



ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE

OLD TESTAMENT
V

1-2 KINGS,
1-2 CHRONICLES,
EZRA,
NEHEMIAH,
ESTHER

EDITED BY
MARCO CONTI

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 ACHTEMEIER
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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COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE

OLD TESTAMENT

V

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CHRONICLES, EZRA,
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IN COLLABORATION WITH
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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.

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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

¹ Students 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 worshiping 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

⁹*Funk & 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 debatable. 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 unflagging 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 1 Kings is “David’s Old Age 1 Kings 1:1-4.”

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.

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 400-405 and in the bibliography found on pages 427-32.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ACW Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1946-.
- AHSIS *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.
- ARL St. Athanasius. *The Resurrection Letters*. Paraphrased and introduced by Jack N. Sparks. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979.
- CCL Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1953-.
- Cetodoc Centre de Traitement Electronique des Documents.
- CS Cistercian Studies. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1973-.
- CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Louvain, Belgium, 1903-.
- CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna, 1866-.
- 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.
- ECS Pauline Allen, et al., eds. Early Christian Studies. Strathfield, Australia: St. Paul's Publications, 2001-.
- ESOO J. A. Assemani, ed. *Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri Opera omnia*. Rome, 1737.
- FC Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-.
- GCS Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1897-.
- HOP Ephrem the Syrian. *Hymns on Paradise*. Translated by S. Brock. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990.
- JDDI St. John of Damascus. *On the Divine Images*. Translated by David Anderson. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.
- LCC J. Baillie et al., eds. The Library of Christian Classics. 26 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953-1966.
- LF A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church Anterior to the Division of the East and West. Translated by members of the English Church. 44 vols. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1800-1881.
- MFC Message of the Fathers of the Church. Edited by Thomas Halton. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1983-.
- 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.
- 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.
- PDCW *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translated by Colm Luibheid. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

- PG J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*. 166 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857-1886.
- PL J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*. 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1844-1864.
- POG Eusebius. *The Proof of the Gospel*. 2 vols. Translated by W. J. Ferrar. London: SPCK, 1920; Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981.
- PS R. Graffin, ed. *Patrologia cursus completus. Series syriaca*. 3 vols. Paris: Firmin-Didot et socii, 1894-1926.
- PSt Patristic Studies. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1922-.
- PTS Patristische Texte und Studien. New York: de Gruyter, 1964-.
- RTAM *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*. Louvain, Belgium: Abbaye Du Mont César, 1929-1996.
- SC H. de Lubac, J. Daniélou et al., eds. *Sources Chrétiennes*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941-.
- TLG L. Berkowitz and K. Squiter, eds. *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- 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 1-2 KINGS, 1-2 CHRONICLES, EZRA, NEHEMIAH AND ESTHER

The commentaries included in this volume cover the second part of the so-called historical books of the Bible.¹ What is immediately evident to the reader is that the narrative materials and topics that form these books are extremely varied and complicated, as they concern an extended period of the ancient history of Israel and different crucial events that follow each other at a fast pace. Modern scholarship, through its mainly historical and philological approach, has been able to ascertain that while these books are linked by a shared historical focus, they may be distinguished by their ideological points of view.

The Deuteronomic and Chronicler's Outlooks

In the books of Samuel and Kings, modern scholars have noticed and emphasized how the covenant, which God has made with the people of Israel, is clearly regarded as a reciprocal engagement, and any infringement of this covenant is necessarily and severely punished by God while obedience is rewarded with blessings. In this regard, contemporary biblical scholarship has recognized that Kings conforms to the theology and ideology of Deuteronomy, where these terms of covenant are plainly expressed for the first time. This is confirmed by the fact that our historical books appear to follow consistently the Deuteronomic Code² when they express their judgment on each king or character described in the biblical narrative. Therefore those characters who conform to the Deuteronomic Code are praised, and those who disobey it are inevitably condemned. Besides this general outlook, the book of Deuteronomy has a central role in 2 Kings, where the biblical narrative describes its discovery in the temple during the reign of Josiah.³

Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, on the other hand, share a perspective that differs from the Deuteronomistic vision, one that has been labeled the Chronicler's History. This has been observed in a common vocabulary and ideas, such as the building and worship of the temple, priestly service and the restoration of Israel. Whether this perspective was originally due to a common author or editor, or to a later editor, is a matter of debate.

¹The first part is constituted by the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth and 1-2 Samuel: see the commentary in this series by J. R. Franke (ACCS OT 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

²The so-called Deuteronomic Code envisions a complete devotion to Yahweh as Israel's only God and views the obligation to perform all sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem as the most important and essential terms in the covenant between God and the people. All the individuals who receive praise in 1-2 King are people who comply with these terms.

³See 2 Kings 22:8-20; 2 Chron 34:15-28; P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 120-21.

Patristic Exegesis

The fathers of the church were not interested in a philological and historical reading of the Bible, so their exegesis did not take into consideration the Deuteronomic or Chronicler's outlook, which link or separate the historical books included in the present volume, but moved along different lines of interpretation. Their exegesis, as has been amply discussed in many volumes of this series,⁴ was mostly based on a typological-allegorical⁵ and/or moral interpretation. Consequently their reading of the historical books was not comprehensive and systematic but concentrated on those single episodes, where a typological or moral interpretation was possible, while those other events described in the biblical narrative which did not fit in with their exegetical principles were neglected. This interpretative approach, as we will see, is present not only in the incidental comments on the historical books made by the Fathers in their homilies or doctrinal works but also in the exegetical commentaries on single books.

1-2 Kings

Certain narratives included in 1-2 Kings offered the Fathers abundant material for a typological or moral interpretation. As a consequence, their discussion and analysis constantly concentrate on these passages, while other large sections of the biblical text, as we have already hinted above, were mostly neglected.

The episodes of 1-2 Kings that the Fathers considered to be the most suitable to a typological interpretation were those concerning King Solomon (his election,⁶ his famous judgments,⁷ his construction of the temple and the royal palace⁸), the prophet Elijah⁹ and the prophet Elisha.¹⁰ The episodes that offered the most apt materials for moral meditation were those concerning the fate of kings and powerful people, such as Ahab,¹¹ the man of God,¹² Jehu¹³ and Josiah.¹⁴

Greek Fathers

All the passages from the Greek Fathers that are included in our commentary on 1-2 Kings are taken from exegetical works on other books of the Bible, or from doctrinal and critical works, because no standard Greek commentary on 1-2 Kings survives. The only work that comprehensively comments on 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles is *De Quaestionibus Ambiguis in Libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon*¹⁵ by Theodoret of Cyr, to which we can only add two very similar catenae, the one by Procopius of Gaza, which has been only partly

⁴See, for instance, Franke (ACCS OT 4; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), xvii-xxix; J. T. Lienhard (ACCS OT 3; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), xv-xxxii.

⁵By "typological" we indicate a kind of interpretation that sees in the events described in the Old Testament a foreshadowing of those of the New Testament, that is, a foreshadowing of the advent of Christ and the salvation of humankind through him.

⁶1 Kings 2:1-46.

⁷1 Kings 3:1-28.

⁸1 Kings 5:1-7:51.

⁹1 Kings 17:1-21:29; 2 Kings 1:1-2:13.

¹⁰2 Kings 2:14-8:15; 13:14-21.

¹¹1 Kings 16:29-22:40.

¹²1 Kings 13:1-34.

¹³2 Kings 9:1-10:35.

¹⁴2 Kings 22:1-23:30.

¹⁵"On the uncertain questions in the Books of the Kings (that is, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings) and the Chronicles," see *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 3:201 n. 6201; PG 80:527-858.

published and is mostly available in a Latin translation and not in its original Greek text,¹⁶ and the one edited in the eighteenth century¹⁷ by Nikephoros Hieromonachos Theotokis. The work by Theodoret, however, cannot be considered to be an organic and systematic commentary, as it only discusses and tries to explain those passages that are more difficult or uncertain for the reader. By contrast, the catenae gather together passages from many different authors (in our case from twenty-seven authors) and inevitably appear to be patchy and often arbitrary in their selections, even though they are precious in preserving passages from important patristic commentators that otherwise would have been completely lost.

Justin Martyr (c. 110-165). The only comment by Justin on the book of Kings¹⁸ that we have been able to trace is from his *Dialogue with Trypho*. In it the great Christian philosopher demonstrates once more how his exegesis of the Old Testament is mostly typological. The piece of wood thrown by Elisha into the river typifies the cross, while the water foreshadows salvation through baptism.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215). In Clement we see a further development of the typological vision of Justin. He not only considers the Old Testament as a preparation and foreshadowing of the truths of the New Testament but also notices in all the Scriptures two levels of comprehension: the first is immediate and open to all; the second is more profound and reserved only for the perfect Christian. As a consequence, his interpretation of the events described in 1-2 Kings is always attentive to these two levels of comprehension. On the one hand, there is an immediate message to all Christians, which is mostly moral and typological; on the other, there is a more profound message that unveils the secrets of the divine wisdom of Christ.

Origen (c. 185-253). As far as we know, Origen never wrote any specific homily or commentary on 1-2 Kings (3-4 Kings or Kingdoms according to the Septuagint).¹⁹ All the passages by Origen included in this volume are taken from his doctrinal works (*On Prayer, Against Celsus, On First Principles*) or from exegetical commentaries on other books of the Bible (*Homilies on Genesis, Leviticus, John*). The interpretation appears to be substantially allegorical, according to the critical trend²⁰ that was brought to perfection by Origen. The events reported in the biblical narrative are therefore seen as a foreshadowing of the advent of Christ and the doctrine of the New Testament (typological interpretation); symbols of truths that are not immediately visible; and figurative messages and admonitions to Christians. Inside this allegorical vision Origen is constantly able to develop a consistent moral reflection which makes the biblical text of the Old Testament a topical instrument of meditation for the Christian.

Methodius (c. 250-311). Methodius, who criticized Origen for his theory on the pre-existence of the soul and his mostly spiritualizing notion of the resurrection of the body, appears to follow Origen's allegorical method in his exegesis of the Bible. In 2 Kings 20:7-11 he sees the fig tree and its fruits as symbols of the Holy Spirit and its love for humankind, and therefore he interprets the healing of King Hezekiah as a result of the love of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶See *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 3:388 n. 7430; PG 87:1147-220.

¹⁷Nikephoros Hieromonachos Theotokis, *Catena in Octateucum et Libros Regnorum*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1772-1773). In this edition all the available Greek fragments of the catena compiled by Procopius of Gaza are also included.

¹⁸2 Kings 6:4-7.

¹⁹Origen wrote homilies on 1 Kings or Kingdoms (= 1 Samuel), of which only those on 1 Samuel 1-2 and 1 Samuel 28 are extant; see *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 1:148 n. 1423.

²⁰The so-called Alexandrian school of exegesis.

Athanasius (c. 295-373). Following the typical allegorical and typological trend of Alexandrian exegesis, Athanasius sees that the unity of Scripture is founded on the figure of Christ. Therefore he follows this principle in his interpretation of the narrative of 1-2 Kings. This is particularly evident in his comment on 1 Kings 1:19-26, in which he compares the figures and roles of Solomon and Christ.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-387). The most important work of Cyril, the Catechetical Lectures, is concerned with the preparation of the faithful for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Consequently, Cyril's meditations on 1-2 Kings have both a typological approach, as he sees in the biblical narrative a foreshadowing of the salvation in Christ (e.g., in 1 Kings 8:27) which the neophytes are about to receive, and a moral approach, as he finds in the events related in the Scripture examples of conduct for new Christians (e.g., in 2 Kings 25:1-11).

Basil the Great (c. 330-379). Even though clear traces of allegorical exegesis in the style of Origen are obvious in the work of Basil,²¹ with this author we notice a shift to a more literal interpretation of the Scripture in which the moral aspect becomes essential. In his comment on 1 Kings 12:14, Basil sees the biblical narrative as a direct admonition to all rulers, who should avoid exalting themselves with secular honors.

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-390). Gregory was a close friend of Basil for most of his life and shared his views about exegesis, even though he never wrote any systematic commentary on any section of the Bible. In his examination of Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 3:12; 4:29-34) he shows a deeply philosophical approach in which he stresses the limitations of human nature in the comprehension of God and the universe and asserts that meekness and humility are the principles on which human wisdom must be founded.

Apostolic Constitutions (c. end of the fourth century). The Apostolic Constitutions is an anonymous work that reached its present form at the end of the fourth century but reworks materials and writings that date from the first century, such as the *Didache*, to the early fourth, such as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Due to the character of this work, which is mostly liturgical, the exegetical approach is substantially moral: the examples of punished wickedness in 1-2 Kings serve as an admonition to the faithful as do the examples of repentance (2 Kings 21:1-17, 19-24).

John Chrysostom (c. 344-407). Considering the extent of his literary output and the complexity of his works, Chrysostom is undoubtedly the most important representative of the Antiochian school of exegesis. This school can be defined, in a very simple way, as the main opponent to the Alexandrian school which had in Origen its most typical exponent and utilized allegory and typology in its exegetical principles. In contrast, Chrysostom used in his comments a mostly literal interpretation of the Scripture, where typological hints are obvious but always quite concise, while the moral and pastoral contents amply prevail. These are evident in all his comments on 1-2 Kings, where he sometimes recognizes how episodes of the biblical narrative foreshadow the advent of Christ, but where he mostly concentrates on those episodes that can be useful to edify the faithful and especially to awaken moral potentials through powerful examples.

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 370-444). A complete commentary on 1-4 Kings or Kingdoms²² (i.e., 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings) is attributed by manuscript tradition to Cyril of Alexandria. However, R. Devreesse has

²¹See especially his *Philocalia*.

²²PG 69:679-98.

demonstrated that these are extracts from other exegetical and doctrinal works by Cyril, which were gathered by a medieval compiler under the title of *In Regum Libri I-IV*.²³ The exegesis of Cyril represents a late example of the Alexandrian tradition, so that the allegorical and typological interpretations prevail, even though he introduces some limitations and does not accept as a whole Origen's spiritual and christological interpretation of the Old Testament.

Theodoret of Cyr (c. 393-466). As we have mentioned, Theodoret is the author of the only extant Greek commentary covering 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles: the *De Quaestionibus Ambiguis in Libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon*. However, this is by no means a systematic commentary, as it concentrates on those passages that are confusing or difficult for the reader and tries to clarify and explain them. The exegetical approach of Theodoret is that typical of the Antiochian school, so that in his comments a literal interpretation prevails. However, Theodoret often tends to expand the typological components concerning Christ, which are present in a concise and sparse form in the traditional Antiochian exegesis, and by developing them, he introduces certain innovations in his commentaries.

John the Monk (c. the eighth century). This author, who is otherwise unknown, has been identified with the great theologian and poet John of Damascus (c. 670-749).²⁴ In his hymn he emphasizes how Christ causes the conversion of Elisha in 1 Kings 19:19-20, so that Elisha does not appear to be a type of Christ but a mere instrument of Christ's power.

Latin Fathers

In the context of Latin patristic exegesis we find a situation that does not significantly differ from that concerning the Greek fathers. No standard complete commentary on 1-2 Kings written in the patristic age (c. second through eighth centuries) survives, so that the majority of the patristic passages that we have selected come from doctrinal treatises or exegetical works on other books of the Bible. However, the material on 1-2 Kings available from the Latin fathers is in general much larger than that available in Greek. To these abundant incidental comments we can add a partial but extremely detailed commentary by Bede on the temple (1 Kings 5:1–7:51) and two early medieval complete commentaries by Rabanus and Walafridius, which do not differ substantially in their style and purpose from Bede's work. Therefore, we can assert with certainty that interest in our historical books was higher among the Latin fathers than the Greek. Many possible reasons can be brought forward to explain this greater interest. I believe that it is due to the situation of the Western empire in the fifth and sixth centuries. When the traditional Roman administrative and political organization of the state collapsed, many Latin authors living in the failing Western empire were led by the historical events of their age to meditate on the destruction and reconstruction of the reigns of Israel and Judah which are described in detail in Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Most of the comments are not from the early Latin patristic age (the second through fourth centuries) but from the later one (fifth and sixth centuries), which coincides with the end of the Roman Empire and a period of extreme political and social turmoil.

Tertullian (c. 155-220). Tertullian's interpretation of the Scripture wavers between a typological vision, in

²³R. Devreesse, *Les Anciens Commentateurs Grecs de l'Octateuque et des Rois* (Studi e Testi 201; Rome: Città del Vaticano, 1959), 179.

²⁴See *Analecta Hymnica Graeca* 10 (1972), 65.

which Christ is the center and the reason of the unity of the two Testaments, and a more literal approach, in which he emphasizes the moral contents of the biblical narrative. Both these trends are evident in his comments on 2 Kings 6:4-7 (typological) and 1 Kings 13:19 (moral).

Cyprian (c. 200-258). The comments by Cyprian on 1-2 Kings (1 Kings 11:14; 11:31-32; 2 Kings 17:20-28; 24:1-3) appear to be mostly literal. His main interest is not to interpret the biblical narrative in an allegorical sense but to read in it examples for the moral conduct of the Christian community.

Novatian (c. 210-260). Novatian, in his polemic against the Jews, is mostly concerned with the letter of the biblical text which cannot be taken at face value but should be analyzed also for its possible symbolism. Therefore he emphasizes how the words of God, who in 2 Kings 19:20-31 speaks about his ears, symbolically mean that God is able to hear all things.

Lactantius (c. 260-330). In his comment on 1 Kings 9:7-9, Lactantius gives us a typical example of typological exegesis, as he reads the words of God to Solomon as a prediction of the destruction of Israel after the passion of Christ.

Ambrose (c. 337-397). A large number of passages by Ambrose have been included in our commentary. Ambrose's exegesis makes use, according to his own definition, of a "moral" and "mystical" interpretation. Therefore he is constantly attentive to both the moral and social import of the biblical text, as is evident from his comments on Elijah's fasting (1 Kings 17:1-6) and Naboth's execution (1 Kings 21:1-29), and to the Bible's allegorical value, as he shows in his comments on Elisha's miracles in the war against the Arameans (2 Kings 6:16-23).

Jerome (347-420). At the beginning of his activity as an exegete, Jerome was an enthusiastic follower of Origen and his allegorical method of biblical interpretation. Later, after the polemics about Origen's doctrinal errors, Jerome became more cautious in following his exegetical approach and added to his comments clear literal and moral elements derived from the Antiochian school of exegesis. This is evident from his comments on 1-2 Kings, where we find typical allegorical interpretations (1 Kings 1:3), together with others where the moral sense strongly prevails (1 Kings 19:4; 21:7).

Prudentius (c. 348-410). We cannot speak of a precise exegetical orientation in Prudentius's works, as he exclusively wrote poetry in which he expresses his religious passion through feelings and emotions more than through a systematic discussion of the Scripture. In his comment on 1 Kings 5:4-5 concerning the building of the temple, he uses a typical typological interpretation in which Solomon's temple is naturally compared with the church of Christ.

