
On Eighty-three Varied Questions (<i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>)	Cetedoc 0289
On Patience (<i>De patientia</i>)	Cetedoc 0308
On Rebuke and Grace (<i>De correptione et gratia</i>)	Cetedoc 0353
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Homilies on the Psalms (<i>Homiliae super Psalmos</i>)	TLG 2040.018
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Bede

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On the Tabernacle	
(<i>De tabernaculo et vasis eius ac vestibus sacerdotum libri iii</i>)	Cetedoc 1345

Braulio of SaragossaLetters (*Epistolae*)**Caesarius of Arles**Additional Sermon (see Augustine *Sermones*)

Cetedoc 0284

Sermons (*Sermones*)

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Cassian, JohnConferences (*Collationes*)

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CassiodorusExplanation of the Psalms (*Expositio psalorum*)

Cetedoc 0900

Clement of AlexandriaChrist the Educator (*Paedagogus*)

TLG 0555.002

Exhortation to the Greeks (*Protrepticus*)

TLG 0555.001

Fragments (*Fragmenta*)

TLG 0555.008

Stromateis (*Stromata*)

TLG 0555.004

Clement of Rome1 Clement (*Epistula i ad Corinthios*)

TLG 1271.001

CommodianThe Instructions of Commodian (*Instructionum*)

Cetedoc 1470

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (*Constitutiones apostolorum*)

TLG 2894.001

CyprianThe Dress of Virgins (*De habitu virginum*)

Cetedoc 0040

Exhortation to Repentance (*Exhortatio ad poenitentiam* [Sp.]The Lapsed (*De lapsis*)

Cetedoc 0042

Letters (*Epistulae*)

Cetedoc 0050

The Lord's Prayer (*De dominica oratione*)

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To Demetrian (*Ad Demetrianum*)

Cetedoc 0046

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Cetedoc 0039

The Unity of the Church (*De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*)

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Cyril of AlexandriaCommentary on Luke (*Commentarii in Lucam*)

TLG 4090.002

Cyril of JerusalemCatechetical Lectures (*Catecheses ad illuminandos*)

TLG 2110.003

Sermon on the Paralytic (*Homilia in paralyticum juxta piscinam jacentem*)

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Didache (*Didache xii apostolorum*)

TLG 1311.001

Didascalia Apostolorum

Ephrem the Syrian

Commentary on Jeremiah

Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron (*In Tatiani Diatessaron*)

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Epiphanius of Salamis

Letters (see Jerome *Epistulae*)

Cetedoc 0620

Panarion (*Panarion: Adversus Haereses*)

TLG 2021.002

Epistle of Barnabas (*Barnabae epistula*)

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Eusebius of Caesarea

Ecclesiastical History (*Historia ecclesiastica*)

TLG 2018.002

Preparation of the Gospel (*Praeparatio evangelica*)

TLG 2018.001

Proof of the Gospel (*Demonstratio evangelica*)

TLG 2018.005

Fulgentius of Ruspe

Letter (*Epistulae*)

Cetedoc 0814

To Monimus (*Ad Monimum*)

Cetedoc 0817

Gregory of Nazianzus

In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, Oration 2 (*Apologetica*)

TLG 2022.016

On Easter, and His Reluctance, Oration 1 (*In sanctum pascha*)

TLG 2022.015

On His Brother St. Caesarius, Oration 7

(*Funeris in laudem Caesarii fratris oratio*)

TLG 2022.005

On His Father's Silence, Oration 16 (*In patrem tacentem*)

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On Holy Baptism, Oration 40 (*In sanctum baptisma*)

TLG 2022.048

On the Death of His Father, Oration 18 (*Funeris oratio in patrem*)

TLG 2022.031

On the Great Athanasius, Oration 21 (*In laudem Athanasii*)

TLG 2022.034

On the Words of the Gospel, "When Jesus Had Finished These Sayings,"

Oration 37 (*In dictum evangelii: Cum consummasset Jesus hos sermons*)

TLG 2022.045

On Theology, Theological Oration 2(28) (*De theologia*)

TLG 2022.008

Gregory of Nyssa

Funeral Oration on Meletius (*Oratio funeris in Meletium episcopum*)

TLG 2017.021

Gregory the Great

Letters (*Registrum epistularum*)

Cetedoc 1714

Pastoral Rule (*Regula pastoralis*)

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Hermas

Shepherd (*Hermas, Pastor*)

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Horsiesi

Instructions

The Testament of Horsiesi (*Liber Orsiesii*)**Ignatius of Antioch**To the Ephesians (*Ad Ephesios*)

TLG 1443.001

To the Philadelphians (*Ad Philadelphios*)

TLG 1443.001

IrenaeusAgainst Heresies (*Adversus haereses*)

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Proof of the Apostolic Preaching (*Epideixis*)**Isaac of Nineveh**

Ascetical Homilies

JeromeAgainst Jovinianus (*Adversus Jovinianum*)

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Against the Pelagians (*Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*)

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Homilies on Mark (*Tractatus in Marci evangelium*)

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Homilies on the Psalms (*Tractatus lix in psalmos*)

Cetedoc 0592

Letters (*Epistulae*)

Cetedoc 0620

On Lazarus and Dives (*Homilia in Lucam, de Lazaro et diuite*)

Cetedoc 0596

Six Books on Jeremiah (*In Hieremiam prophetam libri vi*)

Cetedoc 0586

John ChrysostomAgainst the Anomoeans (*Contra Anomoeos*)

TLG 2062.016

(Contra Anomoeos homiliae 1-5 = De incomprehensibili dei natura)

TLG 2062.012

Baptismal Instructions (*Ad illuminandos catecheses 1-2*)

TLG 2062.382

Discourses Against Judaizing Christians (*Adversus Judaeos [orations 1-8]*)

TLG 2062.021

Homilies on 1 Corinthians (*In epistulam i ad Corinthios*)

TLG 2062.156

Homilies on 1 Thessalonians (*In epistulam i ad Thessalonicenses*)

TLG 2062.162

Homilies on Philippians (*In epistulam ad Philippenses*)

TLG 2062.160

Homilies on Repentance and Almsgiving (*De paenitentia [homiliae 1-9]*)

TLG 2062.027

Homilies on Romans (*In epistulam ad Romanos*)

TLG 2062.155

Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew (*In Matthaеum [homiliae 1-90]*)

TLG 2062.152

Homilies on the Gospel of John (*In Joannem*)

TLG 2062.153

Homilies on Titus (*In epistulam ad Titum*)

TLG 2062.166

Homily to Those Who Had Not Attended the Assembly

(Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae)

TLG 2062.024

Instructions to Catechumens (*Catecheses ad illuminandos*)

TLG 2062.382

Letters to the Fallen Theodore (*Ad Theodorum lapsum*)

TLG 2062.002

On the Epistle to the Hebrews (*In epistulam ad Hebraeos*)

TLG 2062.168

On the Priesthood (*De sacerdotio*)

TLG 2062.085

Justin Martyr

Dialogue with Trypho (*Dialogus cum Tryphone*) TLG 0645.003
 First Apology (*Apologia*) TLG 0645.001

Lactantius

Divine Institutes (*Divinae Institutiones*) Cetedoc 0085
 Epitome of the Divine Institutes (*Epitome divinarum institutionum*) Cetedoc 0086

Leander of Seville

The Training of Nuns (*Regula, sive liber de institutione virginum et contemptu mundi*)

Leo the Great

Letters (*Epistulae*) Cetedoc 1657
 Sermons (*Tractatus septem et nonaginta*) Cetedoc 1657

Marius Victorinus

Against Arius (*Adversus Arium*) Cetedoc 0095

Maximinus of Turin

Sermons (*Collectio Veronensis: De lectionibus sanctorum evangeliorum [Dub.]*) Cetedoc 0694

Methodius

On the Resurrection (*De resurrectione*) TLG 2959.003
 Symposium or Banquet of the Ten Virgins
 (*Symposium sive Convivium decem virginum*) TLG 2959.001

Novatian

On the Trinity (*De Trinitate*) Cetedoc 0071

Origen

Against Celsus (*Contra Celsum*) TLG 2042.001
 Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew
 (*Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei [lib.12-17]*) TLG 2042.030
 (*Commentaria in evangelium Matthaeum [Mt 22:34–27:63]*) TLG 2042.028
 Commentary on the Gospel of John
 (*Commentarii in evangelium Joannis [lib. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13]*) TLG 2042.005
 (*Commentarii in evangelium Joannis [lib. 19, 20, 28, 32]*) TLG 2042.079
 Commentary on the Song of Songs (*Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum*) Cetedoc 0198
 Exhortation to Martyrdom (*Exhortatio ad martyrium*) TLG 2042.007
 Fragments on Jeremiah (*Fragmenta in Jeremiam*) TLG 2042.010
 Homilies on Exodus (*Homiliae in Exodum*) TLG 2042.023
 Homilies on Genesis (*Homiliae in Genesim*) TLG 2042.022
 Homilies on Jeremiah (*Homiliae in Jeremiam*)
 (*homiliae 1-11*) TLG 2042.009
 (*homiliae 12-20*) TLG 2042.021

On First Principles (<i>De principiis</i>)	TLG 2042.002
Pachomius	
Instructions	
Paralipomena (<i>Paralipomena</i>)	
Pacian of Barcelona	
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	
On Penitents (<i>De paenitentibus</i>)	
Patrick	
Confession (<i>Confessio</i>)	
Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus (<i>Epistola</i>)	
Prosper of Aquitaine	
The Call of All Nations (<i>De vocatione omnium gentium</i>)	
Rufinus of Aquileia	
Commentary on the Apostles' Creed (<i>Expositio symboli</i>)	Cetedoc 0196
Salvian the Presbyter	
The Governance of God (<i>De gubernatione Dei</i>)	Cetedoc 0485
2 Clement (<i>Epistula ii ad Corinthios [Sp.]</i>)	TLG 1271.002
Sulpitius Severus	
Letters of Sulpitius Severus (<i>Epistulae iii</i>)	Cetedoc 0476
Tertullian	
Against Hermogenes (<i>Adversus Hermogenem</i>)	Cetedoc 0013
Against Marcion (<i>Adversus Marcionem</i>)	Cetedoc 0014
Against Praxeas (<i>Adversus Praxean</i>)	Cetedoc 0026
An Answer to the Jews (<i>Adversus Judaeos</i>)	Cetedoc 0033
On Baptism (<i>De baptismo</i>)	Cetedoc 0008
On Fasting (<i>De jejuniis adversus psychicos</i>)	Cetedoc 0029
On the Flesh of Christ (<i>De carne Christi</i>)	Cetedoc 0018
On the Soul (<i>De anima</i>)	Cetedoc 0017
Prescriptions Against Heretics (<i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0005
Theodore of Tabennesi (via Ammon)	
A Letter from Theodore	
Theodoret of Cyr	
Commentary on the Psalms (<i>Interpretatio in Psalmos</i>)	TLG 4089.024
Letters	

(<i>Epistulae: Collectio Sirmondiana [1-95]</i>)	TLG 4089.006
(<i>Epistulae: Collectio Sirmondiana [96-147]</i>)	TLG 4089.007
On Divine Providence (<i>De providentia orationes decem</i>)	TLG 4089.032
On Jeremiah (<i>Interpretatio in Jeremiam</i>)	TLG 4089.026

Theophilus of Alexandria

Letters (see Jerome <i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0620
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Theophilus of Antioch

To Autolytus (<i>Ad Autolytum</i>)	TLG 1725.001
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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES &
SHORT DESCRIPTIONS
OF SELECT ANONYMOUS WORKS**

This listing is cumulative, including all the authors and works cited in this series.

Abba John (date unknown). Noted monk in John Cassian's *Conferences* who presided over a coenobitic community in the desert of Scetis and was sought out for his wisdom.

Abba Moses (c. 332-407). Moses the Ethiopian or Moses the Black. He began as a house slave of a government official, later dismissed for robbery, a life he continued after his dismissal. After his conversion, he became a monk of Scetis and then a priest trained by Isidore the Priest. He retired to Petra where he was martyred with seven others by barbarian invaders.

Abba Pior (d. 373). An Egyptian desert father. He left his family while still a boy. His sister sought him out fifty years later, trying to persuade him to return from his life of solitude, but she was unsuccessful. He was known as a generous monk who was willing to put up with much discomfort, living in a horrible cell that no one who followed after him could stand to live in.

Abraham of Nathpar (fl. sixth-seventh century). Monk of the Eastern Church who flourished during the monastic revival of the sixth to seventh century. Among his works is

a treatise on prayer and silence that speaks of the importance of prayer becoming embodied through action in the one who prays. His work has also been associated with John of Apamea or Philoxenus of Mabbug.