Augustine (354-430). Augustine's exegesis of the Old Testament in general, and of 1-2 Kings in particular, reflects the extreme complexity of his thought and personality. Obviously it is not possible, in this concise introduction to the exegesis of the Fathers, to describe the details and nuances of Augustine's interpretation. We can assert with certainty that he was always deeply concerned with the problem that a concrete and a figurative language are both used in the Bible. As a consequence, an allegorical interpretation is necessary in the figurative passages, whereas a literal and moral one is necessary in the concrete ones. This exegetical method is particularly evident in Augustine's comments on the case of the two mothers (1 Kings 3:16-28), where he applies a typical allegorical interpretation, and in his discussion on the reign of Jehu (2 Kings 10:18-24), where the cruelty of the king is considered in its historical context but is ultimately con-

demned and used as a moral admonition to the faithful.²⁵

Paulinus of Nola (355-431). Paulinus was influenced in his exegetical method by the allegorical works of Rufinus, who translated Origen and wrote an allegorical comment on Genesis 49 at his explicit request.²⁶ However, in his comment on 2 Kings 19:1-7, he shows a typical literal approach and examines the biblical text especially in its historical reality.

John Cassian (360-432). John Cassian's work is centered on monastic life, his rules and inspirational models. Therefore his exegetical method is substantially moral, as he finds in the Scripture models of conduct to be proposed to the monks. This is amply demonstrated by his comments on 1 Kings 8:58, 1 Kings 13:24-28 and 2 Kings 24:8-16.

Peter Chrysologus (c. 380-450). Peter Chrysologus, in his activity as a bishop, was mostly concerned with the moral and pastoral import of the biblical text. This is evident in his moral interpretation of 1 Kings 12:28, in which he condemns the idolatry of Jeroboam and shows how similar kinds of errors are still possible among Christians.

Maximus of Turin (c. end of the fourth century-423). Maximus appears to depend on Ambrose in his literary style as well as in his exegetical method. Therefore he makes use of "moral interpretation," as in 1 Kings 20:11, and of an extremely clear and effective form of "mystical exegesis," as in 2 Kings 2:19-22, where he reads the miracle of the water purified by Elisha as a foreshadowing of the church which was to be cleansed by Christ.

Salvian the Presbyter (c. 400-480). Salvian's interpretation of 1 Kings 20:20-30 is both literal, as he examines the war of Israel against the Arameans in its historical reality, and allegorical, as he sees in the victory of the Israelites an open manifestation of God's providence and power.

Fulgentius of Ruspe (c. 467-532). In his doctrinal works and his letters to friends and collaborators, Fulgentius concentrates on his trinitarian polemic against the Arians²⁷ and his opposition to the Pelagians.²⁸ In his comment on 1 Kings 1:8-27, he gives a doctrinally correct description of the Trinity against any possible error.

Caesarius of Arles (c. 470-543). Caesarius's most important work, the sermons, is a summary of his long and passionate pastoral activity as the bishop of Arles (c. 500-543). As a consequence, his exegetical orientation is mostly attuned to a moral interpretation to support his pastoral preaching (see especially 1 Kings 1:21-22; 2 Kings 1:9-14). To this substantially moral exegesis Caesarius often adds a typological interpretation that appears to be mostly christological, that is, entirely centered on the figure of Christ (see 2 Kings 2:19-22).

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604). As in the case of Augustine, it is impossible to summarize in a few lines the complex exegetical personality of Gregory, who wrote a large number of works of different kinds and

²⁵Augustine's comments on 1 Kings 3:16-28, as well as some on 1 Kings 17 and 18, were originally attributed to Caesarius of Arles, which is noted by means of including Caesarius of Arles within parentheses following the name of Augustine. This is meant to clarify for readers that these texts are usually found within collections of sermons by Caesarius of Arles.

²⁶Rufinus Presbyter *De Benedictionibus Patriarcharum* (CCL 20:183-228).

²⁷The Arians maintained that Christ was not generated but created by the Father; therefore, even though the Son was a divine being, his divinity was somehow inferior to that of the Father, and his substance was only similar (and, according to some extreme forms of Arianism, different) to that of the Father.

²⁸The Pelagians, whose religious movement is extremely complex and concerns Christian anthropology as a whole, was characterized by a commitment to imitate Christ and by hostility toward the concept of divine grace in favor of human liberty and free will.

purpose. In his comments on 1 Kings 13:24-28 and 2 Kings 4:30-37 the moral and pastoral tone and intent prevail, while a strong typological approach is evident in the parallel between the miracle of Elisha and Christ's passion and resurrection.

The Venerable Bede (c. 672-735). As the most significant representative of the Anglo-Latin tradition which contributed to producing the Carolingian renaissance, Bede receives in his exegetical works the tradition of the great Latin fathers: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. As a consequence, his exegetical method emulates theirs and makes ample use of allegorical and typological interpretations as well as moral and edifying ones. In his commentary on the temple of Solomon,²⁹ which covers in detail 1 Kings 5:1–7:51, his typological approach is particularly evident, as he constantly sees in the different parts of the temple a foreshadowing of the truths of the doctrine of Christ and the entire New Testament.

Rabanus Maurus (780-856) and his pupil *Walafridius* (*Walahfrid*) *Strabo* (c. 808-849). Both writers are representative of the second phase of the Carolingian renaissance, so that their works do not belong to the patristic age but to the early Middle Ages. They are both more renowned for their poetical production than their exegetical works which cover most of the Scripture, including 1-2 Kings. There is no doubt about Rabanus's authorship of his commentary,³⁰ whereas many reservations have been raised about that by Walafridius,³¹ where large sections appear to be abbreviations and summaries of passages taken from Rabanus's commentary. Their exegesis is very close to that of Bede, whose work they continue in many respects, so that in their comments both the moral and typological interpretations characteristic of Bede's works are largely employed.

Syriac Fathers

Only in the works of the Syriac fathers do we find two commentaries belonging to the patristic age that cover all of 1-2 Kings; the most ancient is that attributed to Ephrem, while the most recent was composed by Isho'dad of Merv in the mid-ninth century. According to Western chronology, Isho'dad should belong to the early Middle Ages, as do Rabanus and Walafridius, but according to the chronology of Syriac patrology, he is still considered to be a father of the church.

Even though we have no difficulty defining these two commentaries as complete, Ephrem and Isho'dad, like the Greek and Latin fathers, tend to concentrate their attention on particular aspects and sections of the biblical text that are suitable to their literal, typological or moral exegesis, so that they neglect large portions of the narrative of 1-2 Kings. The reason why we have two complete commentaries only in Syriac might be due to the fact that Syriac exegesis, even though it does not differ from that of the Greek and Latin fathers in preferring certain biblical books to others, was in a sense more attentive to a global vision of the Scripture, as is confirmed by the fact that both Ephrem and Isho'dad wrote commentaries covering more or less the entire Old and New Testaments.

Together with the passages from Ephrem's and Isho'dad's complete commentaries, we have included a

²⁹*De Templo Salomonis Libri II* = PL 91:737-808; English translation: Bede, *On the Temple*, trans. with notes by S. Connolly (Translated Texts for Historians 21; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995).

³⁰See F. Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, 7 vols. (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, Instituto Francisco Suárez, 1940-1980), nn. 7033-36.

³¹See J. de Blic, "L'œuvre Exégétique de Walafrid Strabon et la Glossa Ordinaria," *RTAM* 16 (1949): 5-28; Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, nn. 8322-23.

few incidental comments on 1-2 Kings taken from other Syriac fathers.

Aphrahat (c. 270-345). In his comments, Aphrahat shows all the characteristics of the early stage of Syriac exegesis to which his works belong. He is not interested in any trinitarian discussion and appears to ignore the Nicene Creed, while he concentrates his attention on a substantially literal interpretation of the Scripture, where ample space is given to moral meditation and to the crucial importance of charity in Christian faith. In his comment on 1 Kings 15:9-13, he emphasizes the role of the devil as the constant enemy of humankind.

Ephrem (c. 306-373). The complete commentary on 1-2 Kings traditionally ascribed to Ephrem is preserved in only two manuscripts: the first from the Vatican Library³² and the second from the British Library.³³ The printed edition of this text³⁴ makes use only of the Vatican manuscript, while the manuscript of the British Library remains unpublished. Even though both manuscripts attribute the authorship of the work to Ephrem, scholars³⁵ had no difficulties in excluding the genuineness of this text. There is no doubt that it dates from a later age than that of Ephrem, although it is not possible to establish a precise date. In my opinion, the clear references to Nestorian doctrines and the ample use of allegorical and typological interpretations suggest a period between the end of the fifth century and the sixth century, when Syriac exegesis was influenced by Greek models. Even though it concentrates mostly on certain sections of the biblical narrative, the commentary is extremely interesting for its ample discussion on the figures of Elijah and Elisha, its profound moral reflection and its intriguing allegorical and typological interpretations.

In addition to the passages from the complete commentary on 1-2 Kings, we have employed a few incidental comments taken from the genuine works of Ephrem (*Hymns on Faith, Commentary on the Diatessaron*). In them all the characteristic aspects of Ephrem's exegetical style are evident: his literalism and closeness to Jewish exegesis, his openness to Greek patristic tradition revealed by a frequent use of allegory and typology and finally his lyricism and poetical vision of Scripture.

Sahdona (*Martyrius*) (first half of the seventh century). The entire literary work of Sahdona (Martyrius) is centered on his principles of ascetical spirituality, which lead him to privilege the moral aspects of the Scripture instead of its possible mystical interpretations. As a consequence, he concentrates on those episodes that favor a moral meditation. This is evident in his comment on 2 Kings 19:15-18, where he emphasizes the power of prayer.

Isaac of Nineveh (second half of the seventh century). Asceticism and spiritual meditation characterize the works of Isaac, a monk who devoted much of his attention to the spiritual instruction of his brothers. In his comment on 2 Kings 13:21, he shows how a holy life gives human beings a complete power over all bodily afflictions, even death itself.

Isho'dad of Merv (mid-ninth century). The second complete commentary on 1-2 Kings is that by Isho'dad of Merv, who was ordained bishop of Hedatta, near Mossoul in Mesopotamia, around 850. Isho'dad's commentary appears to be much more concise than that by Ephrem. The author follows a critical criterion

³²Vaticanus Syriacus 103.

³³British Library Add. 12144.

³⁴In *Primum et Secundum Librum Regnorum*, in J. S. Assemani, ed., *Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri Opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine*, vol. 1 (Syriace et Latine; Rome, 1737), 439-567.

³⁵Cf. B. Outtier in *Le Saint Prophète Élie d'après les Peres de l'Eglise* (Spiritualité Orientale 53; Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1992), 384-85.

which seems to have many similarities to that used by Theodoret of Cyr: he concentrates on those passages that seem to be more obscure or even simply grammatically difficult for the reader. In general, Isho'dad favors a literal approach to the biblical text, according to the prevailing trend in Syriac exegesis, but he also uses frequent typological and allegorical interpretations which are often quite original and demonstrate the enduring vitality of Syriac patristic literature in its later phase.

1-2 Chronicles

Through a rapid survey of the available patristic comments on 1-2 Chronicles, it is immediately evident that the Fathers' attention toward these biblical books was more rare than that toward 1-2 Kings. This is due to two main reasons: the nature of the narrative of 1-2 Chronicles, which includes extremely long genealogies and lists of characters which give no room to any kind of exegetical interpretation; and the nearly identical repetition in the text of Chronicles of episodes already reported in 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings, of which Chronicles represent an often prolix complement. As a result, the Fathers concentrated their attention on 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings and neglected extremely large sections of the text of Chronicles. Their criterion in choosing passages to comment is the same used for 1-2 Kings: they privilege those episodes from Chronicles where a typological and allegorical or literal and moral interpretation is possible, while they tend to neglect all those that are not suitable for their kind of exegesis. Therefore particular attention is paid to David and his role as king and holy man,³⁶ because his deeds provide ample material for moral meditation, as well as for allegorical and typological interpretations. The same can be said about the figure of Solomon, both in his role as the wisest man and the builder of the temple.³⁷

Greek Fathers

The exegesis of the Greek Fathers on 1-2 Chronicles does not differ from that on 1-2 Kings. All their comments are incidental and taken from doctrinal or exegetical works on other books of the Bible, because there is no extant complete commentary on 1-2 Chronicles, except for that by Theodoret, and the catena by Procopius, which is a patchy collection of passages from other authors. In general, the amount of this patristic exegetical material is significantly scarcer than that on 1-2 Kings. The Greek authors who have commented on Chronicles are substantially the same as those who commented on 1-2 Kings. For a profile of Basil, the Apostolic Constitutions, Gregory of Nazianzus, Justin Martyr, Origen and Theodoret of Cyr, we refer the reader to the introduction to 1-2 Kings. Here we will discuss only those authors who have not been mentioned already.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263-340). The exegesis of Eusebius is indissolubly linked to his polemical activity against the pagans, who accused Christian interpreters of the Scripture as indiscriminately using allegory. As a consequence, Eusebius analyzes the biblical text by always considering attentively its historical context, and he draws his typological conclusions after selecting those passages that are less exposed to possible criticism. This is particularly evident in his comment on 2 Chronicles 26:16-23.

Procopius of Gaza (c. 465-530). As we have already hinted above and in the introduction to 1-2 Kings,

³⁶1 Chron 11:1–14:17; 16:1-43.

³⁷2 Chron 1:1–9:31.

Procopius is the author of a catena on the Octateuch and Kings. However, what has been transmitted to us is not a full and complete catena but Procopius's summary of it, that is, a collection of summarized exegetical comments.³⁸ The text of the summarized catena has been published only in part, and large sections of it are available only in a later Latin translation.³⁹ In his selection, Procopius, being a dedicated follower of Origen, privileges passages with a clear allegorical approach, while he mostly neglects the literal exegesis of the Antochian school and of his near contemporary Theodoret of Cyr.

Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite (early sixth century). The work of Pseudo-Dionysus is by now considered to be a perfect synthesis of the neo-Platonism of Proclus and the theology of the Cappadocian fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa). In this intensely philosophical context, Pseudo-Dionysus's exegetical approach appears to be substantially literal, that is, in accordance with that of the Cappadocians, as is confirmed by his comment on 2 Chronicles 26:16-23.

John of Damascus (c. 670-749). In the ample literary and polemical activity of John of Damascus, exegesis does not occupy a central position. Being involved in the iconoclast crisis, he often uses Scripture to support his defense of the cult of images. We may say that his use of exegesis is mostly apologetic. In addition, he pays great attention to the moral content of the biblical message, as is amply demonstrated by his comment on 1 Chronicles 28:3, because many of his works are addressed to a monastic audience and contain practical suggestions for a pious and ascetical life.

Latin Fathers

There is no significant difference with 1-2 Kings in the Latin fathers' exegetical treatment of 1-2 Chronicles, except for the fact that the amount of their comments on these two biblical books is much scarcer than that on 1-2 Kings. The only two available complete commentaries, which also cover 1-2 Kings, are both from the Middle Ages,⁴⁰ while Bede's commentary on the temple,⁴¹ which treats in detail 1 Kings 5:1-7:51, discusses only those few passages in 2 Chronicles that differ from 1 Kings in their description of the temple. Again, the Latin fathers who comment on 1-2 Chronicles are substantially the same as those who comment on 1-2 Kings. Here we add only a profile of Cassiodorus, who was not included in the list of the Latin commentators of 1-2 Kings.

Cassiodorus (c. 485-580). In his exegetical orientation and the choice of the subject of his main biblical commentary, namely, the Psalms, Cassiodorus appears to be influenced by Augustine, whose profound and complex thought he simplifies for his audience at the monastery of Vivarium. In his comments on 1 Chronicles 16:22 and 1 Chronicles 25:1, he appears to make use of a typical typological interpretation.

Syriac Fathers

In general, the attention of the Syriac fathers toward 1-2 Chronicles is extremely scarce. Only a few incidental comments by Aphrahat and Ephrem⁴² are available on these two large biblical books.

³⁸See A. Di Berardino, ed., *Patrologia—I Padri Orientali (secoli V-V3)* (Rome: Marietti, 2000), 621-22.

³⁹See *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 3:388 n. 7430; PG 87:1147-220.

⁴⁰See above "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

⁴¹*De Templo Salomonis Libri II* = PL 91:737-808; English translation: Bede, *On the Temple*.

⁴²For a profile of these two Syriac authors, see the introduction on 1-2 Kings.

Ezra and Nehemiah

In the introduction to 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles I have emphasized the fact that there is no extant complete and systematic patristic commentary on these books of the Bible, so that most of the exegetical passages from the Fathers used in this volume were taken from patristic doctrinal works or commentaries on other books of the Bible.

In the case of Ezra and Nehemiah, the situation is reversed: incidental comments from the Fathers are quite scanty,⁴³ while an extremely detailed and systematic commentary by Bede⁴⁴ is available. We have already mentioned⁴⁵ that Bede is a typical representative of the Anglo-Latin tradition, who received in his exegetical works the heritage of the great Latin fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great, whose exegetical method and orientation he followed. In his desire to reevaluate and continue the exegetical heritage of the great Western fathers, he also covered those sections of the Bible that were neglected by his predecessors. From this point of view Bede's exegetical activity is extremely precious, even in view of the fact that his discussion of biblical books that had never been covered before gave him the possibility to express new and original interpretations of the Scripture, though he is constantly and soundly anchored to the typological, moral and allegorical exegesis of the Latin fathers.⁴⁶

In accordance with the main trend in patristic exegesis, Bede privileges in his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah those sections that were more suitable to an allegorical, moral or typological interpretation. However, in an admirable effort to analyze the text in its entirety, Bede tries to extend his interpretation to nearly all the verses, so that he neglects only a small portion of the biblical text.

The reason why the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were entirely neglected by the Fathers until the time of Bede, who ends the patristic age, is not easily explicable. In fact, they do not substantially differ from those of Kings and Chronicles, towards which, as we have already seen, there was a certain attention. Probably the fact that they were placed at the end of a long series of historical books caused the Fathers to dismiss them as mere appendixes to 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles.

Esther

The attention of the Fathers, Latin, Greek and Syriac, toward the book of Esther was extremely scarce. After examining a large amount of patristic doctrinal and exegetical works, I have been able to find and include in this commentary a few passages by Clement of Rome, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius, among the Greek fathers;⁴⁷ Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and John Cassian, among the Latin;⁴⁸ and Aphrahat among the Syriac.⁴⁹

With regard to the comment by Clement of Rome (fl. c. 92-101), who is one of the apostolic fathers and

⁴³We have been able to locate four passages from Origen, Athanasius, Basil and Cassiodorus. For a profile of these authors, see "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

⁴⁴*In Esdram et Nehemiam Prophetas Allegorica Expositio* (CCL 119A:235-392; PL 91:807-924); Bede, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, trans. with notes by S. DeGregorio (Translated Texts for Historians 47; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

⁴⁵See "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

⁴⁶See *In Esdram et Nehemiam*, xxii-xxv.

⁴⁷For a profile of Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius, see "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

⁴⁸For a profile of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and John Cassian, see "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

⁴⁹For a profile of Aphrahat, see "Introduction to 1-2 Kings."

one of the first Christian writers, we notice that he makes use of an extreme form of literal and moral interpretation, typical of this early phase of Christianity, in his description of Esther's heroism (Esth 4:5-17). All the other Greek, Latin and Syriac fathers employ a more allegorical and typological approach.

However, if we had to rely on these passages only, it would have been impossible to provide the reader with a proper commentary on Esther. Therefore, I have employed the commentary by Rabanus Maurus, which is the only one available on Esther. As I have already mentioned above, it is a medieval commentary. It nonetheless appears to be close to the exegetical works of Bede, as Rabanus closely follows Bede's exegetical style in many respects by making large use of the moral and typological interpretations characteristic of his exegesis.

Rabanus's analysis of Esther is extremely interesting, especially because it is possible to notice in his interpretations a certain exaggeration of some of the features of Bede's exegesis. In a sense, the literal and historical dimension of the biblical book almost disappears in Rabanus's analysis, while it was still firmly present in Bede. Rabanus makes use of a form of extreme allegorism, which sees symbols and types in almost all the details of the biblical narrative. From this point of view Rabanus clearly belongs to a new historical phase which partially departs from the typical tradition of Western patristic exegesis.

With regard to the reason for the lack of attention toward the book of Esther, I think again that its place at the end of a long series of historical books caused the Fathers to dismiss it as a mere appendix to 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles. In addition, we must consider the character of the book, which has many typical features of a work of fiction, so that it might have appeared to be less suitable for a profound exegetical analysis.

Biblical Text

The English text used as the basis for the pericopes of our commentary is that of the Revised Standard Version. Like all modern translations of the Old Testament,⁵⁰ it employs the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which was fixed in its present form after the death of Rabbi Akiba (c. 50-132). The Fathers of the church, who were Greek, Latin and Syriac, employed translations of the Old Testament into their own languages instead of the Hebrew Masoretic Text. The Greek fathers used the so-called Septuagint version (LXX), which dates from the third century B.C. and used a more ancient and ampler Hebrew text than the Masoretic. Until the seventh century A.D., the Latin fathers used the *Vetus Latina* (VL), which was a Latin translation of the Septuagint. From the eighth century they adopted the *Vulgate* (Vg), a translation that Jerome had made from the Masoretic Text by also employing other texts slightly different from the Masoretic and by including many readings from the Septuagint. The Syriac fathers employed the *Peshitta*, that is, the simple Syriac version of the Bible. It was mostly based on the Masoretic Text but also presented certain variants, because the Syriac translators also used the *Targum*,⁵¹ the Septuagint and other Hebrew texts different from the Masoretic. As a consequence, it is inevitable that there are differences between the Masoretic Text that is translated into English in the Revised Standard Version and the Greek, Latin and Syriac versions, namely, the Septuagint, the *Vetus Latina*, the *Vulgate* and the *Peshitta*. However, the dif-

⁵⁰For a discussion on the text of the New Testament, see A. Louth, in collaboration with Marco Conti, *Genesis 1-11* (ACCS OT 1; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), xl; M. Simonetti and M. Conti, *Job* (ACCS OT 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), xxvi.

⁵¹Explanatory translations in Aramaic of the Old Testament.

ferences between these versions and the Masoretic Text are not quantitatively constant in all the books of the Bible but are more significant and frequent in some of them. In the case of 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, the differences are in general quite sporadic. When they are of certain significance, we have always recorded them at the end of each pericope, so that the reader can immediately locate them and make a comparison between the two texts.

The case of Esther is different, as two versions of this biblical book exist, a Hebrew and a Greek one. The Hebrew version is that of the Masoretic Text, while the Greek one is that contained in the Septuagint, which was also translated into Latin in the *Vetus Latina*. The Greek text appears to be much larger than the Hebrew, as it includes many episodes omitted in the Hebrew: a dream of Mordecai, prayers of Mordecai and Esther, a decree of Artaxerxes for the Jews and the interpretation of the dream of Mordecai. There is much debate about the relationship of the two versions, as some scholars think that the Greek version expanded the Hebrew, while others believe that the original Greek text was abridged in the Hebrew Masoretic Text. We can only say that the text used by Rabanus, who is our main source for our patristic commentary, is that of the Vulgate, which faithfully follows the Masoretic Text. As a consequence there are no significant variants between the text he uses and that of the RSV, that is, the Masoretic.

Marco Conti

Rome

1 KINGS



DAVID'S OLD AGE

1 KINGS 1:1-4

OVERVIEW: David was cold not because of old age but as a consequence of his fear after the apparition of the angel, who entered Jerusalem to destroy it, as is confirmed in 1 Chronicles 21:16. David suffered not only from coldness but from dryness as well (ISHO'DAD). Abishag the Shunamite is not a girl who gives David the warmth his body needs but is rather a symbol of the wisdom of old age, which warms the heart of human beings (JEROME). David reveals his temperance and self-control in avoiding any intercourse with the girl (ISHO'DAD).

1:1 *David Could Not Get Warm*

THE REASON FOR THE COLDNESS IN DAVID'S

BODY. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: There are different opinions about this coldness in David's body. Some say, "[That was] due to the fact that he was a child of old age, [who was born] after all his brothers, so that, as the body of his father had already become cold with age, so he also, while

getting old, grew weak and cold." But we actually see that in all generations the children born from old parents are often stronger than those who were generated in youth. Others say, "[That coldness] derived from his extremely old age, and from his prolonged fast and the mortifying of the flesh and the abstinence that he had imposed on himself as a penitence for his sin." However, "Caleb was eighty-five years old and still possessed the vigor of youth,"¹ as he himself declared. And, among other things, David was not so old, as at that time he was only seventy.² Others say, "He had become cold as a consequence of his numerous toils and wars." But the true reason is that taught by the School:³ "It was because of the fright [caused by] the vision of the angel, who appeared to him in a terrifying manner, that his

¹Cf. Josh 14:10. ²See 2 Sam 5:4. ³Isho'dad is referring to the Nestorian exegetical school, which prevailed in Syriac biblical exegesis from the fifth and sixth centuries and was mostly based on the biblical commentaries by Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428).

body withered and grew cold as a consequence of his fear, as is attested in the book of the Chronicles as well.”⁴ And this is what Daniel says too: “At the sight of you my bowels were turned within me, and so how could I continue to live?”⁵ Therefore the same happens to David: after he saw the angel holding his sword, who entered Jerusalem to destroy it,⁶ the warmth fled and the coldness reigned over his body. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.1.⁷

1:2 *So That You May Be Warm*

DAVID SUFFERED FROM COLDNESS AND DRYNESS. ISHO‘DAD OF MERV: [The king] could get no warmth from blankets, because blankets cannot provide warmth by themselves; if you put them on stones or corpses, they certainly cannot warm them; but when there is heat emanating from the inside of our body, then they are useful and are an aid for us, because they imprison the heat, which comes from the inside of our bodies and warms us up again. Therefore blankets were useless for David, so that it was prescribed by the wise men and the physicians that a young virgin was brought to him—and that was a real novelty—because heat and humidity are prevalent in the female sex, and especially in virgins. Indeed, she refreshed him through the humidity of her body and warmed him up with the heat of her blood, since it was evident that he suffered from both these distresses: coldness and dryness. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.2.⁸

1:3 *Abishag Brought to the King*

ABISHAG SYMBOLIZES THE PROFOUND WISDOM OF OLD AGE. JEROME: Once David had been a man of war, but at seventy, age had chilled him so that nothing would make him warm. A girl is accordingly sought from the coasts of Israel—Abishag the Shunammite—to sleep with the king and warm his aged frame. Does it not seem to you—if you keep to the letter that kills⁹—like some farcical story or some broad

jest from an Atellan play?¹⁰ A chilly old man is wrapped up in blankets and only grows warm in a girl’s embrace. Bathsheba was still living, Abigail was still left, and the remainder of those wives and concubines whose names the Scripture mentions. Yet they are all rejected as cold, and only in the one young girl’s embrace does the old man become warm. Abraham was far older than David; still, so long as Sarah lived, he sought no other wife. Isaac counted twice the years of David yet never felt cold with Rebekah, old though she was. I say nothing of the antediluvians, who, although after nine hundred years their limbs must have been not old merely, but decayed with age, had no recourse to girls’ embraces. Moses, the leader of the Israelites, counted one hundred and twenty years, yet sought no change from Zipporah.

Who, then, is this Shunammite, this wife and maid, so glowing as to warm the cold, yet so holy as not to arouse passion in him whom she warmed? Let Solomon, wisest of men, tell us of his father’s favorite; let the man of peace recount to us the embraces of the man of war. “Get wisdom,” he writes, “get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve you: love her, and she shall keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom, and with all your getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote you. She shall bring you to honor, when you do embrace her. She shall give to your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to you.”¹¹

Almost all bodily excellences alter with age, and while wisdom alone increases, all things else decay. . . . So even the very name Abishag, in its mystic meaning, points to the greater wisdom of old men. For the translation of it is, “My father is over and above,” or, “my father’s roaring.” The term “over and above” is obscure, but in this pas-

⁴See 1 Chron 21:16. ⁵Dan 10:16 (quoted with variants). ⁶See 1 Chron 21:16. ⁷CSCO 229:97-98. ⁸CSCO 229:98. ⁹See 2 Cor 3:6.

¹⁰A traditional form of Roman comedy, which originated from the Oscan town of Atella. ¹¹Prov 4:5-9.

sage is indicative of excellence and implies that the old have a larger stock of wisdom and that it even overflows by reason of its abundance. LETTER 52 (TO NEPOTIAN) 2-3.¹²

1:4 *The King Did Not Know Her*

THE TEMPERANCE OF DAVID. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: But he “did not know her,” that is, he did not get close to her, not because he was by now devoid of concupiscence but because he

restrained the movements of concupiscence, fearing that it might be believed that he, who had many women, had asked for that girl out of lust. He paid for his inordinate desire for Bathsheba through his restraint toward this girl and inflicted this punishment on himself: indeed, the sin with Bathsheba¹³ remained fixed in his memory until his death. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.4.¹⁴

¹²NPNF 2 6:89-90. ¹³See 2 Sam 12:1–13:31. ¹⁴CSCO 229:98-99.





ADONIJAH'S STRUGGLE TO TAKE POWER 1 KINGS 1:5-27

OVERVIEW: Solomon is called a servant according to the style of the Old Testament, but his nature and rights as a son are not inferior to those of David's other children (ATHANASIUS).

1:19-26 *Your Servant Solomon*

MEANING OF THE TERM SERVANT. ATHANASIUS: Thus fathers often call their sons their servants, yet without denying the genuineness of their nature. In fact, they often affectionately call their own servants children, yet without losing sight of the fact they did purchase them originally. For they use the one appellation from their authority as fathers, but in the other they speak from affection. Thus Sara called Abraham lord, although she was not a servant but a wife. And while the Apostle joined Onesimus the servant to Philemon the master as a brother, Bathsheba called her son a servant even though she was his mother when she said to his father, "Your servant Solomon." Afterwards also Nathan the Prophet came in and repeated her words to David, "Solomon your servant." Nor did they mind calling the son a servant, for while David heard it, he rec-

ognized the nature of what they were referring to, and even while they said it, they did not forget genuineness [of his sonship], praying that the one they called a "servant" might be made his father's heir; for to David he was his son by nature.

So then, when we read this we interpret it fairly without considering Solomon a servant because we hear him called this. Instead we understand him to be a natural and genuine son. In the same way, if the saints, when referring to the Savior who is confessed to be in truth the Son and the Word by nature, say, "Who was faithful to him that made him," or if he says of himself, "The Lord created me," and, "I am your servant and the Son of your handmaid,"¹ and the like, no one should on this account deny that he is proper to the father and from him. Rather, as in the case of Solomon and David, let them think properly about the Father and the Son. For if, though they hear Solomon called a servant, they acknowledge him to be a son, are they not deserving of many deaths, who, instead of preserving the same explanation in the instance of the Lord, whenever

¹Ps 116:16 (115:7 LXX).

they hear “Offspring,” and “Word,” and “Wisdom,” forcibly misinterpret and deny the generation, natural and genuine, of the Son from the Father; but on hearing words and terms proper to a work, immediately condescend to the notion of his being by nature a work and deny the Word—doing this even though it is possible, from his having been made man, to refer all these terms to his humanity?² And are they not also proven to be “an abomination to the Lord,” when they use “differing weights”³ with them, using one set of measurements here and another there in order to blaspheme the Lord? But perhaps they grant that the word “servant” is to be understood in a certain way, but lay stress upon the phrase “who made” as some great support of their heresy. But

this argument of theirs also is but a broken reed. For if they are aware of the style of Scripture, they must at once condemn themselves. For as Solomon, though a son, is called a servant, so, to repeat what was said above, although parents refer to the sons springing from themselves as “made” and “created” and “becoming”—in none of these do they deny their nature. DISCOURSES AGAINST THE ARIANS 2.3-4.⁴

²Here Athanasius is confuting the theories of the Arians, who maintained that Christ was not generated, but created by the Father; therefore, even though the Son was a divine being, his divinity was somehow inferior to that of the Father, and his substance was only similar (and, according to some extreme forms of Arianism, different) to that of the Father. ³Prov 20:23. ⁴NPNF 2 4:349-50**.





SOLOMON IS ANOINTED
AS THE NEW KING
1 KINGS 1:28-53

OVERVIEW: David appoints Solomon as the new king in order to protect him and his mother and to assert his equal rights in spite of his birth outside marriage. David makes Solomon ride his mule because it was considered at that time a royal animal, which was bought from the Gentiles at a high price. The fountain of Siloha takes its name from the fact that it emits water straight up at intervals (ISHO'DAD). Solomon is not the promised messiah but only foreshadows the advent of the true King (AUGUSTINE). The anointing of Solomon is a figure

of our true chrism (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). All fathers want their children to become more illustrious than themselves, just like God the Father with his Son (THEODORET). Solomon gives Adonijah the chance to demonstrate his innocence and obedience (EPHREM).

1:30 *Solomon to Succeed David as King*

DAVID, IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, PROTECTS BATHSHEBA AND SOLOMON. ISHO'DAD OF

MERV: In the first place, he appoints Solomon as king, even though he had many sons, in order to confound the fools, who believed that nature is more valuable than a virtuous spirit before God. In the second place, he did this because he feared that he, a just man, might be mocked after his death, and Solomon and his mother might be treated with contempt—he as a bastard and she as an adulteress. This is what Bathsheba meant when she said, “My son Solomon and I will be counted offenders,”¹ that is, “If my son is not appointed as king, it will be believed that we are excluded from the kingdom, because we have sinned in this affair of the adultery, and consequently we will be condemned to contempt and cursing as impure persons for the rest of our lives.” BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.30.²

1:33 *Solomon Rides on David's Mule*

THE MULE IS A ROYAL ANIMAL. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [David] orders [Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah] to make “Solomon ride [his] mule,” because this animal was highly valued among the Hebrews, just like the white donkey among the Romans. The Jews, in fact, did not possess mules, since they were not allowed to “breed their animals with another kind,”³ but mules were bought at very high prices from the Gentiles. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.33.⁴

THE SPRING AT ŠILOHA. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [David] orders them to bring [Solomon] down to Šiloha, where the tabernacle was, not far from the spring of water, which is called Šiloha. Šiloha is a Hebrew name, which is given because the water of the spring gushes out straight up and on and off; indeed, it does not gush out regularly and all the time. And the same can be said about the Nile: since, at different intervals, it suddenly becomes full and then overflows, it is called Gihon, because its waters spread out. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 1.33.⁵

1:35 *Appointed to Be Ruler*

A TYPE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. AUGUSTINE: Solomon, it will be remembered, succeeded to the throne during his father David's lifetime—a kind of succession unique among Jewish kings—for no other reason save to furnish further clear evidence that Solomon is not the man our prophecy proclaims. Nathan says to David, “And when your days shall be fulfilled and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.”⁶ In view of these words, how can anyone think that, because of the later verse, “He shall build a house to my name,”⁷ Solomon is the subject of the prophecy and fail to realize that in view of the earlier words, “And when your days shall be fulfilled and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you,” a different Peacemaker is promised—one to be raised up not before David's demise as Solomon was but afterwards? It makes no difference how long was the lapse of time before the destined coming of Jesus Christ. The thing that is beyond question is that he who was promised in such terms to king David was destined to come after his death, the very same who was to build a house for God such as we rejoice to see rising up today, a house not fashioned of timbers and stones but of human beings. It is these people, believers in Christ, whom Saint Paul addresses in these words: “Holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are.”⁸ CITY OF GOD 17.8.⁹

1:39 *Zadok Anointed Solomon*

DONE TO YOU IN TRUTH. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: You must know that this chrism is prefigured in the Old Testament. When Moses, conferring on his brother the divine appointment, was ordering him high priest, he anointed him after he had bathed in water, and thenceforward he was called

¹1 Kings 1:21. ²CSCO 229:99. ³Lev 19:19. ⁴CSCO 229:99.

⁵CSCO 229:100. ⁶2 Sam 7:12. ⁷2 Sam 7:13. ⁸1 Cor 3:17. ⁹FC 24:50.

“christ” [anointed], clearly after the figurative chrism. Again, the high priest, when installing Solomon as king, anointed him after he had bathed in Gihon. But what was done to them in figure was done to you, not in figure but in truth, because your salvation began from him who was anointed by the Holy Spirit in truth. Christ is the beginning of your salvation, since he is truly the “first handful” of dough and you “the whole lump.”¹⁰ And if the first handful is holy, plainly its holiness will permeate the lump. MYSTAGOGICAL LECTURES 3.6.¹¹

1:47-48 *The Fame of Solomon*

ALL FATHERS WISH THEIR SONS TO GAIN THE HIGHEST GLORY. THEODORET OF CYR: In blessing David, why did the leaders who were next to the king want the young king to become more illustrious and glorious than his father? They said, “May God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.”

They knew that no one who has a true paternal love could be jealous of his sons. The wish to see their sons more illustrious than them is characteristic of fathers. Only Arius and his sons

oppose this truth with their madness.¹² Therefore David was pleased with what was said by the leaders since it enabled him to worship God even when his old age prevented him from getting to his feet. Indeed he had announced the fulfillment of the promise: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who today has granted one of my offspring to sit on my throne and permitted me to witness it.” QUESTION 3, ON I KINGS.¹³

1:52 *No Hair of His Shall Fall to the Ground*

NO PUNISHMENT FOR THE INNOCENT. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground,” that is, he shall not undergo any punishment of the guilty, if he proves to be innocent; but he will deserve capital punishment, if he is found to conspire against my sovereignty. Indeed, if he still aspires to take hold of the kingdom, he will be executed: punishment restrains that ambition that discipline could not bring under control. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 1.52.¹⁴

¹⁰Rom 11:16. ¹¹FC 64:172-73. ¹²Theodoret alludes here to the Arians, who maintained that the Son was inferior to the Father, and made of a similar or even different substance. ¹³PG 80:669 A-C ¹⁴ESOO 1:444.





DAVID'S LAST
INSTRUCTIONS TO SOLOMON
1 KINGS 2:1-10

OVERVIEW: Joab's punishment is a necessary action to make the kingdom stable and safe from any danger (ISHO'DAD). David's decision to entrust Solomon with the punishment of Joab and Shimei reveals his absolute trust in his son's wisdom (EPHREM). David, like Abel, foreshadows the figure of the Christian who embraces and cleaves to the doctrine of Christ (AMBROSE).

2:5-6 Do Not Let Joab Go to Sheol in Peace!