Acacius of Beroea (c. 340-c. 436). Syrian monk known for his ascetic life. He became bishop of Beroea in 378, participated in the council of Constantinople in 381, and played an important role in mediating between Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch; however, he did not take part in the clash between Cyril and Nestorius.

Acacius of Caesarea (d. c. 365). Pro-Arian bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, disciple and biographer of Eusebius of Caesarea, the historian. He was a man of great learning and authored a treatise on Ecclesiastes.

Acts of Paul and Thecla (second century). A story about a disciple of Paul known for her continence and miraculous deliverances from martyrdom. Originally a part of *The Acts of Paul*, the work was judged a forgery by Tertullian who opposed its use in the advocacy of female preaching and baptizing. Nonetheless,

the work was widely popular and translated into several languages.

Acts of Peter (c. 190). An apocryphal account of the apostle's life and ministry, including his conflicts with Simon Magus and his death via inverted crucifixion.

Acts of Thomas (c. 225). A widely circulated apocryphal account of the missionary and wonderworking activities of Thomas, which includes the earliest report of the apostle's martyrdom in India.

Adamantius (early fourth century). Surname of Origen of Alexandria and the main character in the dialogue contained in *Concerning Right Faith in God*. Rufinus attributes this work to Origen. However, trinitarian terminology, coupled with references to Methodius and allusions to the fourth-century Constantinian era bring this attribution into question.

Adamnan (c. 624-704). Abbot of Iona, Ireland, and author of the life of St. Columba. He was influential in the process of assimilating the Celtic church into Roman liturgy and church order. He also wrote *On the Holy Sites*, which influenced Bede.

Alexander of Alexandria (fl. 312-328). Bishop of Alexandria and predecessor of Athanasius, on whom he exerted considerable theological influence during the rise of Arianism. Alexander excommunicated Arius, whom he had appointed to the parish of Baucalis, in 319. His teaching regarding the eternal generation and divine substantial union of the Son with the Father was eventually confirmed at the Council of Nicaea (325).

Ambrose of Milan (c. 333-397; fl. 374-397). Bishop of Milan and teacher of Augustine who defended the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Ambrosiaster (fl. c. 366-384). Name given to the author of an anonymous Pauline commentary once thought to have been composed by Ambrose.

Ammonas (fourth century). Student of Antony the Great and member of a colony of an-

chorite monks at Pispir in Egypt. He took over leadership of the colony upon Antony's death in 356. He was consecrated by Athanasius as bishop of a small unknown see. He died by 396. Fourteen letters and eleven sayings in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* are attributed to him, although it is unlikely that all of the identified sayings are his.

Ammonius of Alexandria (late fifth-early sixth century). Alexandrian presbyter who was one of the more moderate anti-Chalcedonian theologians of Alexandria and served as a prominent representative of Alexandrian theology and Christology in his day. His exegetical method, however, exhibits more affinity with Antioch than Alexandria. Fragments from his commentary on John number over 600, and he is often identified as the author of catena fragments from commentaries on both the Old and New Testament (see PG 85:1362-1814), though, due to the prevalence of this name in Egypt and the existence of other possible authors, attribution remains uncertain.

Amphilochius of Iconium (b. c. 340-345; d. c. 398-404). An orator at Constantinople before becoming bishop of Iconium in 373. He was a cousin of Gregory of Nazianzus and active in debates against the Macedonians and Mes-salians.

Anastasius I of Antioch (d. 598/599). Patriarch of Antioch (559-570 and 593-598), exiled by Justinian II and restored by Gregory the Great. His writing significantly influenced later theologians, though only his five-part treatise on orthodox belief survives in its entirety.

Anastasius of Sinai (d. c. 700). Abbot of the monastery of St. Catherine. He argued against various heresies in his dogmatic and polemical works. His main treatise, the *Hodegos* or "Guide," is primarily an attack on monophysism.

Andreas (c. seventh century). Monk who collected commentary from earlier writers to form a catena on various biblical books.

Andrew of Caesarea (early sixth century).

Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He produced one of the earliest Greek commentaries on Revelation and defended the divine inspiration of its author.

Andrew of Crete (c. 660-740). Bishop of Crete, known for his hymns, especially for his "canons," a genre which supplanted the *kontakia* and is believed to have originated with him. A significant number of his canons and sermons have survived and some are still in use in the Eastern Church. In the early Iconoclastic controversy he is also known for his defense of the veneration of icons.

Antony (or Anthony) the Great (c. 251-c. 356). An anchorite of the Egyptian desert and founder of Egyptian monasticism. Athanasius regarded him as the ideal of monastic life, and he has become a model for Christian hagiography.

Aphrahat (c. 270-350; fl. 337-345). "The Persian Sage" and first major Syriac writer whose work survives. He is also known by his Greek name Aphraates.

Apollinaris of Laodicea (310-c. 392). Bishop of Laodicea who was attacked by Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and Theodore for denying that Christ had a human mind.

Aponius/Apponius (fourth-fifth century). Author of a remarkable commentary on Song of Solomon (c. 405-415), an important work in the history of exegesis. The work, which was influenced by the commentaries of Origen and Pseudo-Hippolytus, is of theological significance, especially in the area of Christology.

Apostolic Constitutions (c. 381-394). Also known as *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* and thought to be redacted by Julian of Neapolis. The work is divided into eight books, and is primarily a collection of and expansion on previous works such as the *Didache* (c. 140) and the *Apostolic Traditions*. Book 8 ends with eighty-five canons from various sources and is elsewhere known as the *Apostolic Canons*.

Springius of Beja (mid sixth century). Iberian bishop and exegete. Heavily influenced by Ty-

conius, he wrote a commentary on Revelation in Latin, of which two large fragments survive.

Arator (c. 490-550). Roman subdeacon appointed by Pope Vigilius. From Liguria, Italy, he served as an imperial ambassador for the Gothic court prior to his appointment as subdeacon. A poet at heart, his *De actibus apostolorum*, a poetic paraphrase and allegorical expansion of the book of Acts, was popular in the Middle Ages.

Arethas of Caesarea (c. 860-940). Byzantine scholar and disciple of Photius. He was a deacon in Constantinople, then archbishop of Caesarea from 901.

Aristides (second century). Christian philosopher and early apologist. Reputed to be from Athens, he wrote his *Apologia*, addressed either to Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, to defend the Christian understanding of God against that of the barbarian, Greek and Jewish traditions.

Arius (fl. c. 320). Heretic condemned at the Council of Nicaea (325) for refusing to accept that the Son was not a creature but was God by nature like the Father.

Armenian Liturgy (c. fourth or fifth century). Ancient Christian liturgy based in part on Syrian rites used by early missionaries to Armenia and similar in structure to the old rite of Antioch. The Armenian liturgy also incorporates unique elements and influences from a variety of traditions. The invention of a national script in the fifth century allowed for the translation of the liturgy into Armenian.

Arnobius of Sicca (d. c. 327). Teacher of rhetoric at Sicca Veneria in Numidia in North Africa and opponent of Christianity, he converted late in life and became an apologist for the faith he formerly opposed. According to Jerome, Arnobius's one extant work, *Against the Nations*, was written at the request of his bishop, who wanted proof that his conversion was genuine. It was probably composed during the persecution under Diocletian.

Arnobius the Younger (fifth century). A participant in christological controversies of the

fifth century. He composed *Conflictus cum Serapione*, an account of a debate with a monophysite monk in which he attempts to demonstrate harmony between Roman and Alexandrian theology. Some scholars attribute to him a few more works, such as *Commentaries on Psalms*.

Asterius the Homilist (late fourth-early fifth century). Author of thirty-one homilies on Psalms 1–15 and 18, abbreviated versions of which are preserved under the name of John Chrysostom. This otherwise unknown preacher, sometimes identified with Asterius of Amasea and Asterius the Sophist, lived in or near Antioch.

Athanasian Creed (c. fourth or fifth century). One of the three ecumenical creeds in Western Christianity. Also known as the *Quicumque vult*, it expounds in great detail the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. Traditionally attributed to Athanasius, the creed's origin and date are now disputed; it likely arose in Southern Gaul.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 295-373; fl. 325-373). Bishop of Alexandria from 328, though often in exile. He wrote his classic polemics against the Arians while most of the eastern bishops were against him.

Athenagoras (fl. 176-180). Early Christian philosopher and apologist from Athens, whose only authenticated writing, *A Plea Regarding Christians*, is addressed to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and defends Christians from the common accusations of atheism, incest and cannibalism.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Bishop of Hippo and a voluminous writer on philosophical, exegetical, theological and ecclesiological topics. He formulated the Western doctrines of predestination and original sin in his writings against the Pelagians.

Babai (c. early sixth century). Author of the *Letter to Cyriacus*. He should not be confused with either Babai of Nisibis (d. 484) or Babai the Great (d. 628).

Babai the Great (d. 628). Syriac monk who

founded a monastery and school in his region of Beth Zabday and later served as third superior at the Great Convent of Mount Izla during a period of crisis in the Nestorian church.

Bardesanes (154-222). Philosopher who sought to reconcile Christian thought with contemporary astrological theories, while rejecting Zoroastrian determinism. His ideas, including arguments against the Marcionites, were recorded by a disciple in the *Book of the Laws of the Lands*. He also wrote 150 doctrinal hymns.

Barsanuphius and John (fifth to sixth century). Two anchorite friends who served as spiritual directors to coenobites at a monastery near Gaza. The two communicated with others, including one another, almost exclusively through letters. Little is known of them apart from their correspondence, included among 850 letters of Barsanuphius. Dorotheus of Gaza was one of Barsanuphius's most important disciples.

Basil of Seleucia (fl. 444-468). Bishop of Seleucia in Isauria and ecclesiastical writer. He took part in the Synod of Constantinople in 448 for the condemnation of the Eutychian errors and the deposition of their great champion, Dioscurus of Alexandria.

Basil the Great (b. c. 330; fl. 357-379). One of the Cappadocian fathers, bishop of Caesarea and champion of the teaching on the Trinity propounded at Nicaea in 325. He was a great administrator and founded a monastic rule.

Basilides (fl. second century). Alexandrian heretic of the early second century who is said to have believed that souls migrate from body to body and that we do not sin if we lie to protect the body from martyrdom.

Bede the Venerable (c. 672/673-735). Born in Northumbria, at the age of seven he was put under the care of the Benedictine monks of Saints Peter and Paul at Jarrow and given a broad classical education in the monastic tradition. Considered one of the most learned men of his age, he is the author of *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547). Considered

the most important figure in the history of Western monasticism. Benedict founded many monasteries, the most notable found at Montecassino, but his lasting influence lay in his famous Rule. The Rule outlines the theological and inspirational foundation of the monastic ideal while also legislating the shape and organization of the cenobitic life.

Besa the Copt (fifth century). Coptic monk, disciple of Shenoute, whom he succeeded as head of the monastery. He wrote numerous letters, monastic catecheses and a biography of Shenoute.

Book of Steps (c. 400). Written by an anonymous Syriac author, this work consists of thirty homilies or discourses which specifically deal with the more advanced stages of growth in the spiritual life.

Braulio of Saragossa (c. 585-651). Bishop of Saragossa (631-651) and noted writer of the Visigothic renaissance. His *Life* of St. Aemilianus is his crowning literary achievement.

Byzantine Order. Eastern rite incorporating diverse local traditions from throughout the empire. Byzantine liturgy, which fused into a more standard order in the late Middle Ages, is marked by a variety of rich cultural influences, especially lyrical and mystical elements.**Caesarius of Arles** (c. 470-543). Bishop of Arles renowned for his attention to his pastoral duties. Among his surviving works the most important is a collection of 238 sermons that display an ability to preach Christian doctrine to a variety of audiences.

Callinicus (mid fifth century). Disciple and biographer of Hypatius, third abbot of the monastery at Rufiniane near Chalcedon and Constantinople. Callinicus's *Life of Hypatius* shows clear borrowings from Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, but nevertheless gives insight into the development of monastic life near Constantinople.

Callistus of Rome (d. 222). Pope (217-222) who excommunicated Sabellius for heresy. It is very probable that he suffered martyrdom.

Cassia (b. c. 805; d. between 848 and 867). Nun, poet and hymnographer who founded a convent in Constantinople.

Cassian, John (360-432). Author of the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, works purporting to relay the teachings of the Egyptian monastic fathers on the nature of the spiritual life which were highly influential in the development of Western monasticism.

Cassiodorus (c. 485-c. 580). Founder of the monastery of Vivarium, Calabria, where monks transcribed classic sacred and profane texts, in Greek and Latin, preserving them for the Western tradition.