A NECESSARY PUNISHMENT. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [David] orders Solomon to punish [Joab], not out of viciousness or hatred for him but because he knew that he was wicked and that, if he had acted with hostility against him who was a mature man, he would act even worse against a young man, so that the kingdom would become unstable, and the house would not be firmly established. Therefore he entrusts his son with the revenge against him who had offended him, in order that, after the killing of that evil man by the hand of the new king, he might be feared by everyone, and no revolt might ever occur. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 2.5-6.¹

2:9 A Wise Man

DAVID CONFIDENT IN SOLOMON'S WISDOM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: After expounding the crimes of Joab and Shimei, David entrusts Solomon with their punishment, but only gives him few details about the manner and quality of the punishment: "You will do," he says, "according to your wisdom."² It is as if he said, Since both Joab and Shimei committed such [terrible] actions, it is unlawful that they are left unpunished. Therefore, solve this matter with the help of your wisdom so that your equity may catch them in their iniquity: may your severity, with the revelation of new crimes, find out the sins that your father's indulgence had hidden. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 2.8-9.³

2:10 David Dies

THE CHRISTIAN WHO CLEAVES TO GOD. AMBROSE: By Abel we understand the Christian

¹CSCO 229:100. ²This reading does not belong to the Peshitta (the standard Syriac Bible) but to an unknown version used by Ephrem. ³ESOO 1:445.

who cleaves to God, as David says: “It is good for me to adhere to my God,”⁴ that is, to attach oneself to heavenly things and to shun the earthly. Elsewhere he says, “My soul has fainted in your word,”⁵ thus indicating his rule of life was directed toward reflections on the Word and not on the pleasures of this world. Wherefore we realize that what we read concerning David in the book of Kings is not an idle statement but is said

with due weight and reflection: “And he was laid with his fathers.” We are given to understand that his faith was like that of his father’s. It is clear, then, that there is reference here to participation in life and not to the burial of a body. CAIN AND ABEL 1.5.⁶

⁴Ps 73:28 (72:28 LXX, Vg). ⁵Cf. Ps 119:81 (118:81 LXX, Vg). ⁶FC 42:362.





SOLOMON'S BATTLES TO PACIFY
HIS NEW KINGDOM
1 KINGS 2:11-46

OVERVIEW: Solomon cannot be blamed for the killing of his brother Adonijah, because he behaved according to the political rules followed by kings (THEODORET). Joab's behavior may be compared with that of the demons exorcised by Jesus, because he tried to cause Solomon's death; so too the demons, who entered into the pigs and made them fall into the sea, tried to cause the rage of the owner of the herd, so that he might kill our Lord (ISHO'DAD). Ephrem sees a parallel between the punishment and killing of Adonijah, Joab and Shimei and the ruin that befell Jerusalem for not recognizing the power of Christ (EPHREM).

2:25 *Adonijah Dies*

SOLOMON CANNOT BE BLAMED. THEODORET OF CYR: Some people blame Solomon because he killed his brother. Now the ways of life of people are different. Some of them certainly practice the highest form of philosophy; others pursue that virtue which is called political or civil; others manage the kingdom or hold power militarily. It is necessary to judge each of them according to the way of life that they follow. Therefore an apostolic or prophetic perfection cannot be expected from Solomon, but only those actions that are appropri-

ate to kings. He knew that Adonijah desired to gain supreme command. In fact, he had tried to take hold of the kingdom. When he attacked him the first time openly, he still forgave him and promised him that he would be safe if he behaved with modesty. But after he asked for the partner of his father, he did not grant this to him because Adonijah was opening the way to tyranny. Therefore Solomon ordered him to be killed, as he was concerned for the tranquility of his kingdom. QUESTIONS 7, ON 1 KINGS.¹

2:28 *Joab Fleed*

JOAB COMPARED WITH THE DEMONS EXORCISED BY CHRIST. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Joab runs to the tent for two reasons: first of all, in order to escape his death, if possible; second, because he imagined that, if he were killed in that place, the tent of God would become polluted as a consequence of his death, and the people would rise up against Solomon, so that, since he had not been able to harm him during his life, he conspired to cause a rebellion at his death. This can be compared with what the demons who entered the swine did in order that the owners of the herd

¹PG 80:673.

might become enraged and might kill our Lord; but it did not happen as they had planned.² That is why Solomon, in the same manner, acting in accordance with the commandment of the law, "Take him, who has sinned, from my altar for execution,"³ forcing Joab to get out so that the innocent blood which he had shed without reason was avenged. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 2.28.⁴

2:44 *Your Evil Be on Your Own Head*

A FORESHADOWING OF RUIN. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: You can see here four people who were condemned by Solomon because they were guilty of treason: they all foreshadowed the Jewish nation's ruin, which would derive from Christ's unjust killing. Adonijah, who was appointed as king and was killed shortly later, was the first to presage the fall of the Jewish kingdom; then, after

the abrogation of the priesthood of Aaron, Abiathar was expelled from his office; and Joab, who had the dignity of captain of the army, was deprived of his life by the leaders of the people and all his military force was destroyed. Finally, Shimei expressed in an even more evident and definitive manner the sin and punishment of the Jews, especially of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who blasphemed Christ and demanded his crucifixion. And that last prayer of Christ, like a supreme commandment, was postponed for four more decades⁵ and was not inflicted until the Jews were caught in a new crime when they persecuted the apostles and the other disciples of Christ. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 2.39.⁶

²See Mt 8:30-34; Mk 5:11-17; Lk 8:32-37. ³Exod 21:14. ⁴CSCO 229:101. ⁵Ephrem is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Titus during the reign of Vespasian. ⁶ESOO 1:449-50.





THE DIVINE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

1 KINGS 3:1-15

OVERVIEW: Solomon is led by political opportunity in his choice of marrying Pharaoh's daughter, and therefore cannot be blamed for this action. Solomon made sacrifices in Gibeon, that is, outside Jerusalem, because the tabernacle was there at that time (ISHO'DAD). Solomon knew how to ask wisely of the heavenly king (ISAAC OF NINEVEH). The description of Solomon's qualities in the holy Scripture is a way to foreshadow the qualities of Christ, to whom real wisdom and sovereignty belong (EPHREM). Solomon received this wisdom from him and passed this along to us in authoring the book of Proverbs (HIPPOLYTUS).

3:1 Solomon's Alliance with Pharaoh

SOLOMON'S INTENTION TO AVOID THE DANGER OF WARS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Some wonder why Solomon made alliances with the Gentiles through marriages without being blamed, even though [the Law] forbade [the Hebrews] mixing with them. The reason for that prohibition was "lest" [the Scripture says], "[their daughters] might make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods."¹ And this is what happened to Solomon² as well. However, we also see others who married daughters of the Gen-

tiles, but since they were not seduced to follow their paganism, they were filled with praises: for instance, Mahlon, Chilion and Boaz.³ With regard to Solomon, since he thought he would avert his people from war and establish a house for the Lord through his connections with the foreign kings, for this reason he married their daughters, and not out of lust; therefore he was not blamed for this. But after he fell into the error of their idolatry—that is, he did not correct [his women] from their error⁴—he was blamed by God. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 3.1.⁵

3:4 Solomon Sacrifices at Gibeon

WHY DID SOLOMON SACRIFICE IN GIBEON?

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Since the Law forbade praying or sacrificing outside Jerusalem,⁶ why did Solomon offer one thousand whole burnt offerings on the altar of Gibeon? Because the tabernacle was in Gibeon, as is attested in the book of Chronicles,⁷ and therefore, out of veneration for

¹Exod 34:16. ²See 1 Kings 11:4-8. ³See Ruth 1:2-4; 4:1-22. ⁴Here Isho'dad presents Solomon's sin under a favorable and benevolent light. ⁵CSCO 229:101. ⁶See Deut 12:1-32. ⁷See 1 Chron 16:39; 21:29.

the ancient residence, [Solomon] went there every year to offer his burnt offerings. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 3.4.⁸

3:9 Solomon's Request

ASK FOR WHAT IS IMPORTANT. ISAAC OF NINEVEH: Do not be foolish in the request you make to God, otherwise you will insult God through your ignorance. Act wisely in prayer so that you may become worthy of glorious things. Ask for things that are honorable from him who will not hold back so that you may receive honor from him as a result of the wise choice your free will has made. Solomon asked for wisdom—and along with it he also received the earthly kingdom, for he knew how to ask wisely of the heavenly King, that is, for things that are important. DISCOURSE 3.⁹

3:12 No One Like You

THE QUALITIES OF SOLOMON MOSTLY BELONG TO CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Since the narrative [of the book of Kings] is accurate in the facts, nobody can have any doubt that Solomon received his noble sovereignty, his elevated thought and extraordinary power as a gift from God, thus it is evident that no one among those kings who were dead, nor among those who would succeed him, could be compared with him. It is certain, nevertheless, that these qualities, and others, which are described in the psalms about Solomon, mostly are to be transferred to Christ; otherwise the words [of these biblical passages] would not be in absolute and complete agreement with their meaning and truth. Therefore Christ is that prince of peace whose wisdom

and royal power were never preceded in time or overcome in greatness. And before him no Son was born of an eternal nature or equal to the Father, nor after him will there ever be someone similar to him, as the Word, God says through another prophet: "Before me no god was formed, nor will be after me."¹⁰ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 3.12.¹¹

THE AUTHOR OF PROVERBS. HIPPLYTUS: Proverbs are words of exhortation that serve the whole path of life. They serve as guides and signs for those who are seeking their way to God by reviving them when they become tired by the length of the road. These, moreover, are the proverbs of "Solomon," that is to say, the "peacemaker," who, in truth, is Christ the Savior. And since we understand the words of the Lord without offence as being the words of the Lord, that no one may mislead us by likeness of name, he tells us who wrote them and of what people he was king in order that the credit of the speaker may make the discourse acceptable and the hearers attentive. For these proverbs are the words of that Solomon to whom the Lord said, "I will give you a wise and understanding heart; so that there has been no one like you upon the earth, and after you there shall not arise any one like you." . . . Now he was the wise son of a wise father. This is why David's name, by whom Solomon was begotten, was added. From a child he was instructed in the sacred Scriptures and obtained his dominion not by lot, nor by force, but by the judgment of the Spirit and the decree of God. FRAGMENT ON PROVERBS.¹²

⁸CSCO 229:102. ⁹CS 101:246. ¹⁰Is 43:13 (Peshitta). ¹¹ESOO 1:451. ¹²ANF 5:172**.



THE CASE OF THE TWO MOTHERS

1 KINGS 3:16-28

OVERVIEW: In solving the case of the two mothers, Solomon demonstrated that the mind of God was in him (AMBROSE). The mother who killed her child represents the synagogue, whereas the other, who is falsely accused, is a figure of the church (EPHREM, AUGUSTINE). The murderous mother can also symbolize false Christians who are still slaves to the law and only pretend to be true followers of Jesus. The solution of the case of the two mothers exhorts us to fight always for the truth until the end (AUGUSTINE). The judgment of Solomon demonstrates that sometimes the use of a lie reveals the truth (CASSIAN). The two mothers can also symbolize two different people inside the same church: the first dominated by insincerity, the latter by the love of truth (AUGUSTINE). The innocent mother is also a symbol of

excellence (AMBROSE) that distinguishes the true church from any Arian heresy (AUGUSTINE). She also shows how true charity is the only aim that the faithful and righteous members of the church of God must pursue (AUGUSTINE).

3:16-28 *Two Women Came Before the King*

THE MIND OF GOD WAS IN SOLOMON.

AMBROSE: Is not that noble judgment of Solomon full of wisdom and justice? Let us see whether it is so. "Two women," it says, "stood before King Solomon, and the one said to him, 'Hear me, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house, and before the third day we gave birth and bore a son apiece and were together; there was no witness in the house, nor any other woman with us, only we

two alone. And her son died this night, because she laid on him, and she arose at midnight, and took my son from my breast and laid him in her bosom, and her dead child she laid at my breast. And I arose in the morning to nurse my child and found him dead. And I examined him at dawn, and behold, it was not my son.' And the other woman said, 'No, but the living is my son, and the dead is your son.'" This was their dispute, in which either tried to claim the living child for herself and denied that the dead one was hers. Then the king commanded a sword to be brought and the infant to be cut in half, and either piece to be given to one, one half to the one, and one half to the other. Then the woman whose the child really was, moved by her feelings, cried out, "Do not divide the child, my lord; rather, let it be given to her and live, and do not kill it." But the other answered: "Let it be neither mine nor hers; divide it." Then the king ordered that the infant should be given to the woman who had said "do not kill it," for, as it says, "her compassion earned over her son."

It is not wrong to suppose that the mind of God was in him; for what is hidden from God? What can be more hidden than the witness that lies deep within; into which the mind of the wise king as though to judge a mother's feelings and elicited as it were the voice of a mother's heart? For a mother's feelings were laid bare when she chose that her son should live with another, rather than that he should be killed in his mother's sight. It was therefore a sign of wisdom to distinguish between secret heart thoughts, to draw the truth from hidden springs and to pierce as it were with the sword of the Spirit not only the inward parts of the body but even of the mind and soul. It was the part of justice also that she who had killed her own child should not take away another's but that the real mother should have her own back again. Indeed the Scriptures have declared this. "All Israel," it says, "heard of the judgment that the king had judged, and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was present in judgment." Solomon also

himself had asked for wisdom, so that a prudent heart might be given him to hear and to judge with justice.¹ DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 2.8.44-47.²

AN ALLEGORY OF THE CHURCH AND THE SYNAGOGUE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The two women indicate to us the church and the synagogue. The latter, after it tried to suppress the sacrament of human redemption and persecuted and killed the Redeemer through false accusations, claims, nevertheless, that its child should still be alive, that is, that the Jewish people should still be pleasing and acceptable to God and that he should give eternal life to the Mosaic law, which is dead. Since the [synagogue] is soaked in these errors, it perpetually quarrels with the church, which is represented by the other woman. However, the peaceful king settled the argument not by dividing but by gathering the children of both mothers, so that a single body might be created from the Jews and the Gentiles, whose head is Christ. And both mothers assert that they live under the same roof, because the church and the synagogue inhabit this world in dwellings, where they are mixed. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 3.16.³

THE DEAD CHILD BELONGS TO THE JERUSALEM BELOW, THE LIVING TO THAT ABOVE.

AUGUSTINE: The first idea that occurs to me on consideration is that the two women are the synagogue and the church. For the synagogue is convicted of having killed Christ her son, born of the Jews according to the flesh, in her sleep; that is, by following the light of this present life and not perceiving the revelation of trust in the sayings of the Lord. That is why it is written, "Rise, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you."⁴ That they were two and that they were alone, living in one house, may be taken to mean, without being far-fetched, that besides the circumcision and the uncircumcision there is no other kind of religion to be found in this world. So under the person of one woman you can

¹See 1 Kings 3:9. ²NPNF 2 10:50-51*. ³ESOO 1:452. ⁴Eph 5:14.

include the race of circumcised men bound by the worship and the law of one God, while under the person of the other woman you can comprehend all the uncircumcised Gentiles given over to the worship of idols.

But they were both harlots. Well, the apostles say that Jews and Greeks are all under sin. Every soul that forsakes eternal truth for base earthly pleasures is whoring away from the Lord. Now about the church that comes from the whoredom of the Gentiles, it is clear that it did not kill Christ. . . . Pay attention to the Gospel and listen to what the Lord says: "Whoever does the will of my Father, this is my mother and brother and sister."⁵ So when did this one sleep, not indeed to smother her child in sleep but at least so that the dead one could be substituted and the living one taken away from her? Does it perhaps mean this, that the very sacrament of circumcision which had remained dead among the Jews because their view of it was wholly carnal and literal—that this lifeless sacrament of circumcision some Jews wished to foist like a lifeless body on the Gentiles who had believed in Christ, as it says in the Acts of the Apostles, telling them that they could not be saved unless they had themselves circumcised?⁶ They were foisting this on those ignorant of the law, as though they were substituting the dead child in the darkness of the night. But that argument would have no chance of success except where the sleep of folly had stolen over some part of the church of the Gentiles. From this sleep the apostle seems to be shaking her when he exclaims, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" And a little later: "Are you such fools," he says, "that after beginning with the spirit you now end with the flesh?"⁷ as though he were saying, "Are you such fools, that after first having a living spiritual work, you lose it and go on to accept someone else's dead one?"

Indeed, the same apostle says elsewhere, "The spirit is life because of justice."⁸ And in another place, "To be wise according to the flesh is death."⁹ At these and similar words, then, that mother wakes up, and early morning dawns on

her when the obscurity of the law is lit up by the word of God, that is, by Christ who was rising like the sun,¹⁰ that is, was speaking in Paul. He lit up this darkness when he said, "Tell me, you who wish to be under the law, have you not heard the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the one by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, the one by the free woman through a promise; which is all an allegory. For these are the two Testaments, one from Mount Sinai, bringing forth into slavery, which is Hagar (for Sinai is a mountain in Arabia), and she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free."¹¹ No wonder, then, if on account of dead works the dead child belongs to the Jerusalem below, while on account of spiritual ones the living child belongs to the Jerusalem above. After all, hell is sown below, where the dead belong; and heaven above, where the living belong. Enlightened in this way, as by the coming of day-break, the church has an understanding of spiritual grace and thrusts away from it the carnal accomplishments of the law, like the other woman's dead child. Instead [the church] claims for itself a living faith—since "the just person lives by faith"¹²—which it has acquired in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; that is why it recognizes with certainty the son as three days old and does not allow him to be snatched away. SERMON 10.2.¹³

A TYPE OF FALSE CHRISTIANS. AUGUSTINE: Now let the other one claim that the gospel is hers, as being owed to her and produced through her. For that is what they were saying to the Gentiles in this dispute, those of the Jews who, while clinging to the letter of the law, dared to call themselves Christians. They were saying that the gospel had come as something owed to them for their justice. But it was not theirs, because they

⁵Mt 12:50. ⁶See Acts 15:1. ⁷Gal 3:1-3. ⁸Rom 8:10. ⁹Rom 8:6. ¹⁰See Lk 1:78. ¹¹Gal 4:21-26. ¹²Rom 1:17. ¹³WSA 3 1:283-84.

did not know how to grasp its spirit. So they even had the audacity to contend that they were to be called Christians, boasting in someone else's name like that woman claiming a son she had not borne; and this though by excluding a spiritual understanding from the works of the law they had as it were drained the soul out of the body of their works, and while smothering the live spirit of prophecy had remained attached to their material keeping of the law, which lacked all life, that is to say, spiritual understanding. They wanted to foist all this on the Gentiles too, and take from them, like the living child, the name of Christian. In refuting them, the apostle went so far as to say that the more they claim Christian grace as their due and boast that it is theirs as though by right of the works of the law, the less it really belongs to them. "For to one who works," he says, "his wages are not reckoned as a grace or favor but as his due. But to one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the wicked, it is faith that is reckoned as justice."¹⁴ And therefore he does not count among their number those of the Jews who had believed rightly and were holding fast to a living spiritual grace. He says this remnant of the Jewish people were saved, when the majority of them had gone to perdition. "So therefore at the present time also," he says, "a remnant has been saved, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer as a result of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace."¹⁵ So those are excluded from grace who claim the prize of the gospel is theirs by right, owed and given them for their works. This is like the synagogue claiming, "It is my son." But [the synagogue] was lying. It too, you see, had received him, but by lying. It too, you see, had received him, but by sleeping on him, that is, by being proud in its own conceits, it had killed him. But now this other mother was awake and understood that it was not through her own merits, since she is a harlot, but through God's grace that she had been granted a son, namely, the work of evangelical faith, which she longed to nurse in the bosom of her heart. So that while one was using another person's son to acquire human respectability, this

one was preserving a true love for her own. SERMON 10.3.¹⁶

FIGHT FOR THE TRUTH. AUGUSTINE: As for the royal judgment between the two of them, it simply admonishes us to fight for the truth and to drive hypocrisy away from the spiritual gift of the church like a spurious mother from another woman's living son and not to let her control the grace granted to others when she could not take care of her own. But let us do this, defending and fighting for the truth without running the risk of division. That decision of the judge, when he ordered the baby to be cut in two, is not meant as a breach of unity but as a test of charity. The name Solomon means peaceable. So a peaceable king does not tear limbs apart that contain the spirit of life in unity and concord. But his threat discovers the true mother, and his judgment sets aside the spurious one. So then, if it comes to this sort of crisis and trial, to prevent the unity of Christian grace from being torn apart, we are taught to say, "Give her the child, only let him live." The true mother, you see, is not concerned about the honor of motherhood but about the well-being of her son. Wherever he may be, his mother's true love will make him more her possession than that of the false claimant. SERMON 10.4.¹⁷