Chromatius (fl. 400). Bishop of Aquileia, friend of Rufinus and Jerome and author of tracts and sermons.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215). A highly educated Christian convert from paganism, head of the catechetical school in Alexandria and pioneer of Christian scholarship. His major works, *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and the *Stromata*, bring Christian doctrine face to face with the ideas and achievements of his time.

Clement of Rome (fl. c. 92-101). Pope whose *Epistle to the Corinthians* is one of the most important documents of subapostolic times.

Commodian (probably third or possibly fifth century). Latin poet of unknown origin (possibly Africa, Syria, Rome or Gaul) whose two surviving works suggest chiliast and patripasionist tendencies.

Constantine (d. 337). Roman emperor from 306, with his fellow-emperor Licinius. The two proclaimed religious tolerance in the *Edict of Milan* in 313, allowing Christianity to be practiced freely. He became sole emperor in 324 and sought to preserve the unity and structure of the church for the good of the state. Constantine issued decrees against schisms and summoned the Council of Nicaea (325) to settle the Arian controversy.

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles. See *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Cosmas of Maiuma (c. 675-c. 751). Adopted

son of John of Damascus and educated by the monk Cosmas in the early eighth century. He entered the monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem and in 735 became bishop of Maiuma near Gaza. Cosmas in his capacity as Melodus ("Songwriter") is known for his canons composed in honor of Christian feasts. An alternate rendering of his name is Kosmas Melodos.

Council of Chalcedon (451). The fourth of seven ecumenical councils. The council was summoned by Emperor Marcian in response to a controversy over the person and nature of Christ. The Definition of Chalcedon, informed by Leo's *Tome*, affirmed the statements of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) while further defining the relationship between the two natures in the one person of Christ as unmixed, unchangeable, indivisible and inseparable. The Oriental Orthodox Church refused to accept Chalcedon's definition of the faith, preferring to stay with the *miaphysite* Christology of Cyril of Alexandria.

Council of Constantinople (381). The second ecumenical council, convened by Theodosius I to unify the Eastern Church. The council endorsed the Nicene Creed of 325, expanding it at certain controverted points in order to answer to challenges from, among others, the Eunomians and Pneumatomachians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, while also condemning the Apollinarian denial of Christ's full humanity.

Council of Rome (382). Called by Damasus in response to the Council of Constantinople, this gathering affirmed the Council of Constantinople while also seeking to establish the primacy of the Roman see. The first three chapters of the *Decretum Gelasianum*, which list a hierarchy of authoritative sources and a biblical canon, may have been produced by this council.

Council of Toledo (447). Affirmed the earlier Council of Toledo I (400) and the liturgical practice already established in the West of including the procession of the Spirit from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque*), which had been

added to the recitation of the creed by some in the West in order to combat the heresy of Arianism which subordinated the Son to the Father.

Cyprian of Carthage (fl. 248-258). Martyred bishop of Carthage who maintained that those baptized by schismatics and heretics had no share in the blessings of the church.

Cyril of Alexandria (375-444; fl. 412-444). Patriarch of Alexandria whose extensive exegesis, characterized especially by a strong espousal of the unity of Christ, led to the condemnation of Nestorius in 431.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386; fl. c. 348). Bishop of Jerusalem after 350 and author of Catechetical Homilies.

Cyril of Scythopolis (b. c. 525; d. after 557). Palestinian monk and author of biographies of famous Palestinian monks. Because of him we have precise knowledge of monastic life in the fifth and sixth centuries and a description of the Origenist crisis and its suppression in the mid-sixth century.

Damasus of Rome (c. 304-384). Appointed pope in 366, following a conflict with Ursinus settled by Valentinian I. Damasus solidified the authority of Rome, attacked heresy using councils and strategic partnerships, promoted the cult of the martyrs, and commissioned Jerome's production of the Vulgate.

Dhuoda (ninth century). Wife of Bernard, Duke of Septimania, and author of a work on Christian virtue, *Manual*, which she wrote for her eldest son, William.

Diadochus of Photice (c. 400-474). Antimonoophysite bishop of Epirus Vetus whose work *Discourse on the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ* exerted influence in both the East and West through its Chalcedonian Christology. He is also the subject of the mystical *Vision of St. Diadochus Bishop of Photice in Epirus*.

Didache (c. 140). Of unknown authorship, this text intertwines Jewish ethics with Christian liturgical practice to form a whole discourse on the "way of life." It exerted an enormous amount

of influence in the patristic period and was especially used in the training of catechumen.

Didascalia Apostolorum (*Teaching of the Twelve Apostles and Holy Disciples of Our Savior*) (early third century). A Church Order composed for a community of Christian converts from paganism in the northern part of Syria. This work forms the main source of the first six books of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and provides an important window to view what early liturgical practice may have looked like.

Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398). Alexandrian exegete who was much influenced by Origen and admired by Jerome.

Diodore of Tarsus (d. c. 394). Bishop of Tarsus and Antiochene theologian. He authored a great scope of exegetical, doctrinal and apologetic works, which come to us mostly in fragments because of his condemnation as the predecessor of Nestorianism. Diodore was a teacher of John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Dionysius of Alexandria (d. c. 264). Bishop of Alexandria and student of Origen. Dionysius actively engaged in the theological disputes of his day, opposed Sabellianism, defended himself against accusations of tritheism and wrote the earliest extant Christian refutation of Epicureanism. His writings have survived mainly in extracts preserved by other early Christian authors.

Dorotheus of Gaza (fl. c. 525-540). Member of Abbot Seridos's monastery and later leader of a monastery where he wrote *Spiritual Instructions*. He also wrote a work on traditions of Palestinian monasticism.

Dracontius (fifth century). Latin poet and legal scholar. During imprisonment (484-c. 496) for angering the ruler of Carthage, Dracontius produced his *Satisfactio* and *Laudes Dei*, which explore, in particular, biblical themes of mercy.

Egeria (or Etheria, Aetheria) (fourth century). Possible name for the author of an *Itinerary* or pilgrimage diary that records valuable details on early liturgy, traditions, and church and monas-

tic structure. Through letters to her religious community, likely in Gaul, Egeria describes a journey (c. 381-384) to Egypt, Palestine and Asia Minor.

Ennodius (474-521). Bishop of Pavia, a prolific writer of various genre, including letters, poems and biographies. He sought reconciliation in the schism between Rome and Acacius of Constantinople, and also upheld papal autonomy in the face of challenges from secular authorities.

Ephrem the Syrian (b. c. 306; fl. 363-373). Syrian writer of commentaries and devotional hymns which are sometimes regarded as the greatest specimens of Christian poetry prior to Dante.

Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403). Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, author of a refutation of eighty heresies (the *Panarion*) and instrumental in the condemnation of Origen.

Epiphanius the Latin. Author of the late fifth-century or early sixth-century Latin text *Interpretation of the Gospels*, with constant references to early patristic commentators. He was possibly a bishop of Benevento or Seville.

Epistle of Barnabas. See *Letter of Barnabas*.

Epistula Apostolorum (mid second century). A self-purported letter of doubtful authenticity from the apostles to the churches of the world that emphasizes the divinity and sonship of Jesus along with his childhood miracles.

Ethiopian Liturgy. Liturgical rite similar to the rite of Alexandria. Ethiopian liturgy has evolved since the introduction of Coptic liturgy to Ethiopia, traditionally by St. Frumentius in the fourth century. Significant Eastern and Jewish influences were added over time.

Eucherius of Lyons (fl. 420-449). Bishop of Lyons c. 435-449. Born into an aristocratic family, he, along with his wife and sons, joined the monastery at Lérins soon after its founding. He explained difficult Scripture passages by means of a threefold reading of the text: literal, moral and spiritual.

Eugippius (b. 460). Disciple of Severinus and third abbot of the monastic community at

Castrum Lucullanum, which was made up of those fleeing from Noricum during the barbarian invasions.

Eunomius (d. 393). Bishop of Cyzicyus who was attacked by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa for maintaining that the Father and the Son were of different natures, one ingenerate, one generate.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260/263-340). Bishop of Caesarea, partisan of the Emperor Constantine and first historian of the Christian church. He argued that the truth of the gospel had been foreshadowed in pagan writings but had to defend his own doctrine against suspicion of Arian sympathies.

Eusebius of Emesa (c. 300-c. 359). Bishop of Emesa from c. 339. A biblical exegete and writer on doctrinal subjects, he displays some semi-Arian tendencies of his mentor Eusebius of Caesarea.

Eusebius of Gaul, or Eusebius Gallicanus (c. fifth century). A conventional name for a collection of seventy-six sermons produced in Gaul and revised in the seventh century. It contains material from different patristic authors and focuses on ethical teaching in the context of the liturgical cycle (days of saints and other feasts).

Eusebius of Vercelli (fl. c. 360). Bishop of Vercelli who supported the trinitarian teaching of Nicaea (325) when it was being undermined by compromise in the West.

Eustathius of Antioch (fl. 325). First bishop of Beroea, then of Antioch, one of the leaders of the anti-Arians at the council of Nicaea. Later, he was banished from his seat and exiled to Thrace for his support of Nicene theology.

Euthymius (377-473). A native of Melitene and influential monk. He was educated by Bishop Otreius of Melitene, who ordained him priest and placed him in charge of all the monasteries in his diocese. When the Council of Chalcedon (451) condemned the errors of Eutyches, it was greatly due to the authority of Euthymius that most of the Eastern recluses accepted its decrees. The empress Eudoxia returned to

Chalcedonian orthodoxy through his efforts. **Evagrius of Pontus** (c. 345-399). Disciple and teacher of ascetic life who astutely absorbed and creatively transmitted the spirituality of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism of the late fourth century. Although Origenist elements of his writings were formally condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II, A.D. 553), his literary corpus continued to influence the tradition of the church.

Ezrik of Kolb (early fifth century). A disciple of Mesrob who translated Greek Scriptures into Armenian, so as to become the model of the classical Armenian language. As bishop, he participated in the synod of Astisat (449).

Facundus of Hermiane (fl. 546-568). African bishop who opposed Emperor Justinian's postmortem condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyr and Ibas of Ebessa at the fifth ecumenical council. His written defense, known as "To Justinian" or "In Defense of the Three Chapters," avers that ancient theologians should not be blamed for errors that became obvious only upon later theological reflection. He continued in the tradition of Chalcedon, although his Christology was supplemented, according to Justinian's decisions, by the theopaschite formula *Unus ex Trinitate passus est* ("Only one of the three suffered").

Fastidiosus (late fifth-early sixth century). African Catholic priest who converted to Arianism. The text of one of his sermons survives in a refutation by Fulgentius.

Fastidius (c. fourth-fifth centuries). British author of *On the Christian Life*. He is believed to have written some works attributed to Pelagius.

Faustinus (fl. 380). A priest in Rome and supporter of Lucifer and author of a treatise on the Trinity.

Faustus of Riez (c. 400-490). A prestigious British monk at Lérins; abbot, then bishop of Riez from 457 to his death. His works include *On the Holy Spirit*, in which he argued against the Macedonians for the divinity of the Holy

Spirit, and *On Grace*, in which he argued for a position on salvation that lay between more categorical views of free will and predestination. Various letters and (pseudonymous) sermons are extant.

The Festal Menaion. Orthodox liturgical text containing the variable parts of the service, including hymns, for fixed days of celebration of the life of Jesus and Mary.

Filastrius (fl. 380). Bishop of Brescia and author of a compilation against all heresies.

Firmicus Maternus (fourth century). An anti-Pagan apologist. Before his conversion to Christianity he wrote a work on astrology (334-337). After his conversion, however, he criticized paganism in *On the Errors of the Profane Religion*.

Firmilian of Caesarea (fl. c. 230-c. 268). Influential bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He studied under Origen and became involved in the controversies over the return of the lapsed into the church and rebaptism, having written to Cyprian concerning the latter issue.

First Creed of the Council of Antioch (341). Eastern bishops' response to charges of Arianism from Western leaders. At a gathering that marked the dedication of the Golden Church at Antioch, the bishops put forth four creeds as alternatives to the Nicene formula.

Flavian of Chalon-sur-Saône (d. end of sixth century). Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône in Burgundy, France. His hymn *Verses on the Mandate in the Lord's Supper* was recited in a number of the French monasteries after the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday.

Fructuosus of Braga (d. c. 665). Son of a Gothic general and member of a noble military family. He became a monk at an early age, then abbot-bishop of Dumium before 650 and metropolitan of Braga in 656. He was influential in setting up monastic communities in Lusitania, Asturia, Galicia and the island of Gades.

Fulgentius of Ruspe (c. 467-532). Bishop of Ruspe and author of many orthodox sermons and tracts under the influence of Augustine.