A WISE JUDGMENT. JOHN CASSIAN: What about Solomon, who in his first judgment manifested the gift of wisdom, which he had received of God, only by making use of falsehood? For in order to get at the truth which was hidden by the woman's lie, even he used the help of a lie most cunningly devised, saying: "Bring me a sword and divide the living child into two parts, and give the one half to the one and the other half to the other." And when this pretended cruelty shook the heart of the true mother, but was received with approval by the one who was not, then at

¹⁴Rom 4:4-5. ¹⁵Rom 11:5-6. ¹⁶WSA 3 1:284-85*. ¹⁷WSA 3 1:285-86*.

last by this most sagacious discovery of the truth he pronounced the judgment which every one has felt to have been inspired by God, saying: "Give her the living child and do not slay it; she is the mother." CONFERENCE 17.25.¹⁸

THE HARLOT'S SON SYMBOLIZES THE SINNER'S GRACE. AUGUSTINE: Again, I see these two women in one house as representing two kinds of people in one church: one of them dominated by insincerity, the other ruled by charity. So we may regard these two kinds of people simply like two women, called love and insincerity. Insincerity, of course, deceitfully imitates love. That is why the apostle warns us against her when he says, "Let love be without insincerity."¹⁹ Although the two live in one house as long as that gospel net is in the sea, enclosing good and bad fish together until it is brought ashore, yet each is doing her own thing. They were both harlots, though, because everyone is converted to the grace of God from worldly desires, and nobody can properly boast about any prior justice and its merits. A harlot's committing fornication is her own doing; her having a son is God's. All human beings, after all, are fashioned by the one creator God. Nor it is surprising that God works well even in the sins of men and women. After all, even the crime of Judas the traitor was used by our Lord to achieve the salvation of the human race. But the difference is that when God brings something good out of anyone's sin, it is not usually something that the sinner wants. It is not only that when he sins he does not sin with the same intention as God's providence turning his sin to a just end—Judas, you see, did not betray Christ with the same intention as Christ had in allowing himself to be betrayed; it is also that when he realizes his sin has produced a better result than he never wanted to happen, it gives him more pain than pleasure. Suppose, for example, someone wants to give his enemy poison while he is sick, but he makes a mistake about the kind of medicine and gives him something beneficial instead, so that the sick person gets better

through the kindness of God, who decided to turn his enemy's villainy to his advantage. But when the wicked person realizes that his own hand has restored the other to health, he suffers torments and frustration. But if a harlot is willing to have the child she has conceived and is not driven by lust or avaricious concern for her shameful earnings to take an abortifacient and eliminate what she has conceived from her womb, in case her fertility should interfere with her sinning, then the appetite that had been dissipated among a great many is now concentrated on the one gift of God and will no longer be called greed, but love. So the harlot's son is rightly understood as representing the sinner's grace; the new creature born of the old shame is the forgiveness of sins. SERMON 10.5.²⁰

THE REAL MOTHER IS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH. AMBROSE: Such a Shechem²¹ is the church; for Solomon chose her whose hidden love he had discerned. Such a Shechem is Mary, whose soul God's sword pierces and divides.²² Such a Shechem is a "coming up," even as it appears in the meaning of the word. As to what the "coming up" is, hear Solomon speaking in reference to the church, "Who is she that comes up clothed in white, leaning on her brother?"²³ She is radiant, a word expressed in Greek as *aktinodes*, because she is resplendent in faith and in works. To her children it is said, "Let your works shine before my Father, who is in heaven."²⁴ THE PRAYER OF JOB AND DAVID 4.4.16.²⁵

FIGURES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ARIAN HERESY. AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): The lesson to be read at Vespers, dearly beloved, concerns the two harlots who came for the decision of Solomon; one of them, who was not only dissolute but also cruel and wicked,

¹⁸NPNF 2 11:470*. ¹⁹Rom 12:9. ²⁰WSA 3 1:286*. ²¹See Gen 48:22. Shechem is a symbol of excellence: it is that splendid portion that Jacob allotted to his son Joseph. ²²See Lk 2:35. ²³Song 8:5 (LXX). ²⁴Mt 5:16. ²⁵FC 65:401*.

shouted to the king that he should command the infant to be cut in two. Now, if you willingly listen, we would like to mention to the ears of your charity what the holy Fathers have explained about the matter. The woman who cried out that the boy should be kept whole represented a type of the Catholic church; the other cruel and impious woman who shouted that the boy should be divided signified the Arian heresy. The Catholic church like a most devoted mother exclaims to all heretics: Do not make Christ less than the Father; do not divide his unity; do not divide the one God in various degrees and fashion, as it were, idols of the pagans in your hearts. Keep him with you entirely; if you want to have peace, do not divide his unity. Indeed, if you have the whole, everything remains yours. So great is the omnipotence of God that all possess him entire, and each one possesses all of him. However, the impious, cruel heresy exclaims, "No, but divide him." What does this mean, divide him, except that the Son is not equal to the Father? If a person takes equality from the Son, he denies that the Father is good and omnipotent. If God the Father could beget a Son like himself but would not, he is not good; if he would but could not, he is not almighty. Be assured, brothers, that none of the Arians can answer this statement; but whenever they are limited by the truest reason, like a slippery snake they take refuge in some sort of clever and involved inquiries. SERMON 123.1.²⁶

TRUE CHARITY WILL BE THE AIM OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. AUGUSTINE: But there is no greater proof of charity in Christ's church than when the very honor that seems so important among people is despised, in order to prevent the limbs of the infant being cut in two and Christian infirmity being torn to shreds by the break of unity. The apostle says that he had shown himself like a mother to the little ones among whom he had done the good work of the gospel, not he but the grace of God in him.²⁷ That harlot could call nothing her own except her sins, whereas the gift of fertility she had

from God. And the Lord says beautifully about a harlot, "She to whom much is forgiven loves much."²⁸ So the apostle Paul says, "I became a little one among you, like a wet-nurse fondling her children."²⁹ But when it comes to the danger of the little one being cut in two, when Insincerity claims for herself a spurious dignity of motherhood and is prepared to break up unity, the mother despises her proper dignity provided she may see her son whole and preserve him alive; she is afraid that if she insists too obstinately on the dignity due to her motherhood, she may give Insincerity a chance to divide the feeble limbs with the sword of schism. So indeed let mother Charity say, "Give her the boy." "Whether in pretense or in truth, let Christ be preached."³⁰ In Moses Charity exclaims, "Lord, either pardon them or blot me out of your book."³¹ But in the Pharisees Insincerity speaks: "If we let him go, the Romans will come and take away our nation and place."³² It was not the reality of justice that they wished to have but its name, and they desired to hold on dishonestly to the honor owed to just men and women. And yet Insincerity reigning in them was permitted to sit in Moses' seat, and so the Lord could say, "Do what they say, but do not do what they do;"³³ and so while enjoying a spurious honor they would still nurture the little ones and the weak on the truth of the Scriptures. Insincerity, you see, has her own proper crime—smothering with the weight of her slumbers the new creature she had received through the grace of God pardoning her, but the milk of faith which she has is not hers. Because even after the death of the child, who represents the new life of being born again, Insincerity now set in her bad ways still retains in her memory, as in her breasts, Christian doctrine and the words of faith, which are handed on to all who come to the church. From this milk even the spurious mother could give suck of the true faith to the infant being

²⁶FC 47:206-7*. ²⁷See 1 Thess 2:7. ²⁸Lk 7:47. ²⁹1 Thess 2:7. ³⁰Phil 1:18. ³¹Exod 32:32. ³²Jn 11:48. ³³Mt 23:2-3.

suckled. For that reason the true mother is without anxiety when her baby is being nurtured even by the insincere on the milk of the divine Scriptures of the Catholic faith, when unity is saved and division prevented, and Charity is approved by the judge's final sentence, which represents Christ's last judgment. Since, in order to save her baby and uphold unity, she

was prepared to concede the dignity of motherhood even to Insincerity, for holding on to love and embracing the grace of life she will enjoy the everlasting reward of a devoted mother. SERMON 10.8.³⁴

³⁴WSA 3 1:288-89*.





SOLOMON'S RULE
WAS MAGNIFICENT AND WISE
1 KINGS 4:1-34

OVERVIEW: The twelve prefects appointed by Solomon to administer his kingdom foreshadow the twelve apostles chosen by Christ (EPHREM). The testimonies concerning David and especially Solomon in the Old Testament demonstrate how all Christians have the duty to become wise. The passages in the Scripture concerning Solomon's wisdom prove that all pagan philosophers were influenced by him, and what can be considered wise in their reflections undoubtedly derives from him, who was divinely inspired (ORIGEN). Only a small part of Solomon's writings is extant, while a large number were lost (ISHO'DAD).

4:1-19 Solomon's Officials

THE APOSTLES FORESHADOWED IN SOLOMON'S OFFICIALS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The officials elected by Solomon designate the order of the chosen ones whom Christ affirmed in his grace and appointed as rulers of his people. Indeed, twelve prefects were selected to administer the incomes of this king and his house, because just as many apostles had to be distributed over the entire world and had to be appointed as treasures of the divine mysteries, so that they might nourish with living and immortal food the Israel of God and might administer the

incomes of the house of the peaceful king. Therefore, also the limits of each prefecture were clearly denoted, because, in a similar way, each apostle received a certain province: Simon preached in Rome, John in Ephesus, Matthew in Palestine and Thomas in the region of India. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 4.1.¹

4:29-34 God Gave Solomon Great Wisdom

THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN IS TO BECOME WISE. ORIGEN: But that the object of Christianity is that we should become wise can be proved from the ancient Jewish writings, which we also use, as well as from those that were composed after the time of Jesus and that are believed among the churches to be divine. Now, in the fiftieth psalm, David is described as saying in his prayer to God these words: "The unseen and secret things of your wisdom you have manifested to me."² Solomon, too, because he asked for wisdom, received it; and if anyone were to peruse the Psalms, he would find the book filled with many maxims of wisdom; and the evidences of Solomon's wisdom may be seen in his treatises, which contain a great amount of wisdom expressed in few words, and in which

¹ESOO 1:453. ²Ps 51:6 (50:8 LXX).

you will find many praises of wisdom and encouragements towards obtaining it. So wise, moreover, was Solomon, that the queen of Sheba,³ having heard his name and the name of the Lord, came to try him with difficult questions and spoke to him all things, whatsoever were in her heart; and Solomon answered her all her questions. There was no question omitted by the king that he did not answer her. And the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the possessions that he had, and there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, "The report is true that I heard in my own land regarding you and your wisdom; and I did not believe them who told me, until I had come, and my eyes have seen it. And, lo, they did not tell me the half. You have added wisdom and possessions above all the report that I heard."⁴ It is also recorded of him that "God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hysop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles and fish. People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom." *AGAINST CELSUS* 3.45.⁵

SOLOMON WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY DIVINE PHILOSOPHER. ORIGIN: [Greek philosophers] took these ideas from Solomon, since it was long before them in age and time that he first gave these teachings through the Spirit of God. The Greeks have brought them forth as their own discoveries, and they have also included them in their books of instructions and left them to be

handed down to their successors. But, as we have said, Solomon discovered them before all the rest and taught them through the wisdom he received from God, as it is written, "And God gave Solomon understanding and wisdom beyond measure, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. And his wisdom was made greater than that of all the ancient sons of humankind and all the wise men of Egypt." Thus, Solomon, since he wished to distinguish from one another and to separate what we have called earlier the three general disciplines, that is, moral, natural and contemplative, set them forth in three books, each one in its own logical order. Thus, he first taught in Proverbs the subject of morals, setting regulations for life together, as was fitting, in concise and brief maxims. And he included the second subject, which is called the natural discipline, in Ecclesiastes, in which he discusses many natural things. And by distinguishing them as empty and vain from what is useful and necessary, he warns that vanity must be abandoned and what is useful and right must be pursued. He also handed down the subject of contemplation in the book we have in hand, that is, Song of Songs, in which he urges on the soul the love of the heavenly and the divine under the figure of the bride and the bridegroom, teaching us that we must attain fellowship with God by the paths of loving affection and of love. Indeed, he was not unaware that he was laying the foundations of the true philosophy and founding the order of its disciplines and principles. *COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS PROLOGUE* 3.⁶

THE LOSS OF SOLOMON'S WORKS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Of his three thousand proverbs a single book is left, while all the others perished during the captivity. And of his one thousand and five songs we still possess a single one, that is the Song of Songs. *BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS* 4.32.⁷

³See 1 Kings 10:1-13. ⁴1 Kings 10:6-7. ⁵ANF 4:482*. ⁶OSW 231-32. ⁷CSCO 229:102.



SOLOMON PREPARES
TO BUILD THE TEMPLE
1 KINGS 5:1-12

OVERVIEW: The temple was built by Solomon after the destruction of his enemies, when peace had been restored in Israel, and in the same way the church was built in the peace following the victory against earthly vices (PRUDENTIUS). The servants of Hiram, who cut the wood of Lebanon, represent the teachers chosen among the Gentiles in order to correct and convert the nations to the obedience and doctrine of Christ (BEDE). Hiram did not hesitate to help Solomon, because he had been previously converted to the religion of God by David (ISHO'DAD). Solomon foreshadows, in his act of building the temple, the spiritual construction of the church accomplished by Jesus

through his saving actions (EPHREM).

5:4-5 *Building a House for God*

THE CHURCH IS BUILT IN TIMES OF PEACE.

PRUDENTIUS:

After this war one work remains for us,
O leaders, that which Solomon achieved,
The peaceful scion and the unarmed heir
Of a warlike realm, whose father's weary hand
Was sullied by the ardent blood of kings.
The blood effaced, a temple is upraised
And golden altar, house sublime of Christ.
Jerusalem then by its temple crowned,

Received its God, now that the wandering ark
On the marble altar found repose.

In our camp let a sacred temple rise,
that God may in its sanctuary dwell.

What profits it to have repelled the hosts
Of earth-born vices, if the Son of man
From heaven descending, enter the body
cleansed,

But unadorned and not a temple fair?
Thus far we have engaged in fierce conflict:
Now let white-vestured Peace perform its
tasks,

And youth unarmed build up a sacred house.

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT 804-22.¹

5:6 *The Servants of Solomon and Hiram*

TYPES OF THE TEACHERS CHOSEN AMONG THE GENTILES. BEDE: For the servants of Hiram who cut down cedars from Lebanon for Solomon are the teachers chosen from among the Gentiles whose task is to fell those who enjoy the goods and glory of this world by correcting their pride and arrogance and convert their ambition into obedience to their Redeemer. Now with these servants were also the servants of Solomon, and together they set about the work referred to because the first teachers from among the Gentiles needed the apostles, who had received training by being instructed in the word of faith, lest, were they to begin to teach without masters, they might turn out to be teachers of error. For the reason why Solomon wanted the servants of Hiram to hew timber from Lebanon for him was that they were more experienced than his own servants in felling, but the reason why he also wanted his own servants to be there with them was that they might show the lumbermen what length the planks ought to be. What this symbolizes is plain, namely, that the apostles had a surer knowledge of how to preach to others the word of the gospel that they were privileged to hear from the Lord, but the Gentiles, converted from error and brought into conformity with the truth of the gospel, had a better knowledge of the actual

errors of the Gentiles, and the surer their knowledge the more skillfully they learned to counteract and refute them. Paul indeed had a better knowledge of the mystery of the gospel, which he had learned through revelation, but Dionysus was better able to refute the false teachings of Athens, whose syllogisms as well as errors and all of whose arguments he knew since a boy. With this explanation the statement that follows is fully in keeping: "For you know that there is not a man among my people who has the skill to hew wood like the Sidonians." For when the Lord was bodily present teaching, there was not one among the Jewish people who knew so well how to refute the errors of the Gentiles as the actual Gentile converts to the faith and those of the Gentiles who had become Christians. For the Sidonians and Tyrians are rightly taken as a type of the Gentiles because they were Gentile peoples. ON THE TEMPLE 1.2.4-5.²

5:7 *Hiram Heard and Rejoiced*

HIRAM HAD BEEN CONVERTED BY DAVID.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: This Hiram had been converted to [the worship of] God through his relationships with David, and "he rejoiced greatly, when he heard" that a house would be built for the Lord. He asks to be supplied with bread and oil in exchange for the wood that he delivers because the Tyrians and the Sidonians, as it appears, did not sow or harvest since their commerce was exclusively maritime. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 5.7.³

5:10 *Hiram Supplied Timbers of Cedar*

A PARALLEL BETWEEN SOLOMON AND

CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Here we do not need to work around any concealed meaning; indeed, in this event there is a clear analogy with Christ and the actions he undertook for the building of the church. As Solomon ordered tim-

¹FC 52:106-7. ²TTH 21:8-9. ³CSCO 229:102-3.

bers to be cut from the mountains of Lebanon and stones to be shipped by sea, and employed them after they had been brought to the builder's yard of the temple, so Christ, after receiving the Jews and the Gentiles from the timbers of infidel-

ity, transported them to the builder's yard of the temple which is not made by human hands. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 5.10.⁴

⁴ESOO 1:456.



WORKERS ARE
CONSCRIPTED FROM ISRAEL
1 KINGS 5:13-18

OVERVIEW: The fact that Solomon summoned people from all districts of Israel demonstrates that priests must be chosen from the entire community of the Christians, and not only from certain specific groups (BEDE). The number of the stonecutters and laborers symbolizes the host of angels sent by God to help us in our Christian battles (EPHREM), as well as apostolic preaching, the Gospels and the Trinity (JEROME). The costly and square stones used to make the foundations of the temple are figures of the teachers of the church, who built the spiritual church through their holy preaching (BEDE).

5:13-14 Solomon Conscripted Labor from All Israel

CHRISTIAN PRIESTS MUST BE CHOSEN FROM THE WHOLE CHURCH. BEDE: The first thing to

note here is that it was not for nothing that Solomon chose workmen from all Israel, nor was there any section of the people from which men fit for such a great task were not taken, because, of course, priests nowadays are not to be chosen from the stock of Aaron alone; rather, people are to be sought from the whole church who, whether by example or word, are competent to build the house of the Lord, and wherever they are found they are to be promoted to the office of teachers without any exception of persons. And when such people are ordained to instruct the infidel and those who are to be called into the joint pastorate of the church, they are sent as energetic and picked men, as it were, to hew in Lebanon the materials for the temple. And indeed the number of thirty thousand, which was the tally of the hewers of wood, can be aptly applied figuratively to those who are perfect in the faith

of the holy Trinity, because it is most appropriate for teachers. ON THE TEMPLE I.3.I.¹

5:15-16 *Laborers and Stonecutters*

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LABORERS AND THE STONECUTTERS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: These thousands of men employed in the cutting and transportation of the wooden beams and the stones signify the thousands of thousands of assistant spirits sent for our salvation. In the first place, [we see that] God ordered his angels to cut from the rock of the world and to polish and direct accurately the souls of the saints. . . . Second, in this same symbol, we can observe the toils of the saints for the conversion and salvation of souls, either when they endeavor to drive human beings away from the love of the world or when, after they have accomplished that, they begin to polish the stones cut from the rock until they provide them with luster by a thorough polishing and make them worthy of the heavenly building. Then they are taken and employed by the supreme builder. . . . Finally we can interpret the workers of Solomon to be the angels sent to accomplish their ministry, as well as the prophets and the apostles chosen from the old people to build the church. . . . The builders sent by the king of Tyre symbolize those strong in doctrine and holiness, whom the nation of the Gentiles abundantly supplied for the same purpose. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 5.10.²

FIGURES OF GREAT MYSTERIES. JEROME: Listen to even greater mysteries. At the time when Solomon built the temple, it was our peacemaker who says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you,"³ "for he himself is our peace,"⁴ "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding,"⁵ who himself built the temple for God. Observe what Scripture says about the building of the temple by Solomon: "And there were seventy thousand quarrymen and eighty thousand carriers." Mark the number. The masons who were cutting

stones, who were preparing, as it were, the foundations of the buildings, who were taking up stones from the ground to build the temple of God, are reckoned in the number seven, in the prophets, in the patriarchs, for while they seemingly were driving the human race from off the earth, they were making preparations for the temple of the Lord. The latter, the eighty thousand, symbolize the apostolic preaching and the Gospels; these are they who with the Lord Savior and Solomon were carrying the heavy burden of the nations. This surely is the height of mystery, but hear of even deeper mysteries! "And the overseers over the works and the temple were three thousand." They cannot be greater, not even the overseers in charge of the work, except that they proclaim the Trinity. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 19 (Ps 89 [90]).⁶

5:17 *Quarrying Stones for the Foundation of the House*

A TYPE OF THE TEACHERS OF THE HOLY CHURCH. BEDE: But it seems to be in accord with the solemn celebration that we are observing to recall something about the building of the temple and to search out how appropriately its adornment suits the significance of the church. Scripture tells how Solomon ordered that "they should take very great costly stones for the foundation of the temple and should square them off." These great and costly stones that were laid as a foundation and that supported the entire bulk of the temple built on them suggest the extraordinary teachers of the holy church: "great" because of the outstanding quality of their merits; "costly" because of the splendor of the signs that those who heard the word from the Lord himself produced by their preaching as the fabric of the growing church. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.25.⁷

¹TTH 21:9-10. ²ESOO 1:456. ³Jn 14:27. ⁴Eph 2:14. ⁵Phil 4:7. ⁶FC 48:152-53*. ⁷CS 111:262.

5:18 *The Giblites⁸ Prepared Timber and Stone***THOSE WHO PREPARE PEOPLE'S HEARTS.**

BEDE: "Furthermore the men of Biblos [i.e., the Giblites] prepared wood and stones to build the house." Biblos is a city in Phoenicia⁹ that Ezekiel mentions: "Your skilled men, Tyre, were your pilots. The elders of Biblos and its skilled men,"¹⁰ for which [city] in Hebrew is written Gobel or Gebal, which means "defining" or "limiting." This word is very appropriate to those who prepare people's hearts for the spiritual edifice that is built of the virtues of the soul. For they are only equal to the task of teaching their hearers faith

and the works of righteousness when they themselves have first been instructed by the sacred page and thoroughly learned from a clear definition of the truth what belief one must hold and on what path of virtue one must walk. For one who does not know what is definitely catholic faith is wasting his time assuming the office of teacher, and those who try to teach others the norm that they themselves have not learned do not build a sanctuary for the Lord but ruin for themselves. ON THE TEMPLE 1.4.3.¹¹

⁸This is the Hebrew name of the inhabitants of Biblos, a city in Lebanon. ⁹This is the ancient name of Lebanon. ¹⁰Ezek 27:8-9. ¹¹TTH 21:15-16*.





SOLOMON COMPLETES THE TEMPLE

1 KINGS 6:1-22

OVERVIEW: The numbers in the chronology of the construction of the temple symbolize evangelical perfection and the grace of the Holy Spirit (BEDE). David had already prepared the materials for the construction of the temple (ISHO'DAD). The measures of the house of God are symbolic figures of the virtues of the Christian church. The porch represents the people belonging to the holy church, who precede the time of our Lord's incarnation. The windows of the temple are the holy teachers to whom when in divine ecstasy it is granted to see the hidden mysteries of heaven. The side chambers or porticoes were built to support the house (ISHO'DAD). The three floors denote the levels of the faithful, namely, married people, those who practice continence and virgins (BEDE). Hammers, axes and tools of iron symbolize the devil and his instruments (ORIGEN, AMBROSE). The entrance of the house is a type of our ascension from the present life of the church, in its pilgrimage on earth, to the life of heavenly blessedness. The ceilings signify the just people of most exalted virtue, who are an example for all the faithful in the church. The structure denotes

the divine protection that helps us not to give up while still struggling in this world. In the mystical sense, the temple walls are the nations of believers of whom the holy universal church consists. The inner house that was built at the rear of the temple is the promised life in heaven that precedes this life of our exile. Different mystical meanings are symbolized by the number forty. The entire house is covered inside with cedar wood when the hearts of the righteous begin to shine with the love of good works. The ark of the covenant prefigures our Savior in whom alone we have a covenant of peace with the Father. The altar signifies typically the life of the perfectly righteous who concentrate all their attention on entering the kingdom of heaven. The gold leaf represents the manifold works of piety that pure love exhibits in the service either of its Creator or of a brother's need (BEDE).

6:1 *480 Years from the Exodus*

THE TIME OF CONSTRUCTION AND ITS SYMBOLISM. BEDE: Where it says, "in the fourth

year in the month of Zio,¹ which is the second month of the reign of Solomon over Israel,” the intended order is, in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon in the month of Zio, that is, the second month. He calls the second month May, for April, in which the Pasch, the principal feast among the Hebrews, is held, was the first month of the year.² From this it is quite clear that later when the Pasch was over, he began to build a house for the Lord, and after they had been consecrated by the mystical solemnity, the people set their hands to the mystical task. A commemoration is made of the exodus from Egypt when work began on the building of the tabernacle so that the reader may be made aware what a period of time had passed between the building of both houses and learn the spiritual mystery attaching to this period of time. For four times 120 make 480; now four is very appropriate to evangelical perfection on account of the actual number of the Evangelists; 120 is appropriate to the teaching of the law on account of the same number of years of the legislator.³ It was also in this number of men that the primitive church received the grace of the Holy Spirit,⁴ clearly showing that those who use the law legitimately, that is, those who recognize and embrace the grace of Christ in it, are deservedly filled with the grace of his Spirit so that they may become more ardent in his love. ON THE TEMPLE I.5.I.⁵

6:2 *The House's Dimensions*

DAVID HAD PREPARED MATERIALS FOR THE HOUSE. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The house that Solomon built for the [Lord] was sixty cubits long,” that is, the double of the tabernacle. It is extremely likely that it included two rooms, an interior and an exterior. The interior was twenty cubits long, while the exterior was forty cubits. [The house] was built on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite,⁶ which David had bought together with the garden.⁷ David had prepared the materials for the construction of the house, as

the book of Chronicles reports.⁸ BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 6.2.⁹

FIGURES OF FAITH, CHARITY AND HOPE.

BEDE: The temple was built of Parian marble, a white stone, to represent the brilliance of chastity in the church, concerning which the Lord says in the canticle of love: “Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among maidens.”¹⁰ [The temple] “was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.” The length of the temple designates the faith of the holy church, through which it bears with long-suffering patience, in the midst of its good works, the adversities brought against it by the wicked. The width designates the charity by which [the church] expands inwardly through the essential working of piety. The height designates the hope with which it awaits the rewards of the heavenly life, [which it will receive] as a result of the good deeds it performs through charity. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.25.¹¹

6:3 *The Vestibule*

THE PEOPLE WHO PRECEDED THE TIME OF THE SAVIOR. BEDE: “There was also a porch in front of the temple, twenty cubits in length to correspond with the width of the temple.”¹² It had a door opposite the door of the temple and was ten cubits deep, facing the east. This porch represents the people belonging to holy church who precede the time of our Lord's incarnation, yet were not empty of faith in his incarnation. This is [the meaning of] the door of the porch opposite the door of the temple, facing the east—that the faith of the people in Christ before his coming was the same as that of those who came after his arrival and that the hearts of all the faithful are illumined by the same light of the grace of the Orient. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.25.¹³

¹In the Hebrew text, Ziv. ²See Exod 12:2. ³See Deut 34:7. ⁴See Acts 1:16. ⁵TTH 21:17-18. ⁶See 2 Chron 3:1. ⁷This mention of the garden is only in the text of the Peshitta. ⁸See 1 Chron 22:2-14. ⁹CSCO 229:103. ¹⁰Song 2:2. ¹¹CS 111:263. ¹²1 Kings 6:3 (Vg). ¹³CS 111:266.

6:4 *Windows with Recessed Frames*

A TYPE OF THOSE WHO SEE THE MYSTERIES OF HEAVEN.

BEDE: The windows of the temple are the holy teachers and all the spiritual people in the church to whom when in divine ecstasy it is granted more specially than to the others to see the hidden mysteries of heaven. And when they reveal publicly to the faithful what they have seen in private, they fill all the inner recesses of the temple as windows do with the sunlight they let in. Hence these windows are appropriately said to have been slanting, that is, wider on the inside, because, of course, whoever receives a ray of heavenly contemplation even for a moment must expand the bosom of his heart more fully by mortification and prepare it by resourceful asceticism to strive for greater things. ON THE TEMPLE 1.7.1.¹⁴

6:5 *Side Chambers All Around*

THE USE OF THE SIDE CHAMBERS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Against the sides of the house he made side chambers, that is, some porticos like those built around a basilica, one on the other, in three levels. He did this, in the first place, because the portico was narrow and could not be divided into separate parts; secondly, in order that they might work as a support to the house so that it did not collapse. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 6.5.¹⁵

6:6 *The Dimensions of the Lowest Story*

THE THREE FLOORS DENOTE THE LEVELS OF THE FAITHFUL.

BEDE: In the Gospel where the Lord is tempted by the devil these floors are called the pinnacles of the temple.¹⁶ But we also read that the apostle James, the brother of the Lord, was lifted to the pinnacle of the temple from which to address the people. Whether it was the practice of teachers to deliver their address to the people standing around below them while they sat on these floors is something

we find nowhere in the Scriptures. So what the mystery obviously means is that these three floors denote the corresponding number of levels of the faithful, namely, married people, those who practice continence and virgins, levels distinguished according to the loftiness of their profession but all of them belonging to the house of the Lord and intently clinging to him by reason of their fellowship in the same faith and truth. ON THE TEMPLE 1.7.2.¹⁷

6:7 *No Tool of Iron Was Used*

AN ALLEGORICAL FIGURE OF THE DEVIL.

ORIGEN: How, he says, "was the hammer of the whole earth broken and crushed? How was Babylon brought to destruction?"¹⁸ One needs to enquire here who is the "hammer of all the earth" or in what way its brokenness is prophesied, since it was "broken" before it was "crushed," so that after bringing together what has been written elsewhere about the "hammer," when we find its name, we will also investigate the meaning of the name from these examples that we have brought forth.

At one time there was constructed a "house of God," according to the third book of Kings,¹⁹ and it was Solomon who built and erected it; and it was said here, as if in praise, about the "house of God," that "hammer and axe were not heard in the house of God." Therefore as the "hammer is not heard in the house of God," since the "house of God" is the church, so the "hammer is not heard" in the church. Who is this "hammer" who wants to obstruct, insofar as he can, the stones for building the temple, so that, "broken," they are not suited for its foundations? See with me if the devil is not the "hammer of the whole earth." HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 27(50).1-2.²⁰

¹⁴TTH 21:25. ¹⁵CSCO 229:104. ¹⁶Mt 4:5. ¹⁷TTH 21:25. ¹⁸Jer 50:23. ¹⁹In LXX, VL and Jerome's Vg, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings are entitled 1-4 Kings (literally *Libri Regnorum* = Books of Kingdoms). ²⁰FC 97:245*.

THE TOOLS OF THE DEVIL. AMBROSE: Christ knocks with his hand that you may open, whereas the adversary cuts the door down with axes; and therefore it is written that hammer and axe should not enter into the house of God. Pride and deceit ought to be outdoors, not inside; conflicts indeed ought to be outside;²¹ but within, the peace that surpasses all understanding.²² Let not your soul be cut with the iron, but even as Joseph's soul, so may your soul pass by the iron.²³ Otherwise, your ruling part, which is like a kind of tabernacle of the Word, may be destroyed at the very beginning of faith and the entrance into spiritual learning. **THE PRAYER OF JOB AND DAVID 4.7.28.**²⁴

6:8 *The Entrance for the Middle Story*

SYMBOLISM OF THE ENTRANCE AND THE DIFFERENT STORIES. BEDE: The way to the upper and third [parts of the] building was made through the innermost part of the southern wall, as if by an invisible entrance, so that only its beginning might be evident from the eastern corner of the before-mentioned [southern] wall. Only he who could climb [it] knew the progress of this ascent, of which Scripture recalls: "The door in the center of the side was on the right [i.e., southern] part of the house, and they ascended by a circular stairway to the middle room and from the middle room to the third." When our Lord was suffering on the cross, "one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came forth blood and water."²⁵ This [prefigured] the water of baptism by which we are cleansed [from sin] and the blood of the Lord's chalice by which we are sanctified. Through these holy mysteries of his side, as a consequence of our invisible faith, we ascend from the present life of the church, in its pilgrimage on earth, to the life of heavenly blessedness that the souls of the righteous enjoy once they have laid aside their bodies. When we have recovered our [earthly] bodies at the [general] resurrection, we will pass over from that life even to the supreme glory of eternal bliss, with our faith

in our Lord's passion leading the way. It is undoubtedly of this glory that Isaiah says, "In their own land they will come into possession of a double portion, undying happiness will be theirs,"²⁶ that is, they will receive the eternal joys of an immortal body and a happy soul together in the land of the living, which is the only land of the saints. The lowest [part of the] building signifies the present way of life of the saints; the middle [part signifies] the repose of souls that is acquired after this life; and the top [part signifies] the glory of the [final] resurrection, which will never be changed and will last forever. The door in the center of the side, which was situated in the right [i.e., southern] part of the building, and which opened up the way to the upper parts, [represents] our faith in the passion of Christ, from whose pierced right side, [while he was hanging] on the cross, there flowed forth the sacraments, by receiving which we will be able to ascend to the joys of heavenly life. **HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.I.**²⁷

6:9 *Roofed with Beams and Planks of Cedar*

THE CEILINGS SIGNIFY JUST PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH. BEDE: Ceilings are boardwork constructed and adorned with great beauty and fixed to the beams on the lower side, and because the house of the Lord had been built three times the double height, naturally it had three ceilings. What is more fitting for us to believe than these ceilings signify all the just people of most exalted virtue in the holy church? And their work and teaching is held up as an example to all as being much loftier than any other, and by their intercessions and exhortations they keep the spirits of the weak from failing in temptation. These ceilings are indeed rightly described as being of cedarwood. For cedar is by nature a completely incorruptible tree, of pleasant fragrance and luxurious appearance, and when it is set on fire it

²¹See 1 Cor 6:1-11. ²²See Phil 4:7. ²³See Ps 105:17-18 (104:17-18 LXX, Vg). ²⁴FC 65:412-13. ²⁵Jn 19:34. ²⁶Is 61:7. ²⁷CS 111:10-11.

drives away and destroys serpents by its dazzling brightness. These things are an apt figure of all the perfect whose patience is indomitable, whose outstanding reputation for virtue is far more pleasing to the good than that of anyone else, whose powers of refuting and proving wrong those who resist the truth are utterly unshakable, and who, both in this life and the life to come, shine with a resplendence that outshines the rest of the saints. *ON THE TEMPLE* 1.8.3.²⁸

6:10 *Each Story Five Cubits High*

DIVINE PROTECTION HELPS US IN THIS

WORLD. BEDE: This means the breastworks that were constructed on top of the roof of the house all around in case anyone who came up to the upper parts of the building should suddenly fall to the bottom. And in every house that anyone built, Moses ordered this to be done, saying, "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof all the way around, lest blood be shed in your house and you be to blame should anyone slip and fall down headlong."²⁹ Now these structures or breastworks are called sides above,³⁰ where, after the words "and on the wall of the temple he built structures all around, running around the walls of the house, both the temple and the oracle," the following is immediately added: "and he made side chambers all around." These side chambers, of course, we have understood as denoting the divine protection that helps us not to give up while still struggling in this world and daily striving after higher things according to our capacity. We ought to understand this passage also in the same sense, but with this distinction that in this life, whether amid the frequent temptations of our implacable enemy or the obstacles of our frailty, we are often, indeed constantly, protected by heavenly compassion, but in the life which, as we have stated above, the top of the roof of the temple suggests, we are protected by so great a grace of God who is with us, that we neither want nor are able to sin, nor are we affected by fear of either death or pain or the adversary who tempts us. The Lord speaks of the

helps he gives us in the present life, as if they were the sides of the structures, when he says of his people, "They will call on me, and I shall hear them; I am with them in their tribulation, and I shall rescue them and glorify them."³¹ Of his grace to come whereby that heavenly city is illumined, the prophet says to the same city, "Praise the Lord, Jerusalem,"³² and so forth as far as "peace in your borders." Now this structure on the roof of the house of the Lord is rightly said to be five cubits high because, of course, the presence of God's glory in that homeland [of ours] fills us in such a way that nothing else is sweet to our sight, our hearing, our sense of smell or taste or touch except to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. *ON THE TEMPLE* 1.8.4.³³

6:15 *The Walls Lined Inside with Boards of Cedar*

THE TEMPLE WALLS SYMBOLIZE THE NATIONS OF BELIEVERS.

BEDE: On the inside, indeed, the house was lined with cedar, for on the outside, the actual stone it was built of glinted with as much brilliance as if it had been covered with glowing white marble. Taken in the mystical sense, however, the temple walls are the nations of believers of whom the holy universal church consists and whose widespread distribution throughout the whole world is denoted by the width of the walls, whereas the height denotes the hope and whole upward thrust of the church toward heavenly things, or at any rate the height of the wall, which consists of courses of stones laid one on top of the other, denotes the state of the present church where the elect are all built on the foundation of Christ and follow each other in succession through the course of the ages and, by supporting each other, fulfill the law of Christ,³⁴ which is charity. *ON THE TEMPLE* 1.8.6.³⁵

²⁸TTH 21:32. ²⁹Deut 22:8. ³⁰See TTH 21:25. ³¹Ps 91:15 (90:15 Vg). ³²Ps 147:12 (147:1 Vg). ³³TTH 21:32-33. ³⁴See Gal 6:2. ³⁵TTH 21:34.