Gaudentius of Brescia (fl. 395). Successor of

Filastrius as bishop of Brescia and author of twenty-one Eucharistic sermons.

Gennadius of Constantinople (d. 471). Patriarch of Constantinople, author of numerous commentaries and an opponent of the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria.

Germanus of Constantinople (c. 640-c. 733). Patriarch of Constantinople (715-730). He wrote the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which served for centuries as the explanation of the divine liturgy of the Byzantine Church, written during the outbreak of the great iconoclastic controversies in Eastern Christianity. One of the leading theologians of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681), which condemned monothelitism.

Gerontius (c. 395-c. 480). Palestinian monk, later archimandrite of the cenobites of Palestine. He led the resistance to the council of Chalcedon.

Gildas (sixth century). British monk and historian. His major work is *De excidio Britanniae*, a history focused on the pagan invasion of Britain and the vices of contemporary Britons. Fragments of letters and a Penitential are also attributed to Gildas.

Gnostics. Name now given generally to followers of Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus, Mani and others. The characteristic belief is that matter is a prison made for the spirit by an evil or ignorant creator, and that redemption depends on fate, not on free will.

Gospel of Peter (late second century). An early apocryphal writing with Docetic aspects that likely originated in Syria. It was referred to by Serapion (c. 190) and Origen, though only one section survives in an eighth-century manuscript.

Gospel of Philip (second or third century). A Gnostic collection of sayings, including several attributed to Jesus, on the process of salvation. This Coptic document, discovered at Nag Hammadi, is probably unconnected with the *Gospel of Philip* cited by Epiphanius.

Gospel of Truth (second century). One of the Coptic texts found at Nag Hammadi. This

Gnostic treatise discusses the nature, ministry and death of Jesus, and includes several unique speculations. Some scholars have connected it with the second-century Gnostic Valentinus. Irenaeus referred to it disparagingly as the so-called *Gospel of Truth*, which he found to be in conflict with the four canonical Gospels.

Gregory of Elvira (fl. 359-385). Bishop of Elvira who wrote allegorical treatises in the style of Origen and defended the Nicene faith against the Arians.

Gregory of Narek (950-1003). Armenian monk, philosopher, mystic and poet who lived in the monasteries of Narek (greater Armenia, now Turkey). He wrote a mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs and the Armenian Prayer book and liturgy. The latter, which he authored in his mature years, he referred to as his "last testament."

Gregory of Nazianzus (b. 329/330; fl. 372-389). Cappadocian father, bishop of Constantinople, friend of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, and author of theological orations, sermons and poetry.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394). Bishop of Nyssa and brother of Basil the Great. A Cappadocian father and author of catechetical orations, he was a philosophical theologian of great originality.

Gregory of Tours (c. 538-594). Bishop of Tours elected in 573. Gregory produced hagiographical and historical works. His *Historia Francorum*, a fragmentary yet valuable source, begins with creation and highlights sixth-century Gaul.

Gregory Thaumaturgus (fl. c. 248-264). Bishop of Neocaesarea and a disciple of Origen. There are at least five legendary *Lives* that recount the events and miracles which led to his being called "the wonder worker." His most important work was the *Address of Thanks to Origen*, which is a rhetorically structured panegyric to Origen and an outline of his teaching.

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604). Pope from 590, the fourth and last of the Latin "Doc-

tors of the Church." He was a prolific author and a powerful unifying force within the Latin Church, initiating the liturgical reform that brought about the Gregorian Sacramentary and Gregorian chant.

Hegemonius (fl. early fourth century). Author of *Acta disputationis*, traditionally believed to have been written in fourth-century Syria. This work is a fictitious debate between a Mesopotamian bishop and a Manichaean.

Hegesippus (second century). An author, possibly of Jewish descent, who served as a source for Eusebius and is best known for five books of anti-Gnostic polemic.

Heracleon (fl. c. 145-180). Gnostic teacher and disciple of Valentinus. His commentary on John, which was perhaps the first commentary to exist on this or any Gospel, was so popular that Ambrose commissioned Origen to write his own commentary in response, providing a more orthodox approach to the Fourth Gospel.

Hesychius of Jerusalem (fl. 412-450). Presbyter and exegete, thought to have commented on the whole of Scripture.

Hilary of Arles (c. 401-449). Archbishop of Arles and leader of the Semi-Pelagian party. Hilary incurred the wrath of Pope Leo I when he removed a bishop from his see and appointed a new bishop. Leo demoted Arles from a metropolitan see to a bishopric to assert papal power over the church in Gaul.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-367). Bishop of Poitiers and called the "Athanasius of the West" because of his defense (against the Arians) of the common nature of Father and Son.

Hippolytus (fl. 222-245). Recent scholarship places Hippolytus in a Palestinian context, personally familiar with Origen. Though he is known chiefly for *The Refutation of All Heresies*, he was primarily a commentator on Scripture (especially the Old Testament) employing typological exegesis.

Horsiesi (c. 305-c. 390). Pachomius's second successor, after Petronius, as a leader of cenobitic monasticism in Southern Egypt.

Hyperichius (c. fifth century). A monk known only from his *Exhortation to the Monks*, 160 statements in Greek on monastic virtues, and the collection *Sayings of the Fathers*, which quotes eight of these exhortations.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-107/112). Bishop of Antioch who wrote several letters to local churches while being taken from Antioch to Rome to be martyred. In the letters, which warn against heresy, he stresses orthodox Christology, the centrality of the Eucharist and unique role of the bishop in preserving the unity of the church.

Ildefonsus of Toledo (mid seventh century). Archbishop of Toledo (657-667). Previously a monk, he served as abbot of Agalí, and later as archbishop. Only a portion of his works is extant, including some theological works and letters. He is best known for his *De viris illustribus* (Lives of Illustrious Men) continuing the catalog begun by Isidore of Seville. His extant writing reflects his Marian piety.

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 135-c. 202). Bishop of Lyons who published the most famous and influential refutation of Gnostic thought.

Isaac of Nineveh (d. c. 700). Also known as Isaac the Syrian or Isaac Syrus, this monastic writer served for a short while as bishop of Nineveh before retiring to live a secluded monastic life. His writings on ascetic subjects survive in the form of numerous homilies.

Isaiah of Scete (late fourth century). Author of ascetical texts, collected after his death under the title of the *Ascetic Discourses*. This work was influential in the development of Eastern Christian asceticism and spirituality.

Isho'dad of Merv (fl. c. 850). Nestorian bishop of Hedatta. He wrote commentaries on parts of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament, frequently quoting Syriac fathers.

Isidore of Pelusium (d. c. 440). Egyptian ascetic. Born to a prominent Egyptian family in Alexandria, he left behind his wealth to live on a mountain near Pelusium, and was often consulted by church and civic leaders alike, such as

Cyril of Alexandria and Theodosius II, for his wisdom and his counsel of moderation. Many of his letters also have come down to us, some of which provide keen insight into the interpretation of Scripture.

Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636). Youngest of a family of monks and clerics, including sister Florentina and brothers Leander and Fulgentius. He was an erudite author of comprehensive scale in matters both religious and sacred, including his encyclopedic *Etymologies*.

Jacob of Nisibis (d. 338). Bishop of Nisibis. He was present at the council of Nicaea in 325 and took an active part in the opposition to Arius.

Jacob of Sarug (c. 450-c. 520). Syriac ecclesiastical writer. Jacob received his education at Edessa. At the end of his life he was ordained bishop of Sarug. His principal writing was a long series of metrical homilies, earning him the title "The Flute of the Holy Spirit."

Jerome (c. 347-420). Gifted exegete and exponent of a classical Latin style, now best known as the translator of the Latin Vulgate. He defended the perpetual virginity of Mary, attacked Origen and Pelagius and supported extreme ascetic practices.

John Chrysostom (344/354-407; fl. 386-407). Bishop of Constantinople who was noted for his orthodoxy, his eloquence and his attacks on Christian laxity in high places.

John of Antioch (d. 441/42). Bishop of Antioch, commencing in 428. He received his education together with Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia in a monastery near Antioch. A supporter of Nestorius, he condemned Cyril of Alexandria, but later reached a compromise with him.

John of Apamea (fifth century). Syriac author of the early church who wrote on various aspects of the spiritual life, also known as John the Solitary. Some of his writings are in the form of dialogues. Other writings include letters, a treatise on baptism, and shorter works on prayer and silence.

John of Carpathus (c. seventh/eighth cen-

ture). Perhaps John the bishop from the island of Carpathus, situated between Crete and Rhodes, who attended the Synod of 680/81. He wrote two "centuries" (a literary genre in Eastern spirituality consisting of 100 short sections, or chapters). These were entitled *Chapters of Encouragement to the Monks of India* and *Chapters on Theology and Knowledge* which are included in the *Philokalia*.

John of Damascus (c. 650-750). Arab monastic and theologian whose writings enjoyed great influence in both the Eastern and Western Churches. His most influential writing was the *Orthodox Faith*.

John of Jerusalem (John II of Jerusalem) (late fourth-early fifth century). Successor of Cyril as bishop of Jerusalem (386-417). Engaged with Epiphanius in the first Origenist controversy and became involved in the Pelagian controversy. He is probably the author of the five *Mystagogical Lectures* attributed to Cyril.

John the Elder (c. eighth century). A Syriac author also known as John of Dalyatha or John Saba ("the elder") who belonged to monastic circles of the Church of the East and lived in the region of Mount Qardu (northern Iraq). His most important writings are twenty-two homilies and a collection of fifty-one short letters in which he describes the mystical life as an anticipatory experience of the resurrection life, the fruit of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

John the Monk. Traditional name found in *The Festal Menaion*, believed to refer to John of Damascus. See John of Damascus.

Joseph of Thebes (fourth century). One of the desert fathers of Scetis, also known as Abba Joseph, who taught the most important virtue of a monk was to remain in complete submission to a spiritual father in total renunciation of one's own will.

Joseph's Bible Notes (Hypomnestikon) (fourth or fifth century). A pastiche of biblical and historical questions drawn from various writers, including the Jewish historian, Josephus. It

was believed to have been written by Josephus Christianus, derived from the brief poem appended at the end of the book, but the author ultimately is unknown. It evidences an Alexandrian Christology.

Josephus, Flavius (c. 37-c. 101). Jewish historian from a distinguished priestly family. Acquainted with the Essenes and Sadducees, he himself became a Pharisee. He joined the great Jewish revolt that broke out in 66 and was chosen by the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem to be commander-in-chief in Galilee. Showing great shrewdness to ingratiate himself with Vespasian by foretelling his elevation and that of his son Titus to the imperial dignity, Josephus was restored his liberty after 69 when Vespasian became emperor.

Julian of Eclanum (c. 385-450). Bishop of Eclanum in 416/417 who was removed from office and exiled in 419 for not officially opposing Pelagianism. In exile, he was accepted by Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose Antiochene exegetical style he followed. Although he was never able to regain his ecclesiastical position, Julian taught in Sicily until his death. His works include commentaries on Job and parts of the Minor Prophets, a translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on the Psalms, and various letters. Sympathetic to Pelagius, Julian applied his intellectual acumen and rhetorical training to argue against Augustine on matters such as free will, desire and the locus of evil.

Julian Pomerius (late fifth-early sixth century). Author of *On the Contemplative Life* and a teacher of Caesarius of Arles. Originally from Mauretania, Julian moved to southern Gaul where he was ordained as a priest. He eventually settled in Arles as a teacher of rhetoric.

Julian the Arian (c. fourth century). Antiochene, Arian author of *Commentary on Job*, and probably a follower of Aetius and Eunomius. The 85 *Apostolic Canons*, once part of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and the Pseudo-Ignatian writings are also attributed to him.

Julius Africanus (c. 160-c. 240). First Chris-

tian chronographer who influenced later historians such as Eusebius. Born in Jerusalem, he was charged with organizing a library in the Pantheon at Rome. He was acquainted with Origen during the time he studied in Alexandria and corresponded with him. He died in Palestine.

Justin Martyr (c. 100/110-165; fl. c. 148-161). Palestinian philosopher who was converted to Christianity, "the only sure and worthy philosophy." He traveled to Rome where he wrote several apologies against both pagans and Jews, combining Greek philosophy and Christian theology; he was eventually martyred.

Justinian the Emperor (482-565). Emperor of Byzantium, 527-565. As the second member of the Justinian Dynasty, he instituted an ambitious, though failed, restoration of the Byzantine Empire. He sought theological unity through a politicized Christianity that persecuted perceived heretics and apostates along with Jews and pagans. Many of his writings are extant, including twenty-one letters and four dogmatic works.

Lactantius (c. 260-c. 330). Christian apologist removed from his post as teacher of rhetoric at Nicomedia upon his conversion to Christianity. He was tutor to the son of Constantine and author of *The Divine Institutes*.