6:16 *The East Side of the Temple*

A TYPE OF THE PROMISED LIFE IN HEAVEN.

BEDE: He calls the east side of the temple the rear; for the temple had its entrance on the east and its inner house, that is, the Holy of Holies, on the west. The fact that he says that the board partitions that separated the inner house from the outer one were erected from the floor to the top does not mean they were built to the ceiling, which was at the height of thirty cubits from the floor, as has already been said above,³⁶ but only up to a height of twenty cubits, as one can clearly read in what follows. But the portion above these partitions up as far as the ceiling was left open and empty to a height of ten cubits and a length of twenty cubits across the width of the house, and, of course, through this aperture the smoke of the burnt offerings from the altar of sacrifice used to ascend and penetrate all the way in to cover the ark of the Lord. This division of the Lord's house is a clear figure of a mystery and, thanks to the explanation of the apostle, is clearer than daylight because the first house into which "the priests" continually "go performing their ritual duties"³⁷ is the present church, where, intent on works of piety, we daily offer sacrifices of praise to the Lord, but the inner house, which was built at the rear of the temple,³⁸ is the promised life in heaven, which indeed precedes this life of our exile, which is celebrated there in the presence of the supreme king as a perpetual solemnity of the blessed, both angels and humankind. Hence it is with reference to it that the servant is quite deservedly told, "Enter into the joy of your Lord"³⁹ but is later in time because it is after the labors of this world that we succeed in entering it. ON THE TEMPLE I.9.2.⁴⁰

6:17 *The Nave*

THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF THE NUMBER

FORTY. BEDE: We have said that the temple itself before the doors of the oracle was a type of the present church. Hence it was rightly forty cubits

long, for this number is often used to signify the present labor of the faithful, just as the number fifty stands for the rest and peace to come. For the number ten contains the precepts, the observance of which leads to life. Likewise the number ten signifies that very eternal life that we desire and for which we live. But the world in which we strive to attain that life is a square. Hence too the psalmist, foreseeing the church that was to be assembled from the nations said, "He has gathered them out of the countries from the rising and from the setting of the sun, from the north and from the sea."⁴¹ Now ten multiplied by four makes forty. Hence the people liberated from Egypt as a figure of the present church were subjected to many hardships for forty years in the desert,⁴² but at the same time they were also regaled with heavenly bread,⁴³ and in this way they finally reached the land promised them of old. They were subjected to trials for forty years in order to draw attention to the hardships with which the church contends throughout the whole world in observing the law of God; they were fed on manna from heaven for those forty years to demonstrate that the very sufferings that the church endures in the hope of the heavenly denarius, that is, of eternal happiness, are to be alleviated when those "who now hunger and thirst for righteousness will have their fill,"⁴⁴ and as the same church sings to its Redeemer, "But as for me, I will appear before your sight in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear."⁴⁵ In the same way then the people of God is both subjected to adversities and regaled with manna to confirm the saying of the apostle: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation."⁴⁶ In this figure too our Lord fasted forty days before his bodily death and feasted forty more with his disciples after his bodily resurrection "appearing to them by many proofs and speaking of the kingdom of God, and eating

³⁶See TTH 21:22-23, 30-31. ³⁷Heb 9:1-9. ³⁸See TTH 21:43. ³⁹Mt 25:21. ⁴⁰TTH 21:36-37. ⁴¹Ps 107:3 (106:2 Vg). ⁴²See Deut 2:7. ⁴³See Exod 16:35. ⁴⁴Mt 5:6. ⁴⁵Ps 17:15 (16:15 Vg). ⁴⁶Rom 12:12.

together with them."⁴⁷ For by fasting he showed in himself our toil, but by eating and drinking with his disciples he showed his consolation in our midst. While he was fasting he was crying out, as it were, "Take heed lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life,"⁴⁸ whereas while he was eating and drinking he was crying out, as it were, "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world";⁴⁹ and "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you."⁵⁰ For as soon as we set our feet on the way of the Lord we both fast from the vanity of the present world and are cheered with the promise of the world to come, not setting our heart on the life here below but feeding our heart on the life up there. ON THE TEMPLE I.10.⁵¹

6:18 *Carvings of Gourds and Flowers*

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CEDAR AND ITS CARVINGS. BEDE: We have said of cedarwood that it betokened the unsurpassable beauty of the virtues. Now the entire house is covered inside with this wood when the hearts of the righteous begin to shine with nothing but the love of good works, and the house has its turnings made of cedar boards and its joints skillfully wrought when these elect are joined to each other by the most beautiful bond of charity so that, though the multitude of the faithful is innumerable, they can nevertheless, with good reason, be said to have one heart and one soul on account of the community of the faith and love they share.⁵² For the turnings that were attached to the joints of the planks in order that they might all make one partition are the very services of charity by which the holy brotherhood is bound together and formed into one house of Christ all over the world. Moreover, this house has carvings standing in relief when, far from covering and hiding their works of virtue, the saints, by a clear outward expression, show forth to all, as an example for living, what they themselves are like and what

they do, as did the apostle Paul who not only by preaching Christ to the Gentiles and by personally suffering for Christ showed how outstanding he was, but also in his letters addressed to the churches declared how many perils he underwent for Christ and by what great revelations he was raised aloft in a blessed glorification.⁵³ And when he said to his listeners without any hesitation, "Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ,"⁵⁴ what did he show them but the carvings standing in relief in the house of the Lord, which by the exceptional eminence of his virtue showed itself to be within the power of all to imitate? ON THE TEMPLE I.II.I.⁵⁵

6:19 *The Ark of the Covenant*

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT IS CHRIST. BEDE: The exposition of this has been anticipated to the effect, namely, that the secret inner house of our heavenly homeland designated the ark of the covenant, the Lord our Savior in whom alone we have a covenant of peace with the Father, [our Savior] who ascending into heaven after his resurrection placed at the right hand of his Father the flesh that he had taken from the Virgin. ON THE TEMPLE I.I2.I.⁵⁶

6:20 *The Inner Sanctuary*

THE ALTAR SIGNIFIES THE LIFE OF THE PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS. BEDE: "And the altar he also covered with cedar." He means the altar of incense which was in front of the oracle [i.e., the inner sanctuary], about which a little further down are added the words "also the whole altar, which belonged to the oracle, he covered with gold." From this we are given to understand that the same altar was indeed made of stone and overlaid with cedar and then covered with gold. It signifies typically the life of the perfectly right-

⁴⁷Acts 1:3. ⁴⁸Lk 21:34. ⁴⁹Mt 28:20. ⁵⁰Jn 16:22. ⁵¹TTH 21:38-40.

⁵²See Acts 4:32. ⁵³See 2 Cor 11:26. ⁵⁴1 Cor 11:1. ⁵⁵TTH 21:40.

⁵⁶TTH 21:43.

eous who are, as it were, placed near the oracle and giving up the basest pleasures concentrate all their attention merely on entering the kingdom of heaven. Hence quite appropriately it was not the flesh of victims that was burned on this altar but only incense, because such people no longer need to sacrifice in themselves carnal sins or seductive thoughts but only offer up the fragrance of spiritual prayers and heavenly desires through the fire of eternal love in the sight of their Creator. Now what the stone, cedar and gold represent in this kind of altar can be easily understood from what has been said above. ON THE TEMPLE 1.12.3.⁵⁷

6:21 *The Inside of the House Overlaid with Pure Gold*

THE MANIFOLD WORKS OF PIETY. BEDE: The gold leaf with which the house was covered is the manifold works of piety that pure love exhibits in the service either of its Creator or of a brother's need. The gold nails⁵⁸ with which the gold leaf was attached are the very precepts of charity or promises of eternal glory through which by the gift of the grace of Christ we are kept constant in the exercise and pursuit of virtue in case we should fail. ON THE TEMPLE 1.12.4.⁵⁹

⁵⁷TTH 21:44. ⁵⁸The text of Jerome's Vulgate, which was used by Bede for his commentary, reads, "He fastened the plates with nails of gold," whereas the Hebrew Masoretic Text reads, "He drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary." ⁵⁹TTH 21:45.



THE HOLY ORNAMENTS
OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD
1 KINGS 6:23-38

OVERVIEW: The cherubim are properly said to have been made of olive wood, because they represent the angelic retinues that are anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Wings signify the grace of perpetual and unfailing happiness of those who persevere continually in heavenly things. Two cherubim were made in order to signify a sharing in the same love, because love cannot exist between fewer than two. The cherubim stretch out their wings as if to fly because angelic spirits always have their mind in readiness to comply with the divine will. The two cherubim also symbolize the completeness and complementarity of the two Testaments (BEDE). The engravings on the walls represent either a type of the saints praying in the temple of God (EPHREM) or the manifold functions of the virtues. The floor of the house was overlaid with gold inside and outside to signify that our Lord has filled the angels and the souls of the righteous in heaven with the perfect gift of love. There was one entrance to the oracle, which symbolizes the one entrance to the church and to the kingdom of heaven. The engraved images of the cherubim and palm trees and the carvings in bold relief are all types of the works of virtue. The posts were foursquare because of the four books of the holy gospel by whose teaching we are instructed in the true faith. The three courses of polished stones, with which the inner court was built, are faith, hope and charity. The fact that the house of the Lord was built in seven years prefigures the fact that the holy church is being built of the souls of the elect for the entire duration of this world, which

is also completed in a period of six days, and it too brings its growth to an end with the end of the world (BEDE).

6:23 *Two Cherubim*

THE CHERUBIM REPRESENT THE ANGELIC RETINUES. BEDE: "Cherubim," as the prophet Ezekiel explicitly declares, is a title of dignity, and in the singular number the form cherub is used, but cherubim in the plural. Hence the figures of the cherubim that were made in the oracle can be appropriately taken to mean the angelic retinues that always wait on their Creator in heaven. And they are properly said to have been made of olive wood because, of course, angelic virtues are anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit lest they should ever grow arid in the love of God. For they are those fellow companions of ours of whom the prophet speaks in his praise of Christ: "God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows."¹ In figurative terms it was quite right that those whom their Creator later filled with the light of heavenly wisdom were made of olive wood. That is why he wanted them called cherub, which means in Latin "a great store of knowledge." And they are ten cubits high because they enjoy the denarius of eternal life having preserved ever untarnished in themselves the image of their Creator by the sanctity and uprightness and truth that they received in the first creation. For a denarius is worth ten

¹Ps 45:7 (44:8 Vg).

obols and customarily bore the name and likeness of the king. Consequently, it also makes a very fitting metaphor for the kingdom of heaven where, on the one hand, the holy angels ever remain in their Creator's likeness according to which they were made, and on the other hand, the human elect receive his image that they had lost by sinning. For "we know," he says, "that when he appears we shall be like him [and] see him as he is."² ON THE TEMPLE I.13.1.³

6:24 *Each Wing Was Five Cubits Long*

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CHERUBIM'S WINGS. BEDE: Wings when used as a figure of holy people signify their virtues whereby they delight in always flying to heavenly things and passing their lives in preoccupation with these things. But when wings are used to signify angels, what do they more aptly demonstrate than the grace of perpetual and unailing happiness of those who persevere continually in heavenly things in the service of their Creator? Or at all events because they are endowed with the lightness of spiritual nature so that they can get to wherever they want, as it were, by flying, they are here both figuratively represented with wings and actually shown with wings. Now it has been well said: "One wing of the cherub was five cubits, and the other wing of the cherub five cubits," since the angelic powers keep with untiring devotion the law of God which is written in five books, that is, by loving the Lord their God with all their strength and by loving their neighbors as themselves.⁴ "For love is the fulfilling of the law."⁵ Now "their neighbors" includes both the angelic spirits themselves reciprocally and elect human beings who are equally their fellow citizens. So the reason each wing is said to be of the same dimensions is that with the same devotion as they love each other in God they also long for our company as we ascend to them, and so two wings together take up ten cubits when, in a twofold demonstration of love, the angels rejoice in the presence of their Maker. ON THE TEMPLE I.13.2.⁶

6:25 *The Same Measure and Form*

LOVE CANNOT EXIST BETWEEN FEWER THAN TWO. BEDE: Two cherubim were made in order to signify a sharing in the same love of which we speak, because love cannot exist between fewer than two. Moreover, the reason why the Savior took care to send the disciples in twos⁷ to preach was that he might tacitly teach that those who were to preach the word of faith must before all works possess the virtue of love. And the two cherubim were of the same dimensions and shape because there is no difference of will or thought in the heavenly homeland where all are illumined by one and the same vision and glory of God present there. ON THE TEMPLE I.13.3.⁸

6:27 *In the Innermost Part of the House*

ALWAYS READY TO COMPLY WITH THE DIVINE WILL. BEDE: From what has been said already it is clear why the cherubim, whose abode is always in heaven, were placed in the middle of the interior of the temple. The cherubim, moreover, stretch out their wings as if to fly because angelic spirits always have their mind in readiness to comply with the divine will. But the fact that one cherub's wing was touching one wall and the second cherub's wing the other wall has to do with that ministry of love that the angels perform for us. The fact that the other wings in the middle of the temple touched each other expresses that grace of love with which they embrace each other. ON THE TEMPLE I.13.4.⁹

6:28 *The Cherubim Overlaid with Gold*

THE TWO CHERUBIM AS THE TWO TESTAMENTS. BEDE: The two cherubim can also stand for the two Testaments. These cherubim, no doubt, were made in the oracle¹⁰ because in the

²1 Jn 3:2. ³TTH 21:47. ⁴See Lk 10:27. ⁵Rom 13:10. ⁶TTH 21:47-48. ⁷See Lk 10:1. ⁸TTH 21:48. ⁹TTH 21:48-49. ¹⁰The inner sanctuary.

design of God's providence, which is, of course, inaccessible and incomprehensible to us, it was arranged before the world began, when and how and by what authors sacred Scripture was to be written. They were made of olive wood because the divine books were composed by men "of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed,"¹¹ men who were enlightened by the unction of the Holy Spirit. They were made of olive wood because they afford us the light of knowledge with the help of the flame of God's love that is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. They are ten cubits high because by the observance of the Decalogue of the law they preach that God is to be served since they show that those who serve God faithfully are to be rewarded with the denarius of an everlasting kingdom. They have twin sets of wings because they proclaim that the Testaments have always, both in adversity and prosperity, pursued heavenly things with tireless resolve and attained to them, because they point out to their listeners that they must do exactly the same. Five cubits is the length of one cherub's wing and five the length of the other's since in all the fluctuations of transient things the saints lay all the senses of their eyes ever on the Lord. They desire to hear the sound of his praise and to recount all his wonderful works, considering his words are sweeter to their throats than honey and the honeycomb to their mouths. Running after the odor of his ointments and while there is breath left in them and the spirit of God in their nostrils, they do not speak evil with their lips or utter folly with their tongue. Thus going on their way "with the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,"¹² they succeed in receiving the heavenly denarius that the supreme master of the household has promised to the workers in his vineyard.¹³

And the two cherubim formed one work because the writers of both documents served God with one and the same purity of work and devotedness of love and proclaim God with one harmonious voice and belief. What the New Testament relates as accomplished facts regarding

the Lord's incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension, the calling of the Gentiles, the expulsion of the Jews and the manifold affliction of the church, these same facts the Old Testament, rightly understood, truthfully foretold as events that were to happen. ON THE TEMPLE 1.13.7-8.¹⁴

6:29 *The Walls of the House*

THE SAINTS PRAYING IN THE TEMPLE.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Here it is indicated that there were four symbols of cherubim, palm trees, narcissus and lilies, which we said represent the saints praying in the temple and contemplating divine things. And these same saints were foreshadowed with a similar sense by Moses, even though he used different symbols, when he distributed the tribes of his people in four groups to the four regions of the world, so that they might all live around the tabernacle. Indeed, the tabernacle represented the person of God, whom he wanted them to contemplate and to observe constantly.¹⁵ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 6.29.¹⁶

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ENGRAVINGS. BEDE: Solomon makes cherubim in the temple walls when the Lord grants to his elect to guide their lives according to the rule of the holy Scriptures, which contain a great store of knowledge. He makes cherubim when he teaches them to imitate in this world, according to their limited capacity, the chastity of the life of angels, and this is done particularly by vigils and the divine praises, by sincere love of the Creator and the neighbor. He makes palm trees when he fixes in their minds the thought of their eternal reward so that the more they have the reward of righteousness ever before the eyes of their hearts, the less likely are they to fall from the pinnacle of uprightness. He makes several representations, as it were, standing out in relief from the wall when he assigns to the faithful the manifold functions of the virtues,

¹¹2 Chron 3:13. ¹²2 Cor 6:7. ¹³See Mt 20:1-2. ¹⁴TTH 21:50-52*.

¹⁵See Num 2. ¹⁶ESOO 1:459.

for instance, “compassion, kindness, lowliness, patience and self-restraint, to show forbearance toward one another and forgive one another and above all these things” to have “love, which is the bond of perfection.”¹⁷ That is to say, these virtues, when they become such a habit with the elect that they seem, as it were, to be naturally ingrained in them, what else are they than the pictures of the Lord’s house done in relief as if they were coming out of the wall, because they no longer learn the words and works of truth extrinsically from others but have them deeply rooted within themselves. Holding them in constant readiness, they can bring forth from their inmost hearts what ought to be done and taught. ON THE TEMPLE I.14.2.¹⁸

6:30 *The Floor Overlaid with Gold*

ALL BROTHERS IN CHRIST. BEDE: Inside and outside¹⁹ mean in the oracle and in the temple itself. Now we have said above²⁰ that the evenness of the floor denoted the humble harmony of the holy brotherhood where, though there are Jews and Gentiles, barbarians and Scythians, freeborn and slaves, highborn and lowborn,²¹ they all boast of being brothers in Christ, all boast of having the same Father who is in heaven, for no one may doubt the perfectly harmonious humility of the heavenly citizens. The reason why Solomon overlaid the floor of the house with gold inside and outside is that our king of peace²² has filled the angels and the souls of the righteous in heaven perfectly and fully with the gift of love and has set apart the citizens of the same heavenly homeland who are in pilgrimage in this world from the baseness of the rest of mortals by the hallmark of love, saying, “By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.”²³ ON THE TEMPLE I.14.3.²⁴

6:31 *Doors of Olivewood for the Inner Sanctuary*

ONE ENTRANCE. BEDE: As regards the first part

of his statement, namely, “he made little doors of olive wood,” he seems to have wanted to explain this more clearly when he added “and two doors of olive wood.”²⁵ For there was one entrance to the oracle. But this entrance was closed by two doors and was opened again when they were unlocked, just as the temple and the portico before the temple no longer had an entrance. They give rise to a certain mystery because [since there is] “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God,”²⁶ we must hope for one entrance into the present church after baptism and one entrance into the heavenly kingdom through works of faith. ON THE TEMPLE I.15.²⁷

6:32 *The Doors Covered with Carvings*

TYPES OF THE WORKS OF VIRTUE. BEDE: Now all these items, that is, cherubim and palm trees and carvings in the adornment of the temple walls, have been set forth and explained above²⁸ according to our ability. There is no need to go to the trouble of adding anything further. For the works of virtue that the church performs throughout the world in its holy and perfect members should be pursued with all diligence by those especially to whom the care of the faithful has been committed and the keys of the kingdom of heaven granted, so that to the extent that they rank higher than the rest, they should also excel them in merit of good actions. For they have the image of the cherubim engraved on them when they imitate, both in thought and action, the life of angels on earth insofar as mortals can. They resemble palm trees when they keep their minds ever steadfastly intent on the gifts of their heavenly reward. For it is with the palm that the hand

¹⁷Col 3:12-14. ¹⁸TTH 21:54*. ¹⁹Bede follows the text of Vg, which reads, “The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, both inside and outside.” ²⁰See TTH 21:35-36. ²¹See Col 3:11. ²²See 1 Chron 22:9. ²³Jn 13:35. ²⁴TTH 21:55. ²⁵Bede follows the text of Vg, which reads, “And in the entrance to the oracle he made little doors of olive wood and five-cornered posts and two doors of olive wood.” ²⁶Eph 4:5-6. ²⁷TTH 21:55. ²⁸See the passage at 6:29 entitled “The Symbolism of the Engravings.”

of a victor is adorned. They have carvings in bold relief when they show to all who observe them the clearest proofs of good works, proofs that no one can misconstrue. And all these works are covered with sheets of gold when, as has often been said and must always be said, the brightness of love outshines the rest of the flowers of virtue, especially in the eminent members of the church. ON THE TEMPLE I.I6.I.²⁹

6:33-34 *Doorposts of Olivewood and Two Doors of Cypress Wood*

AN ALLEGORY OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. BEDE: Just as the entrance to the inner sanctuary by which one reached the ark of the Lord and the cherubim signifies the entrance to the kingdom of heaven whereby we hope and desire to be introduced to the vision of our Creator and the heavenly citizens, so the entrance into the temple shows in type the beginnings of our life oriented on God when we enter the church of this present time. The latter entrance denotes our entry into the faith, the former our entry into vision. Hence the posts of this entrance were foursquare because of the four books of the holy gospel by whose teaching we are instructed in the true faith, or because of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice, on whose most firm foundation, as it were, every edifice of good actions rests; prudence, by which we learn what we ought to do and how we ought to live; fortitude, through which we carry out what we have learned must be done; and the prophet briefly sums up these virtues in one verse, saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation";³⁰ light, that is, to teach us the things we ought to do, salvation to strengthen us to do them; temperance by which we have discretion so as not to find ourselves giving more or less than the right amount of attention to prudence or fortitude; and since anyone who exercises prudence, fortitude and temperance will be proved beyond dispute to be just, the fourth virtue that follows after prudence, fortitude and temperance

is justice. ON THE TEMPLE I.I6.4.³¹

6:35 *Cherubim, Palm Trees and Open Flowers*

SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND FAITH.