Leander (c. 545-c. 600). Latin ecclesiastical writer, of whose works only two survive. He was instrumental in spreading Christianity among the Visigoths, gaining significant historical influence in Spain in his time.

Leo the Great (regn. 440-461). Bishop of Rome whose *Tome to Flavian* helped to strike a balance between Nestorian and Cyrilline positions at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Letter of Barnabas (c. 130). An allegorical and typological interpretation of the Old Testament with a decidedly anti-Jewish tone. It was included with other New Testament works as a "Catholic epistle" at least until Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260/263-340) questioned its authenticity.

Letter to Diognetus (c. third century). A refutation of paganism and an exposition of the Christian life and faith. The author of this letter is unknown, and the exact identity of its recipient, Diognetus, continues to elude patristic scholars.

Liturgy of St. Basil (fourth century and onward). The liturgical collections of the Byzantine liturgy containing an anaphora attributed to Basil the Great. The liturgy has evolved considerably over the centuries.

Liturgy of St. James. A liturgy adopted throughout the East, including by the Syrian Orthodox Church. Traditionally attributed to St. James the bishop of Jerusalem, it survives in both Greek and Syriac versions.

Liturgy of St. Mark (fourth century). Traditional Eucharistic liturgy of the Alexandrian Church. First adopted by the Egyptian Melchites, its extant manuscripts are based on an early Egyptian text, and forms of the rite are still used by the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches.

Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles (first or second century). One of the earliest Christian liturgies. Attributed to Addai (Addaeus) and Mari (Maris), Christian missionaries to Edessa and surrounding areas of Syria, the liturgy was also celebrated in Mesopotamia and Persia. It was likely used in the Syrian church and was also taken up later by the Nestorians.

Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites (sixth century). Liturgy of the West Syrian Church named after the monophysite Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578) who used this rite, in the Coptic language, to solidify the hierarchy of monophysitism. Many of the anaphorae can be traced back in their basic structure the church of Jerusalem in apostolic times.

Liturgy of the Hours (third century). Early liturgy for prayers throughout the day. The church community, especially monastics, offered prayer at set times of the day: morning prayer, prayers of terce (third hour), sext (sixth hour) and none (ninth hour) that correspond

to the hours of Christ's crucifixion and death. Evening prayer was associated with the nighttime rest of the world itself. More elaborate and extended divisions of the hours followed that included Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline, reflective of a theology of time that celebrates the rhythm of life as God's people communicate with him.

Lucifer (d. 370/371). Bishop of Cagliari and vigorous supporter of Athanasius and the Nicene Creed. In conflict with the emperor Constantius, he was banished to Palestine and later to Thebaid (Egypt).

Luculentius (fifth century). Unknown author of a group of short commentaries on the New Testament, especially Pauline passages. His exegesis is mainly literal and relies mostly on earlier authors such as Jerome and Augustine. The content of his writing may place it in the fifth century.

Macarius of Egypt (c. 300-c. 390). One of the Desert Fathers. Accused of supporting Athanasius, Macarius was exiled c. 374 to an island in the Nile by Lucius, the Arian successor of Athanasius. Macarius continued his teaching of monastic theology at Wadi Natrun.

Macrina the Younger (c. 327-379). The elder sister of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, she is known as "the Younger" to distinguish her from her paternal grandmother. She had a powerful influence on her younger brothers, especially on Gregory, who called her his teacher and relates her teaching in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*.

Manichaeans. A religious movement that originated circa 241 in Persia under the leadership of Mani but was apparently of complex Christian origin. It is said to have denied free will and the universal sovereignty of God, teaching that kingdoms of light and darkness are coeternal and that the redeemed are particles of a spiritual man of light held captive in the darkness of matter (see Gnostics).

Marcellus of Ancyra (d. c. 375). Wrote a refutation of Arianism. Later, he was accused

of Sabellianism, especially by Eusebius of Caesarea. While the Western church declared him orthodox, the Eastern church excommunicated him. Some scholars have attributed to him certain works of Athanasius.

Marcion (fl. 144). Heretic of the mid second century who rejected the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, claiming that the Father of Jesus Christ was other than the Old Testament God (see Gnostics).

Marius Victorinus (b. c. 280/285; fl. c. 355-363). Grammarian of African origin who taught rhetoric at Rome and translated works of Platonists. After his conversion (c. 355), he wrote works against the Arians and commentaries on Paul's letters.

Mark the Hermit (c. sixth century). Monk who lived near Tarsus and produced works on ascetic practices as well as christological issues.

Martin of Braga (fl. c. 568-579). Anti-Arian metropolitan of Braga on the Iberian peninsula. He was highly educated and presided over the provincial council of Braga in 572.

Martyrdom of Polycarp (c. 160). A letter written shortly after the death of the eighty-six-year-old bishop of Smyrna which provides, in sometimes gruesome detail, the earliest account Christian martyrdom outside of the New Testament.

Martyrius. See Sahdona.

Maximinus (the Arian) (b. c. 360-65). Bishop of an Arian community, perhaps in Illyricum. Of Roman descent, he debated publicly with Augustine at Hippo (427 or 428), ardently defending Arian doctrine. Besides the polemical works he wrote against the orthodox, such as his *Against the Heretics, Jews and Pagans*, he also wrote fifteen sermons that are considered much less polemical, having been previously attributed to Maximus of Turin. He is also known for his twenty-four *Explanations of Chapters of the Gospels*.

Maximus of Turin (d. 408/423). Bishop of Turin. Over one hundred of his sermons survive on Christian festivals, saints and martyrs.

Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662). Palestinian-born theologian and ascetic writer. Fleeing the Arab invasion of Jerusalem in 614, he took refuge in Constantinople and later Africa. He died near the Black Sea after imprisonment and severe suffering, having his tongue cut off and his right hand mutilated. He taught total preference for God and detachment from all things.

Melito of Sardis (d. c. 190). Bishop of Sardis. According to Polycrates, he may have been Jewish by birth. Among his numerous works is a liturgical document known as *On Pascha* (ca. 160-177). As a Quartodeciman, and one involved intimately in that controversy, Melito celebrated Pascha on the fourteenth of Nisan in line with the custom handed down from Judaism.

Methodius of Olympus (d. 311). Bishop of Olympus who celebrated virginity in a Symposium partly modeled on Plato's dialogue of that name.

Minucius Felix (second or third century). Christian apologist who was an advocate in Rome. His *Octavius* agrees at numerous points with the *Apologeticum of Tertullian*. His birthplace is believed to be in Africa.

Montanist Oracles. Montanism was an apocalyptic and strictly ascetic movement begun in the latter half of the second century by a certain Montanus in Phrygia, who, along with certain of his followers, uttered oracles they claimed were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Little of the authentic oracles remains and most of what is known of Montanism comes from the authors who wrote against the movement. Montanism was formally condemned as a heresy before by Asiatic synods.

Muratorian Fragment (second century). Earliest known list of New Testament books, preserved in an eighth-century manuscript. The document is missing its first lines yet includes all but five books of the final canon. It also discusses various contested writings, several of which are clearly rejected.

Nemesius of Emesa (fl. late fourth century).

Bishop of Emesa in Syria whose most important work, *Of the Nature of Man*, draws on several theological and philosophical sources and is the first exposition of a Christian anthropology.

Nestorius (c. 381-c. 451). Patriarch of Constantinople (428-431) who founded the heresy which says that there are two persons, divine and human, rather than one person truly united in the incarnate Christ. He resisted the teaching of theotokos, causing Nestorian churches to separate from Constantinople.

Nicetas of Remesiana (fl. second half of fourth century). Bishop of Remesiana in Serbia, whose works affirm the consubstantiality of the Son and the deity of the Holy Spirit.

Nilus of Ancyra (d. c. 430). Prolific ascetic writer and disciple of John Chrysostom. Sometimes erroneously known as Nilus of Sinai, he was a native of Ancyra and studied at Constantinople.

Novatian of Rome (fl. 235-258). Roman theologian, otherwise orthodox, who formed a schismatic church after failing to become pope. His treatise on the Trinity states the classic Western doctrine.

Odes of Solomon (early second century). A collection of forty-two pseudo-Solomonic poems containing commentary on the liturgy of a Judeo-Christian community in Syria. The poems are permeated with soteriological concerns, though they never mention the name Jesus.

Oecumenius (sixth century). Called the Rhetor or the Philosopher, Oecumenius wrote the earliest extant Greek commentary on Revelation. Scholia by Oecumenius on some of John Chrysostom's commentaries on the Pauline Epistles are still extant.

Olympiodorus (early sixth century). Exegete and deacon of Alexandria, known for his commentaries that come to us mostly in catenae.

Optatus (fourth century). Bishop of Milevis in North Africa. He wrote a treatise against Donatism. These six books emphasize the unique-

ness of the Catholic Church and include a list of documents on the Donatist controversy.

Origen of Alexandria (b. 185; fl. c. 200-254). Influential exegete and systematic theologian. He was condemned (perhaps unfairly) for maintaining the preexistence of souls while purportedly denying the resurrection of the body. His extensive works of exegesis focus on the spiritual meaning of the text.

Pachomius (c. 292-347). Founder of cenobitic monasticism. A gifted group leader and author of a set of rules, he was defended after his death by Athanasius of Alexandria.

Pacian of Barcelona (c. fourth century). Bishop of Barcelona whose writings polemicize against popular pagan festivals as well as Novatian schismatics.

Palladius of Helenopolis (c. 363/364-c. 431). Bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia (400-417) and then Aspuna in Galatia. A disciple of Evagrius of Pontus and admirer of Origen, Palladius became a zealous adherent of John Chrysostom and shared his troubles in 403. His *Lausaic History* is the leading source for the history of early monasticism, stressing the spiritual value of the life of the desert.

Papias of Hierapolis (c. early second century). Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia who may have known the apostle John. Through his writings, which are extant only in fragments preserved in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, Papias influenced later theologians including Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Victorinus, and provided an important witness to traditions about the origins of the Gospels.

Paschasius of Dumium (c. 515-c. 580). Translator of sentences of the Desert Fathers from Greek into Latin while a monk in Dumium.

Paterius (c. sixth-seventh century). Disciple of Gregory the Great who is primarily responsible for the transmission of Gregory's works to many later medieval authors.

Patrick (d. c. 492). Saint known as the apostle to Ireland. Born in Britain and later kidnapped at the age of sixteen by pirates, Patrick was

taken to Ireland where he worked as a shepherd. He later returned to Britain and undertook training in Gaul and possibly also Lerins for the apostolate. According to tradition, he was consecrated a bishop and returned to northern Ireland in 432 where he preached the gospel and established his see at Armagh, which was extended to the continent via Irish missionaries. His two works that survive are *Epistle to the Soldier Coroticus* and *Confession*, written toward the end of his life. His feast day is March 17.

Paulinus of Milan (late 4th-early 5th century). Personal secretary and biographer of Ambrose of Milan. He took part in the Pelagian controversy.

Paulinus of Nola (355-431). Roman senator and distinguished Latin poet whose frequent encounters with Ambrose of Milan (c. 333-397) led to his eventual conversion and baptism in 389. He eventually renounced his wealth and influential position and took up his pen to write poetry in service of Christ. He also wrote many letters to, among others, Augustine, Jerome and Rufinus.

Paulus Orosius (b. c. 380). An outspoken critic of Pelagius, mentored by Augustine. His *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* was perhaps the first history of Christianity.

Pelagius (c. 354-c. 420). Contemporary of Augustine whose followers were condemned in 418 and 431 for maintaining that even before Christ there were people who lived wholly without sin and that salvation depended on free will.

Peter Chrysologus (c. 380-450). Latin archbishop of Ravenna whose teachings included arguments for adherence in matters of faith to the Roman see, and the relationship between grace and Christian living.

Peter of Alexandria (d. c. 311). Bishop of Alexandria. He marked (and very probably initiated) the reaction at Alexandria against extreme doctrines of Origen. During the persecution of Christians in Alexandria, Peter

was arrested and beheaded by Roman officials. Eusebius of Caesarea described him as "a model bishop, remarkable for his virtuous life and his ardent study of the Scriptures."

Philip the Priest (d. 455/56) Acknowledged by Gennadius as a disciple of Jerome. In his *Commentary on the Book of Job*, Philip utilizes Jerome's Vulgate, providing an important witness to the transmission of that translation. A few of his letters are extant.

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.-c. A.D. 50). Jewish-born exegete who greatly influenced Christian patristic interpretation of the Old Testament. Born to a rich family in Alexandria, Philo was a contemporary of Jesus and lived an ascetic and contemplative life that makes some believe he was a rabbi. His interpretation of Scripture based the spiritual sense on the literal. Although influenced by Hellenism, Philo's theology remains thoroughly Jewish.

Philoxenus of Mabbug (c. 440-523). Bishop of Mabbug (Hierapolis) and a leading thinker in the early Syrian Orthodox Church. His extensive writings in Syriac include a set of thirteen *Discourses on the Christian Life*, several works on the incarnation and a number of exegetical works.

Phoebadius of Agen (d. c. 395). Bishop of Agen whose *Contra arianos* attacked the 357 pro-Arian formula of Sirmium. Phoebadius was the last leader induced to sign the formula of Ariminum in 359, a compromise widely viewed as an Arian triumph.

Photius (c. 820-891). An important Byzantine churchman and university professor of philosophy, mathematics and theology. He was twice the patriarch of Constantinople. First he succeeded Ignatius in 858, but was deposed in 863 when Ignatius was reinstated. Again he followed Ignatius in 878 and remained the patriarch until 886, at which time he was removed by Leo VI. His most important theological work is *Address on the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, in which he articulates his opposition to the Western filioque, i.e., the procession of the

Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. He is also known for his *Amphilochia* and *Library* (*Bibliotheca*).

Poemen (c. fifth century). One-seventh of the sayings in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* are attributed to Poemen, which is Greek for shepherd. Poemen was a common title among early Egyptian desert ascetics, and it is unknown whether all of the sayings come from one person.

Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69-155). Bishop of Smyrna who vigorously fought heretics such as the Marcionites and Valentinians. He was the leading Christian figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the second century.

Possidius (late fourth-fifth century). A member of Augustine's monastic community at Hippo from 391, then bishop of Calama in Numidia sometime soon after 397. He fled back to Hippo when Vandals invaded Calama in 428 and cared for Augustine during his final illness. Returning to Calama after the death of Augustine (430), he was expelled by Genseric, Arian king of the Vandals, in 437. Nothing more is known of him after this date. Sometime between 432 and 437 he wrote *Vita Augustini*, to which he added *Indiculus*, a list of Augustine's books, sermons and letters.

Potamius of Lisbon (fl. c. 350-360). Bishop of Lisbon who joined the Arian party in 357, but later returned to the Catholic faith (c. 359?). His works from both periods are concerned with the larger Trinitarian debates of his time.

Primasius (fl. 550-560). Bishop of Hadrumentum in North Africa (modern Tunisia) and one of the few Africans to support the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Drawing on Augustine and Tyconius, he wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse, which in allegorizing fashion views the work as referring to the history of the church.

Proclus of Constantinople (c. 390-446). Patriarch of Constantinople (434-446). His patriarchate dealt with the Nestorian controversy, rebutting, in his *Tome to the Armenian Bishops*,

Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology where Theodore was thought to have overly separated the two natures of Christ. Proclus stressed the unity of Christ in his formula "One of the Trinity suffered," which was later taken up and spread by the Scythian monks of the sixth century, resulting in the theopaschite controversy. Proclus was known as a gifted preacher and church politician, extending and expanding Constantinople's influence while avoiding conflict with Antioch, Rome and Alexandria.

Procopius of Gaza (c. 465-c. 530). A Christian exegete educated in Alexandria. He wrote numerous theological works and commentaries on Scripture (particularly the Hebrew Bible), the latter marked by the allegorical exegesis for which the Alexandrian school was known.

Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390-c. 463). Probably a lay monk and supporter of the theology of Augustine on grace and predestination. He collaborated closely with Pope Leo I in his doctrinal statements.

Prudentius (c. 348-c. 410). Latin poet and hymn writer who devoted his later life to Christian writing. He wrote didactic poems on the theology of the incarnation, against the heretic Marcion and against the resurgence of paganism.

Pseudo-Clementines (third-fourth century). A series of apocryphal writings pertaining to a conjured life of Clement of Rome. Written in a form of popular legend, the stories from Clement's life, including his opposition to Simon Magus, illustrate and promote articles of Christian teaching. It is likely that the corpus is a derivative of a number of Gnostic and Judeo-Christian writings. Dating the corpus is a complicated issue.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. c. 500). Author who assumed the name of Dionysius the Areopagite mentioned in Acts 17:34, and who composed the works known as the *Corpus Areopagiticum* (or *Dionysiacum*). These writings were the foundation of the apophatic school of mysticism in their denial that anything can be

truly predicated of God.

Pseudo-Macarius (fl. c. 390). An anonymous writer and ascetic (from Mesopotamia?) active in Antioch whose badly edited works were attributed to Macarius of Egypt. He had keen insight into human nature, prayer and the inner life. His work includes some one hundred discourses and homilies.

Quodvultdeus (fl. 430). Carthaginian bishop and friend of Augustine who endeavored to show at length how the New Testament fulfilled the Old Testament.

Rabanus (Hrabanus) Maurus (c. 780-856). Frankish monk, theologian and teacher, student of Alcuin of York, then Abbot of Fulda from 822 to 842 and Archbishop of Mainz from 848 until his death in 856. The author of poetry, homilies, treatises on education, grammar, and doctrine, and an encyclopedia titled *On the Nature of Things*, he also wrote commentaries on Scripture, including the books of Kings and Esther. Though he is technically an early medieval writer, his works are included as they reflect earlier thought.

Riddles in the Apocalypse (eighth century). Commentary on Revelation of unknown authorship. *De Enigmatibus ex Apocalypsi* in Latin, the commentary explores the enigmatic symbolism of the book. It is contained in the one volume commentary known as the *Irish Reference Bible*, or *Das Bibelwerk* which dates from the late eighth century (see also CCL 7:231-95).

Romanus Melodus (fl. c. 536-556). Born as a Jew in Emesa not far from Beirut where after his baptism later he later became deacon of the Church of the Resurrection. He later moved to Constantinople and may have seen the destruction of the Hagia Sophia and its rebuilding during the time he flourished there. As many as eighty metrical sermons (*kontakia*, sg. *kontakion*) that utilize dialogical poetry have come down to us under his name. These sermons were sung rather than preached during the liturgy, and frequently provide theological insights and Scriptural connections often

unique to Romanus. His Christology, closely associated with Justinian, reflects the struggles against the Monophysites of his day.

Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-411). Orthodox Christian thinker and historian who nonetheless translated and preserved the works of Origen, and defended him against the strictures of Jerome and Epiphanius. He lived the ascetic life in Rome, Egypt and Jerusalem (the Mount of Olives).

Sabellius (fl. 200). Allegedly the author of the heresy which maintains that the Father and Son are a single person. The patripassian variant of this heresy states that the Father suffered on the cross.

Sahdona (fl. 635-640). Known in Greek as Martyrius, this Syriac author was bishop of Beth Garmai. He studied in Nisibis and was exiled for his christological ideas. His most important work is the deeply scriptural *Book of Perfection* which ranks as one of the masterpieces of Syriac monastic literature.

Salvian the Presbyter of Marseilles (c. 400-c. 480). An important author for the history of his own time. He saw the fall of Roman civilization to the barbarians as a consequence of the reprehensible conduct of Roman Christians. In *The Governance of God* he developed the theme of divine providence.

Second Letter of Clement (c. 150). The so called *Second Letter of Clement* is an early Christian sermon probably written by a Corinthian author, though some scholars have assigned it to a Roman or Alexandrian author.

Sedulius, Coelius (fl. 425-450). Author of the *Paschale carmen*, a poem in five books, which focuses on the miraculous character of Christ's suffering. Sedulius learned philosophy in Italy and was later converted to Christianity by the presbyter Macedonius. He has at times been confused with the poet Sedulius Scotus (ninth century). He is also known for the similarly themed *Paschale opus*, among other works.

Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian (256). One of many Carthaginian councils con-

vened in response to the controversy surrounding rebaptisms. All bishops present, including Cyprian, deemed that baptism administered by heretics was invalid and necessitated rebaptism, a position later revised by Augustine.

Severian of Gabala (fl. c. 400). A contemporary of John Chrysostom, he was a highly regarded preacher in Constantinople, particularly at the imperial court, and ultimately sided with Chrysostom's accusers. He wrote homilies on Genesis.

Severus of Antioch (fl. 488-538). A monophysite theologian, consecrated bishop of Antioch in 522. Born in Pisidia, he studied in Alexandria and Beirut, taught in Constantinople and was exiled to Egypt.

Shenoute (c. 350-466). Abbot of Athribis in Egypt. His large monastic community was known for very strict rules. He accompanied Cyril of Alexandria to the Council of Ephesus in 431, where he played an important role in deposing Nestorius. He knew Greek but wrote in Coptic, and his literary activity includes homilies, catecheses on monastic subjects, letters, and a couple of theological treatises.

Shepherd of Hermas (second century). Divided into five *Visions*, twelve *Mandates* and ten *Similitudes*, this Christian apocalypse was written by a former slave and named for the form of the second angel said to have granted him his visions. This work was highly esteemed for its moral value and was used as a textbook for catechumens in the early church.

Sibylline Oracles (second century B.C.-second century A.D.). An apocryphal collection of Greek prophecies. Spanning the second century B.C. to the second century A.D., the collection is the product of Christian redaction of Jewish adaptations and expansions of pagan Greek oracles.

Socrates (Scholasticus) (c. 380-450). Greek historian and lawyer from Constantinople. His *Ecclesiastical History*, meant to continue the work of Eusebius, comprises seven books, each covering the reign of one emperor between 306 and 439.

Sophronius of Jerusalem (Sophronius Sophistes) (c. 550-638). Patriarch of Jerusalem (634-638) and opponent of monothelitism. Born in Damascus of Arabic descent, Sophronius became a monk and friend to John Moschus at a monastery near Jerusalem, though he also ministered in Sinai, Egypt and Italy.

Stephen of Hnes (Stephen of Heracleopolis Magna) (seventh century?). Bishop of Hnes who built two small chapels, or monasteries, in the district of Cusae in upper Egypt. He wrote a panegyric to Apollo the archimandrite of the monastery of Isaac. Apollo, who had met the Patriarch Severus of Antioch just before his death in 538, was Stephen's spiritual father. He wrote another encomium to St. Helias who was later venerated by her followers in the cult of St. Helias.

Sulpicius Severus (c. 360-c. 420). An ecclesiastical writer from Bordeaux born of noble parents. Devoting himself to monastic retirement, he became a personal friend and enthusiastic disciple of St. Martin of Tours.

Symeon the New Theologian (c. 949-1022). Compassionate spiritual leader known for his strict rule. He believed that the divine light could be perceived and received through the practice of mental prayer.

Syncletica (fifth century). Egyptian nun known from collected sayings and a fifth-century *Life*. Syncletica began ascetic practices in her parents' Alexandria home and after their death retired to desert life. Until succumbing to illness in her eighties, she was a spiritual leader to women who gathered to learn from her piety.

Synesios of Cyrene (c. 370-c. 413). Bishop of Ptolemais elected in 410. Born of a noble pagan family, Synesios studied in Alexandria under the neoplatonist philosopher Hypatia. His work includes nine hymns that present a complex Trinitarian theology with neoplatonic influences.

Synod of Alexandria (362). A gathering of Egyptian bishops and Nicene delegates, called by Athanasius after the death of Constantius.

The synod published a letter that expressed anti-Arian agreement on Trinitarian language.

Tarasius of Constantinople (d. 806). Patriarch of Constantinople from 784. Tarasius promoted reconciliation between Eastern and Western churches. At his urging Empress Irene II called the Second Council of Nicaea (787) to address debates over iconoclasm.

Tatian (second century). Christian apologist from the East who studied under Justin in Rome, returning to his old country after his mentor's martyrdom. Famous for his Gospel harmony, the *Diatessaron*, Tatian also wrote *Address to the Greeks*, which was a defense of Christianity addressed to the pagan world.

Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155/160-225/250; fl. c. 197-222). Brilliant Carthaginian apologist and polemicist who laid the foundations of Christology and trinitarian orthodoxy in the West, though he himself was later estranged from the catholic tradition due to its laxity.

Theodore bar Koni (d. 845). Important Nestorian author and apologist who taught at the school of Kashkar [Iraq] in Beth Aramaye and later became metropolitan of Beth Garmai. Numerous works are attributed to him, though only a collection of scholia on the Old and New Testaments which offers a defense of East Syrian Christianity and refutations of Islam and various heresies is extant. He also wrote an ecclesiastical history that provided a glimpse into the lives of Nestorian patriarchs, a book on logic, and treatises against monophysitism and Arianism.

Theodore of Heraclea (d. c. 355). An anti-Nicene bishop of Thrace. He was part of a team seeking reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christianity. In 343 he was excommunicated at the council of Sardica. His writings focus on a literal interpretation of Scripture.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428). Bishop of Mopsuestia, founder of the Antiochene, or literalistic, school of exegesis. A great man in his day, he was later condemned as a precursor of Nestorius.

Theodore of Tabennesi (d. 368) Vice general of the Pachomian monasteries (c. 350-368) under Horsiesi. Several of his letters are known.

Theodoret of Cyr (c. 393-466). Bishop of Cyr (Cyrrhus), he was an opponent of Cyril who commented extensively on Old Testament texts as a lucid exponent of Antiochene exegesis.

Theodotus of Ancyra (d. before 446). Bishop of Ancyra in Galatia and friend-turned-enemy of Nestorius. He fought against John of Antioch who consequently excommunicated him. Several of his works are extant.

Theodotus the Valentinian (second century). Likely a Montanist who may have been related to the Alexandrian school. Extracts of his work are known through writings of Clement of Alexandria.

Theophanes (775-845). Hymnographer and bishop of Nicaea (842-845). He was persecuted during the second iconoclastic period for his support of the Seventh Council (Second Council of Nicaea, 787). He wrote many hymns in the tradition of the monastery of Mar Sabbas that were used in the *Paraklitiki*.

Theophilus of Alexandria (d. 412). Patriarch of Alexandria (385-412) and the uncle of his successor, Cyril. His patriarchate was known for his opposition to paganism, having destroyed the Serapeion and its library in 391, but he also built many churches. He also was known for his political machinations against his theological enemies, especially John Chrysostom, whom he himself had previously consecrated as patriarch, ultimately getting John removed from his see and earning the intense dislike of Antioch Christians. He is, however, venerated among the Copts and Syrians, among whom many of his sermons have survived, although only a few are deemed authentically his. His *Homily on the Mystical Supper*, commenting on the Last Supper, is perhaps one of his most well known.

Theophilus of Antioch (late second century). Bishop of Antioch. His only surviving work is *Ad Autholycum*, where we find the first Chris-

tian commentary on Genesis and the first use of the term Trinity. Theophilus's apologetic literary heritage had influence on Irenaeus and possibly Tertullian.

Theophylact of Ohrid (c. 1050-c. 1108). Byzantine archbishop of Ohrid (or Achrida) in what is now Bulgaria. Drawing on earlier works, he wrote commentaries on several Old Testament books and all of the New Testament except for Revelation.

Third Council of Constantinople (681). The Sixth Ecumenical Council, convoked by Constantine IV to resolve the Monothelite controversy. The council's decree affirmed the doctrine that Christ's two natures correspond to two distinct wills and two energies.

Treatise on Rebaptism (third century). An anonymous treatise arguing, possibly against Cyprian, that those receiving baptism by heretics in the name of Jesus ought not be rebaptized.

Tyconius (c. 330-390). A lay theologian and exegete of the Donatist church in North Africa who influenced Augustine. His *Book of Rules* is the first manual of scriptural interpretation in the Latin West. In 380 he was excommunicated by the Donatist council at Carthage.

Valentinian Exposition (second century). A type of secret catechism for those who were to be initiated into the Valentinian version of gnosis. It provided an exposition of the origin of creation and was also concerned with the process of how our salvation is achieved in light of the myth of Sophia. There are references to the sacramental rituals of baptism and the Eucharist and also early evidences of the disagreements and theological controversies that existed among Valentinian theologians.

Valentinus (fl. c. 140). Alexandrian heretic of the mid second century who taught that the material world was created by the transgression of God's Wisdom, or Sophia (see Gnostics).

Valerian of Cimiez (fl. c. 422-439). Bishop of Cimiez. He participated in the councils of Riez (439) and Vaison (422) with a view to strength-

ening church discipline. He supported Hilary of Arles in quarrels with Pope Leo I.

Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-c. 610). Latin poet. In 597 Venantius was appointed bishop of Poitiers, where he had served the community of former queen Radegunde since 567. His works include lives of saints and two hymns that were soon incorporated into Western liturgy.

Verecundus (d. 552). An African Christian writer, who took an active part in the christological controversies of the sixth century, especially in the debate on Three Chapters. He also wrote allegorical commentaries on the nine liturgical church canticles.

Victor of Cartenna (fifth century). Bishop of Cartenna in Mauretania Caesariensis to whom Gennadius attributed *Adversus Arianos*. Other works have been attributed to him, including select works associated with Pseudo-Ambrose and Pseudo-Basil.

Victor of Vita (fl. 480/481-484). Bishop of Vita in the Byzacena province and author of a history of the Vandal persecution in Africa. There is disagreement over the details of his life.

Victorinus of Petovium (d. c. 304). Latin biblical exegete. With multiple works attributed to him, his sole surviving work is the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* and perhaps some fragments from *Commentary on Matthew*. Victorinus expressed strong millenarianism in his writing, though his was less materialistic than the millenarianism of Papias or Irenaeus. In his allegorical approach he could be called a spiritual disciple of Origen. Victorinus died during the first year of Diocletian's persecution, probably in 304.

Vigilius of Thapsus (fl. c. 484). Bishop of

Thapsus, who took part in talks between Catholics and Arians at Carthage in 484. Vigilius was the author of *Contra Eutychetem* and the *Dialogus contra arianos, sabellianos et photinianos*, and probably *Contra Felicianum*.

Vincent of Lérins (d. before 450). Monk who has exerted considerable influence through his writings on orthodox dogmatic theological method, as contrasted with the theological methodologies of the heresies.

Walafridius (Walahfrid) Strabo (808-849). Frankish monk, writer and student of Rabanus Maurus. Walafridius was made abbot of the monastery of Reichenau in 838 but was exiled in 840, when one of the sons of Emperor Louis the Pious—to whom Walafridius was loyal—invaded Reichenau. He was restored in 842 and died in 849. His writings include poetry, commentaries on scripture, lives of saints and a historical explanation of the liturgy. Though he is technically an early medieval writer, his works are included

Zephyrinus (d. 217). Bishop of Rome from 199 to 217. Renewed his predecessor Victor's condemnation of the adoptionism being taught in Rome by Theodotus of Byzantium and readmitted the excommunicated modalist bishop Natalius upon the latter's repentance, but as a layperson. Much of what we know about him is from the work of Hippolytus, whose negative opinion of Zephyrinus may have been colored by his antagonism toward Zephyrinus's successor, Callistus. The epistles attributed to Zephyrinus are now considered spurious (part of the so-called False Decretals of the ninth century) but are included as possibly reflecting earlier thought..

TIMELINE OF WRITERS OF THE PATRISTIC PERIOD

The following chronology will assist readers in locating patristic writers, writings and recipients of letters referred to in this patristic commentary. Persons are arranged chronologically according to the terminal date of the years during which they flourished (fl.) or, where that cannot be determined, the date of death or approximate date of writing or influence. Writings are arranged according to the approximate date of composition. This list is cumulative with respect to all volumes of the ACCS.

Timeline of Writers of the Patristic Period

Location	British Isles	Gaul	Spain, Portugal	Rome* and Italy	Carthage and Northern Africa
Period				Clement of Rome, fl. c. 92-101 (Greek)	
				<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> , c. 140 (Greek)	
2nd century				Justin Martyr (Ephesus, Rome), c. 100/110-165 (Greek)	
				Valentinus the Gnostic (Rome), fl. c. 140 (Greek)	
			Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 135-c. 202 (Greek)		
				Marcion (Rome), fl. 144 (Greek) Heracleon, 145-180 (Greek)	
				Zephyrinus (Rome), regn. 199-217	Tertullian of Carthage, c. 155/160-c. 225 (Latin)
				Callistus of Rome, regn. 217-222 (Latin)	
				Minucius Felix of Rome, fl. 218-235 (Latin)	
				Hippolytus (Rome, Palestine?), fl. 222-235/245 (Greek)	
				Novatian of Rome, fl. 235-258 (Latin)	Cyprian of Carthage, fl. 248-258 (Latin)
				Victorinus of Petovium, 230-304 (Latin)	
3rd century					

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Alexandria* and Egypt	Constantinople* and Asia Minor, Greece	Antioch* and Syria	Mesopotamia, Persia	Jerusalem* and Palestine	Location Unknown
Philo of Alexandria, c. 20 B.C. – c. A.D. 50 (Greek)				Flavius Josephus (Rome), c. 37-c. 101 (Greek)	
Basilides (Alexandria), 2nd cent. (Greek)	Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 69-155 (Greek)	<i>Didache</i> (Egypt?), c. 100 (Greek)			
<i>Letter of Barnabas</i> (Syria?), c. 130 (Greek)		Ignatius of Antioch, c. 35–107/112 (Greek)			
Theodotus the Valentinian, 2nd cent. (Greek)	Athenagoras (Greece), fl. 176-180 (Greek)				<i>Second Letter of Clement</i> (spurious; Corinth, Rome, Alexandria?) (Greek), c. 150
	Melito of Sardis, d. c. 190 (Greek)				
	<i>Montanist Oracles</i> , late 2nd cent. (Greek)				
Clement of Alexandria, c. 150-215 (Greek)		Theophilus of Antioch, c. late 2nd cent. (Greek)			
Sabellius (Egypt), 2nd–3rd cent. (Greek)		<i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i> , early 3rd cent. (Syriac)			Pseudo-Clementines 3rd cent. (Greek)
<i>Letter to Diognetus</i> , 3rd cent. (Greek)					
Origen (Alexandria, Caesarea of Palestine), 185-254 (Greek)					
	Gregory Thaumaturgus (Neo-caesarea), fl. c. 248-264 (Greek)		Mani (Manichaeans), c. 216-276		
Dionysius of Alexandria, d. 264/5 (Greek)					
	Methodius of Olympus (Lycia), d. c. 311 (Greek)				

Timeline of Writers of the Patristic Period

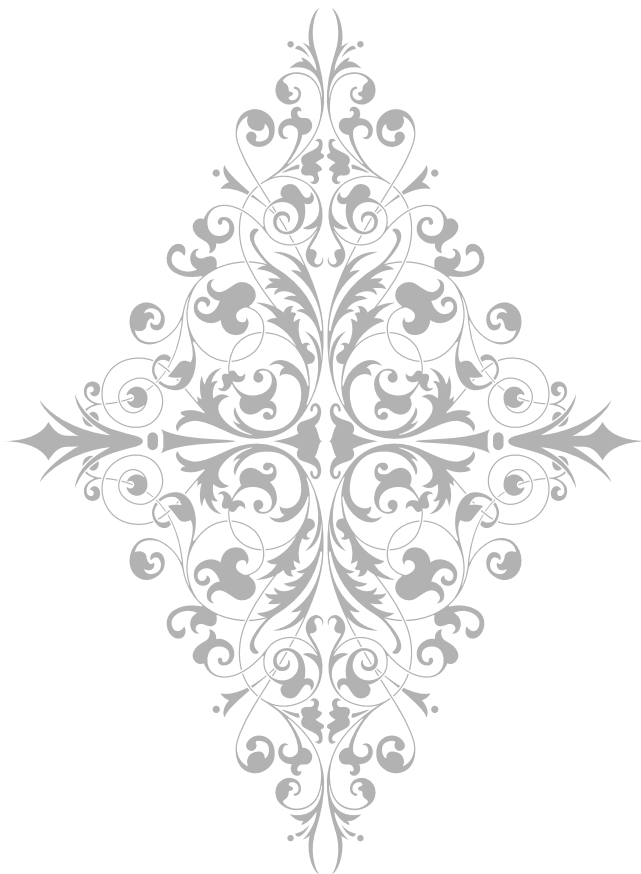
Location	British Isles	Gaul	Spain, Portugal	Rome* and Italy	Carthage and Northern Africa
Period 4th century		Lactantius, c. 260-330 (Latin)		Firmicus Maternus (Sicily), fl. c. 335 (Latin)	Arnobius of Sicca, d.c. 327 (Latin)
			Hosius of Cordova, d. 357 (Latin)	Marius Victorinus (Rome), fl. 355-363 (Latin)	
			Potamius of Lisbon, fl. c. 350-360 (Latin)	Eusebius of Vercelli, fl. c. 360 (Latin)	
		Hilary of Poitiers, c. 315-367 (Latin)	Gregory of Elvira, fl. 359-385 (Latin)	Lucifer of Cagliari (Sardinia), d. 370/371 (Latin)	
				Ambrosiaster (Italy?), fl. c. 366-384 (Latin)	
				Filastrius of Brescia, fl. 380 (Latin)	
				Faustinus (Rome), fl. 380 (Latin)	
			Pacian of Barcelona, 4th cent. (Latin)	Faustus of Riez, fl. c. 380 (Latin)	Isaiah of Scete, late 4th cent. (Greek)
			Prudentius, c. 348-c. 410 (Latin)	Gaudentius of Brescia, fl. 395 (Latin)	Paulus Orosius, b. c. 380 (Latin)
				Ambrose of Milan, c. 333-397; fl. 374-397 (Latin)	
5th century				Paulinus of Milan, late 4th-early 5th cent. (Latin)	
	Fastidius (Britain),	Sulpicius Severus (Bordeaux), c. 360-c. 420/425 (Latin)		Rufinus (Aquilaia, Rome), c. 345-411 (Latin)	Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 (Latin)
	c. 4th-5th cent. (Latin)	John Cassian (Palestine, Egypt, Constantinople, Rome, Marseilles), 360-432 (Latin)		Chromatius (Aquilaia), fl. 400 (Latin)	Possidius, late 4th-5th cent. (Latin) Luculentius, 5th cent. (Latin)
		Vincent of Lérins, d. 435 (Latin)		Aponius, fl. 405-415 (Latin)	
		Valerian of Cimiez, fl. c. 422-449 (Latin)		Pelagius (Britain, Rome), c. 354-c. 420 (Greek)	
		Eucherius of Lyons, fl. 420-449 (Latin)		Maximus of Turin, d. 408/423 (Latin)	Quodvultdeus (Carthage), fl. 430 (Latin)
		Hilary of Arles, c. 401-449 (Latin)		Paulinus of Nola, 355-431 (Latin)	
				Peter Chrysologus (Ravenna), c. 380-450 (Latin)	
				Julian of Eclanum, 386-454 (Latin)	

Alexandria* and Egypt	Constantinople* and Asia Minor, Greece	Antioch* and Syria	Mesopotamia, Persia	Jerusalem* and Palestine	Location Unknown
Antony, c. 251-355 (Coptic /Greek)	Theodore of Heraclea (Thrace), fl. c. 330-355 (Greek)	Eustathius of Antioch, fl. 325 (Greek)	Aphrahat (Persia) c. 270-350; fl. 337-345 (Syriac)	Eusebius of Caesarea (Palestine), c. 260/263-340 (Greek)	Commodus, c. 3rd or 5th cent. (Latin)
Peter of Alexandria, d. c. 311 (Greek)	Marcellus of Ancyra, d. c. 375 (Greek)	Eusebius of Emesa, c. 300-c. 359 (Greek)			
Arius (Alexandria), fl. c. 320 (Greek)	Epiphanius of Salamis (Cyprus), c. 315-403 (Greek)	Ephrem the Syrian, c. 306-373 (Syriac)	Jacob of Nisibis, fl. 308-325 (Syriac)		
Alexander of Alexandria, fl. 312-328 (Greek)	Basil (the Great) of Caesarea, b. c. 330; fl. 357-379 (Greek)	Julian the Arian (c. fourth century)			
Pachomius, c. 292-347 (Coptic/Greek?)	Macrina the Younger, c. 327-379 (Greek)				
Theodore of Tabennesi, d. 368 (Coptic/Greek)	Apollinaris of Laodicea, 310-c. 392 (Greek)				
Athanasius of Alexandria, c. 295-373; fl. 325-373 (Greek)	Gregory of Nazianzus, b. 329/330; fl. 372-389 (Greek)	Nemesius of Emesa (Syria), fl. late 4th cent. (Greek)			Maximinus, b.c. 360-365 (Latin)
Horsiesi, c. 305-390 (Coptic/Greek)	Gregory of Nyssa, c. 335-394 (Greek)	Diodore of Tarsus, d. c. 394 (Greek)		Acacius of Caesarea (Palestine), d. c. 365 (Greek)	
Macarius of Egypt, c. 300-c. 390 (Greek)	Amphilochius of Iconium, c. 340/345- c. 398/404 (Greek)	John Chrysostom (Constantinople), 344/354-407 (Greek)		Cyril of Jerusalem, c. 315-386 (Greek)	
Didymus (the Blind) of Alexandria, 313-398 (Greek)	Evagrius of Pontus, 345-399 (Greek)	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> , c. 375-400 (Greek)			
Tyconius, c. 330-390 (Latin)	Eunomius of Cyzicus, fl. 360-394 (Greek)	<i>Didascalia</i> , 4th cent. (Syriac)			
Ammonas, 4th cent. (Syriac)	Pseudo-Macarius (Mesopotamia?), late 4th cent. (Greek)	Theodore of Mopsuestia, c. 350-428 (Greek)		Diodore of Tarsus, d. c. 394 (Greek)	
Theophilus of Alexandria, d. 412 (Greek)	Nicetas of Remesiana, d. c. 414 (Latin)	Acacius of Beroea, c. 340-c. 436 (Greek)		Jerome (Rome, Antioch, Bethlehem), c. 347-420 (Latin)	
Palladius of Helenopolis (Egypt), c. 365-425 (Greek)	Proclus of Constantinople, c. 390-446 (Greek)	Asterius the Homilist (Antioch), late 4th- early 5th (Greek)	Eznik of Kolb, fl. 430-450 (Armenian)		
Cyril of Alexandria, 375-444 (Greek)	Nestorius (Constantinople), c. 381-c. 451 (Greek)	Severian of Gabala, fl. c. 400 (Greek)		Philip the Priest (d. 455/56)	
	Basil of Seleucia, fl. 440-468 (Greek)	Nilus of Ancyra, d. c. 430 (Greek)		Hesychius of Jerusalem, fl. 412-450 (Greek)	
	Diadochus of Photice (Macedonia), 400-474 (Greek)	John of Antioch, d. 441/2 (Greek)		Euthymius (Palestine), 377-473 (Greek)	

Location	British Isles	Gaul	Spain, Portugal	Rome* and Italy	Carthage and Northern Africa
5th century (cont.)		Eusebius of Gaul, 5th cent. (Latin)			
		Prosper of Aquitaine, c. 390-c. 463 (Latin)			
		Salvian the Presbyter of Marseilles, c. 400-c. 480 (Latin)		Leo the Great (Rome), regn. 440-461 (Latin)	
		Gennadius of Marseilles, d. after 496 (Latin)		Arnobius the Younger (Rome), fl. c. 450 (Latin)	
6th century				Ennodius (Arles, Milan, Pavia) c. 473-521 (Latin)	
				Epiphanius the Latin, late 5th-early 6th cent. (Latin)	
		Caesarius of Arles, c. 470-543 (Latin)	Paschasius of Dumium (Portugal), c. 515-c. 580 (Latin)	Eugippius, c. 460- c. 533 (Latin)	Fulgentius of Ruspe, c. 467-532 (Latin)
			Apringius of Beja, mid-6th cent. (Latin)	Benedict of Nursia, c. 480-547 (Latin)	Verecundus, d. 552 (Latin)
			Leander of Seville, c. 545-c. 600 (Latin)	Cassiodorus (Calabria), c. 485-c. 540 (Latin)	Primasius, fl. 550-560 (Latin)
			Martin of Braga, fl. 568-579 (Latin)	Gregory the Great (Rome), c. 540-604 (Latin)	Facundus of Hermiane, fl. 546-568 (Latin)
7th century		Flavian of Chalon-sur-Saône, fl. 580-600 (Latin)		Gregory of Agrigentium, d. 592 (Greek)	
			Isidore of Seville, c. 560-636 (Latin)	Paterius, 6th/7th cent. (Latin)	
	Adamnan, c. 624-704 (Latin)		Braulio of Saragossa, c. 585-651 (Latin)		
			Fructuosus of Braga, d. c. 665 (Latin)		
8th-12th century	Bede the Venerable, c. 672/673-735 (Latin)	Rabanus Maurus (Frankish), c. 780-856 (Latin)			
		Walafridius Strabo (Frankish), 808-849 (Latin)			

*One of the five ancient patriarchates

Alexandria* and Egypt	Constantinople* and Asia Minor, Greece	Antioch* and Syria	Mesopotamia, Persia	Jerusalem* and Palestine	Location Unknown
Ammonius of Alexandria, c. 460 (Greek)	Gennadius of Constantinople, d. 471 (Greek)	Theodoret of Cyr, c. 393-466 (Greek)		Gerontius of Petra c. 395-c. 480 (Syriac)	
Poemen, 5th cent. (Greek)		Pseudo-Victor of Antioch, 5th cent. (Greek)			
Besa the Copt, 5th cent.		John of Apamea, 5th cent. (Syriac)			
Shenoute, c. 350-466 (Coptic)	Andrew of Caesarea (Cappadocia), early 6th cent. (Greek)				
Olympiodorus, early 6th cent.	Oecumenius (Isauria), 6th cent. (Greek)	Philoxenus of Mabbug (Syria), c. 440-523 (Syriac)	Jacob of Sarug, c. 450-520 (Syriac)	Procopius of Gaza (Palestine), c. 465-530 (Greek)	Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, fl. c. 500 (Greek)
	Romanus Melodus, fl. c. 536-556 (Greek)	Severus of Antioch, c. 465-538 (Greek)	Babai, early 6th cent. (Syriac)	Dorotheus of Gaza, fl. 525-540 (Greek)	
		Mark the Hermit (Tarsus), c. 6th cent. (4th cent.?) (Greek)	Abraham of Nathpar, fl. 6th-7th cent. (Syriac)	Cyril of Scythopolis, b. c. 525; d. after 557 (Greek)	
			Babai the Great, c. 550-628 (Syriac)		
	Maximus the Confessor (Constantinople), c. 580-662 (Greek)	Sahdona/Martyrius, fl. 635-640 (Syriac)			(Pseudo-) Constantius, before 7th cent.? (Greek)
	Andrew of Crete, c. 660-740 (Greek)		Isaac of Nineveh, d. c. 700 (Syriac)		Andreas, c. 7th cent. (Greek)
	John of Carpathus, 7th-8th cent. (Greek)	John of Damascus (John the Monk), c. 650-750 (Greek)		Cosmas Melodus, c. 675-751 (Greek)	
	Theophanes (Nicaea), 775-845 (Greek)		John the Elder of Qardu (north Iraq), 8th cent. (Syriac)		
	Cassia (Constantinople), c. 805-c. 848/867 (Greek)		Isho'dad of Merv, d. after 852 (Syriac)		
	Arethas of Caesarea (Constantinople/Caesarea), c. 860-940 (Greek)				
	Photius (Constantinople), c. 820-891 (Greek)				
	Symeon the New Theologian (Constantinople), 949-1022 (Greek)				
	Theophylact of Ohrid (Bulgaria), 1050-1126 (Greek)				



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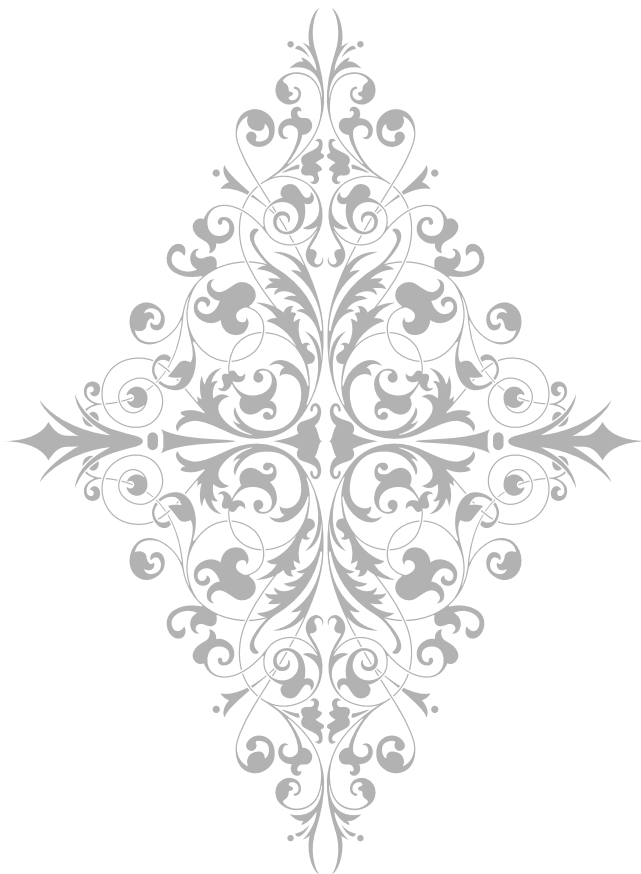
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ABOUT THE EDITOR



Dean O. Wenthe (Ph.D., Notre Dame) is the president of Concordia Theological Seminary and professor of exegetical theology. He is the general editor of the Concordia Commentary on Scripture series and associate editor of the *Concordia Self-Study Bible*.

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE

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Genesis 12–50

*Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,
Deuteronomy*

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel

*1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra,
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