BEDE: [These symbols] have already been expounded above, because the same representations or carvings were wrought on the walls of the house and on the inner doors, and the meaning of the figures is obviously that the first door of the temple actually received the same representations and carvings and the same cherubim as the inner parts. The reason for this is that the same mysteries of faith, hope and charity, which the sublime and the perfect each grasp in a sublime manner and that all the elect in heaven fully understand in the divine vision, are handed on also in the instruction of the unlettered for each one to learn and confess, in as much as those who have been initiated into the mysteries sometimes also succeed in understanding what they have devoutly believed. ON THE TEMPLE I.I6.8.³²

6:36 *The Inner Court³³ Built with Three Courses of Dressed Stone*

FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY AND GOOD WORKS.

BEDE: Hence it is aptly noted that the priests' court was constructed of three courses of polished stones and one course of cedar beams. For the three courses of polished stones are faith, hope and charity, and the expression "of polished stones" is appropriate because each one needs a certain amount of intelligence to discern how he ought to believe and what he ought to hope for as well as love. But the one course of cedar beams is good works performed without being vitiated by outward show, since, if this condition is lacking, faith, hope and charity cannot be genuine. For it has often been said that on account of their pleasant fragrance and naturally incorruptible quality,

²⁹TTH 21:57*. ³⁰Ps 27:1 (26:1 Vg). ³¹TTH 21:59-60*. ³²TTH 21:63. ³³That is, the court reserved to the priests.

cedar beams symbolize the enduring character and good repute of works of piety. All the elect who aim at pleasing God by faith, hope, love and action get as far as this court. Beyond it climb the perfect by the exalted grace of their merits since they reach such a peak of virtue that they can say to their hearers, "Be imitators of us as we also are of Christ,"³⁴ and boast and say, "Do you not know that we shall judge the angels? How much more the things of this world?"³⁵ ON THE TEMPLE 2.17.8.³⁶

6:37-38 *Seven Years in Building It*

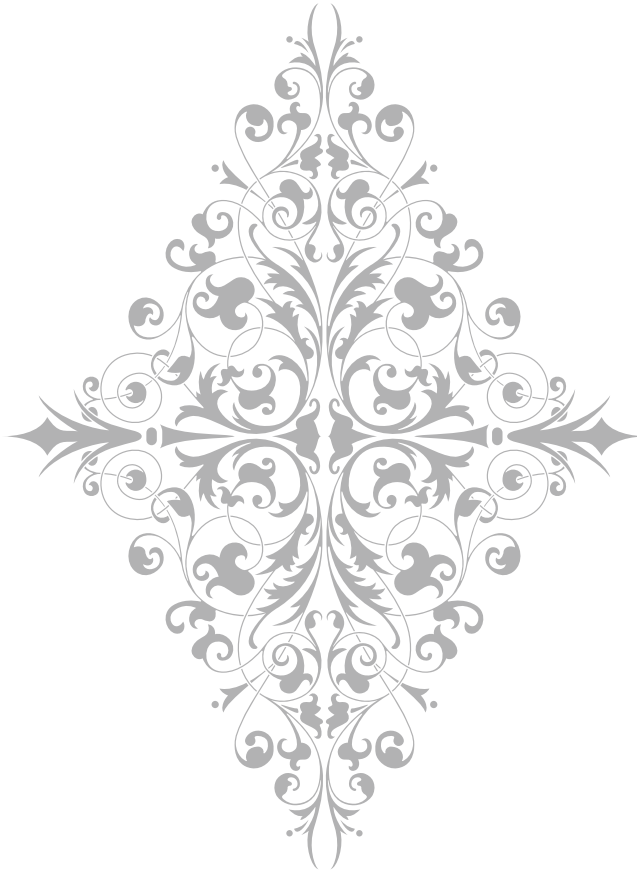
THE TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED IN SEVEN

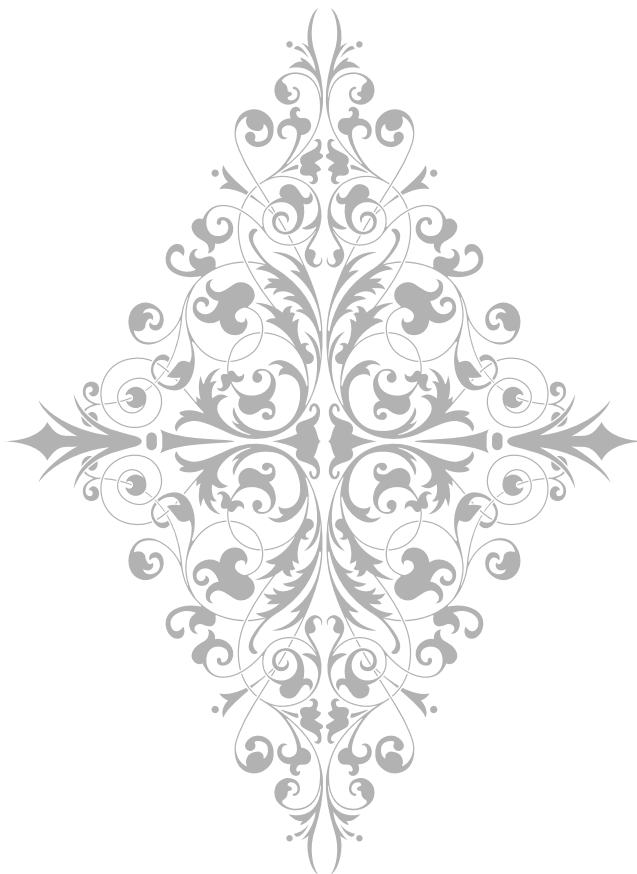
YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS. BEDE: The allegorical meaning of the fact that the house of the Lord was built in seven years is plain, because, of course, the holy church is being built of the souls of the elect for the entire duration of this world, which is also completed in a period of six days, and it too brings its growth to an end with the end of the world. Or, at all events, it is built in seven years on account of the import of the grace of the Spirit through which the church alone gets the authority to be the church. For Isaiah enumerates the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit without which no one can either become a believer or keep the faith or by the merit of faith attain the crown.³⁷ On the other hand, the fact that it was in the eighth year and in the eighth month of that year that the house was completed in all its parts and all its specifications has to do with the world to come and the day of judgment when the holy church will already have reached such a degree of perfection that it will not be possible to find anything to add to it. For it will then have what that dutiful devotee suppliantly asked of the Lord, saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."³⁸ For it is well known that the day of judgment is often represented typologically in the Scriptures by the number eight from the fact

that it follows this world, which lasts for seven days. This is also why the prophet gave the title "For the eighth" to the psalm he used to sing through fear of this severe judge, beginning with the words "Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation, nor chastise me in your wrath,"³⁹ and so forth.

But there arises the rather important question as to how the house of the Lord is said to have been completed in all its parts in the eighth month and in all its specifications, whereas in what follows one reads that its dedication was completed in the seventh month.⁴⁰ On the other hand, it is not credible that Solomon, though he built the temple in seven years and completed it in the eighth month of the eighth year, nevertheless deferred the dedication of the completed building until the seventh month of the ninth year. Hence it seems more likely that the house was built in seven years and seven months so that the solemn ceremony of dedication might be celebrated in the same seventh month, and, as the Chronicles relate,⁴¹ on the twenty-third day of that month Solomon sent the people away to their tents, and thus after one week when the eighth month had come around, the house of the Lord was found to be complete and already finished, that is to say, both in all its parts and in its actual dedication. Unless perhaps one should think that after the dedication of the temple some extra features were added for its services up to the beginning of the eighth month, the king speeding up the work so that the temple would be dedicated in the seventh month, . . . and that in this way the two things might turn out to be true, namely, both that the temple had been completed in the eighth month in all its parts and specifications and that it had been dedicated in the seventh month. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.1-2.⁴²

³⁴1 Cor 11:1. ³⁵1 Cor 6:3. ³⁶TTH 21:71. ³⁷See Is 11:2-3. ³⁸Jn 14:8. ³⁹Ps 6:1-2. ⁴⁰See 1 Kings 8:2. ⁴¹2 Chron 7:10. ⁴²TTH 21:71-73.







THE FURNISHINGS OF
SOLOMON'S ROYAL PALACE
1 KINGS 7:1-51

OVERVIEW: The House of the Forest of Lebanon took its name from the fact that weapons abounded there, just as trees abound in the forests of Lebanon (ISHO'DAD). The Tyrian craftsman whom Solomon employed to help in his work stands for the ministers of the word chosen from the Gentiles. The pillars symbolize James, Cephas and John, who preceded the coming of our Redeemer, to bear testimony to his coming. The two capitals, which were placed on these pillar tops, are the two Testaments, which holy teachers are bound both in mind and body to meditate on and observe. The reason why there were seven rows of nets in both capitals is that it was through the grace of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the number seven, that the fathers of both Testaments received the privilege of election. Both the rows have seven rows of nets in order to show that without the grace of the Holy Spirit neither God nor the neighbor can be loved. The lilies signify the glory of the heavenly homeland and the beauty of immortality fragrant with the flowers of paradise. The two hundred pomegranates around the second capital suggests mystically that the people of both Testaments, who were to be unified in Christ, were to be brought in to re-

ceive the crown of eternal life (BEDE). "Jachin" indicates the humility of priesthood, while "Boaz" signifies the power of kingship (ISHO'DAD).

The molten sea was made as a figure of the laver of salvation in which we are cleansed for the remission of our sins. The beveled sculptures surrounding the sea rightly denote examples of former times that we must judiciously ponder to see by what works the saints have pleased God (BEDE). The oxen allude to the perfect structure of the created world (ISHO'DAD). By the brim of a cup is expressed the taste of the Lord's passion, and by the leaf of a crisped lily the glory of his resurrection. The length of four cubits of the bases refers to the patience of long endurance, the width to the expansiveness of love, the height to the hope of heavenly reward. The surface of the bases was carved with mystical figures on every side because the minds of the saints display the charm of the virtues in everything. The four wheels are the four books of the Gospels, which are aptly compared with wheels because, just as the wheel can travel with the greatest rapidity wherever it is steered, so with the Lord's help the word of the gospel filled all the regions of the world. The whole cubit in the laver denotes the

perfection of good works. The number forty conventionally typifies great perfection. The fact that the sea was placed at the right side of the temple signifies that it is through the bath of baptism that we must reach the kingdom of heaven. It is appropriate that the vessels of the Lord's house were cast in the region of the Jordan, namely, in the river in which our Lord deigned to be baptized, because every baptism of the faithful in which they are consecrated to the Lord is celebrated on the model of his baptism. The table of gold is the sacred Scripture that is rich in the light of spiritual understanding. The lampstands symbolize the words of God, because they give the light of wisdom to the erring. The hinges represent the angels and the holy people who are made of gold because of the merit of their own glory or because of the love they have for God. The reason why Solomon made one house of the Lord but furnished it with many treasuries was that there is one house of the Father not made with hands that will last eternally in heaven, but many mansions in it will receive all who fear him (BEDE).

7:2 *The House of the Forest of the Lebanon*

THE MEANING OF THE "HOUSE OF THE FOREST OF THE LEBANON." ISHO'DAD OF MERV:

"The House of the Forest of the Lebanon" does not mean that this house was built in a forest or in Lebanon, as is sometimes asserted, but that [Solomon] built a huge house where weapons were gathered in large quantity, just as the Forest of Lebanon [abounds] in trees. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 7.2.¹

7:13-14 *Solomon Invited Hiram, an Artisan in Working Bronze*

A TYPE OF THE MINISTERS CHOSEN FROM THE GENTILES. BEDE: And this was done on account of the mystery. For the Tyrian craftsman whom Solomon employed to help in his work stands for the ministers of the word chosen from

the Gentiles. The allusion to this man as a craftsman is a beautiful touch because he was the son of a widow of Israel, a person who is sometimes wont to be taken as prefiguring the church of the present day from whom her husband, namely, Christ, after having tasted death, rose and ascended into heaven, leaving her meanwhile to sojourn on the earth. However, there is no need to labor the explanation of how the sons of this widow are preachers since all the elect individually profess themselves children of the church. Also since in regard to these preachers of the New Testament a special promise is made in the words of the prophet: "Instead of your fathers, sons are born to you; you shall make them princes over all the earth."² Now Hiram did all Solomon's work, that is to say, because the holy teachers, while they devote themselves faithfully to the ministry of the word, do indeed do the work of God, since by speaking outwardly they open the way of truth to those whom he himself has predestined to eternal life by enlightening them inwardly. "I," he says, "planted, Apollo watered; but God gave the increase."³ Moreover, he made the work of bronze because the energetic teacher seeks to entrust the word to those who . . . desire to receive it with reverence and keep it to the end, and who also by preaching to others do their utmost to spread more widely whatever right doctrine they have learned themselves; for it is common knowledge that bronze is a metal which is very durable and produces all kinds of sounds. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.3.⁴

7:15 *Two Pillars of Bronze*

ILLUSTRIOUS TEACHERS BORE TESTIMONY TO THE COMING OF OUR REDEEMER. BEDE:

Hence it is good that we are told that two bronze pillars of excellent and marvelous work were set up in this porch⁵ and that capitals worked to resemble lilies were placed on top of them. The

¹CSCO 229:105. ²Ps 45:16 (44:17 Vg). ³1 Cor 3:6. ⁴TTH 21:73-74*. ⁵See 1 Kings 6:3 and notes.

pillars stood in front of the door of the temple because illustrious teachers, concerning whom the apostle says, "James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars,"⁶ precede the coming of our Redeemer, to bear testimony to the coming of the one who said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved."⁷ One of these [pillars] stood at the right of the door and the other at the left, because they foretold to the people of Israel, then fervent with divine faith and charity, the future incarnation of their Redeemer; and they proclaimed to the Gentiles, still as it were facing north, numb with the cold of unbelief, that this [door] was to be opened to make way for the entry of the Redeemer. That the capitals of the pillars were made by a workman to resemble lilies signifies that the entire import of the preaching [of James, Cephas and John] resounded with the clarity of everlasting happiness and promised that his glory would be seen by their hearers. He who existed as God before the ages became a human being at the end of the ages, so that like the flower of the lily he might have a golden color within and be white on the outside. For what is the significance of the glow of gold surrounded by whiteness except the brilliance of divinity in a human being? He first revealed this human being as brilliant because of his virtues, and after his death he clothed him in the snowy white splendor of incorruptibility.

HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.25.⁸

7:16 *Two Capitals of Molten Bronze*

THE TWO CAPITALS AS THE TWO TESTAMENTS. BEDE: The tops of the pillars, that is, their highest part, are the hearts of faithful teachers whose God-centered thoughts guide all their actions and words as the head guides the members of the body. On the other hand, the two capitals that were placed on these pillar tops are the two Testaments, which holy teachers are totally bound both in mind and body to meditate and observe. It is appropriate, then, that both capitals were five cubits high because the Scripture of the

Mosaic law comprises five books, and furthermore the entire collection of Old Testament writings embraces the five ages of the world. But the New Testament does not proclaim to us something different from what Moses and the prophets had said should be proclaimed: "If you believed Moses you would believe me, for he wrote of me."⁹ For Moses wrote much about the Lord not only in figure but also quite plainly as when he relates what had been promised to Abraham in the Lord's words: "In your seed shall the families of the earth bless themselves,"¹⁰ and when in his own words he says to the Israelites, "The Lord will raise up for you among your brothers a prophet like me; him you shall hear according to all things whatsoever he shall speak to you."¹¹ Of this prophecy the voice of the Father from heaven reminded the disciples when, as the Lord appeared to them in glory between Moses himself and Elijah on the holy mountain, it rang out, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to him."¹² Therefore, with the admirable harmony of divine activity, the grace of the New Testament was hidden under the veil of the Old at first, but now the mysteries of the Old Testament are revealed by the light of the New, as if the reason why the capital of each of the two pillars was five cubits high was that it is manifest that the grace of the perfection of the gospel too is innate in the Old Testament whose mysteries are noted beforehand in the five books of the Law or are all comprised more fully in the five ages of the world; and so it happens that each eminent preacher, whether destined to be sent to the Jews or to the Gentiles, fortified with the harmonious testimony of the word of God, keeps the sure and correct rule of faith and conduct free from error, and in the course of his teaching he knows how to draw forth "out of his treasure house new things and old."¹³ Not only do the Testaments harmonize with each other in their account of the divine mysteries, but also all the

⁶Gal 2:9. ⁷Jn 10:9. ⁸CS 111:266-67. ⁹Jn 5:46. ¹⁰Acts 3:25. ¹¹Acts 3:22. ¹²Mt 17:5. ¹³Mt 13:52.

elect who are written about in the books of these Testaments are endowed with the one faith and are bound to each other by the same charity. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.8.¹⁴

7:17 Seven Nets for Each Capital

SEVEN DENOTES THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. BEDE: For the number seven is conventionally used to denote the grace of the Holy Spirit, as attested in the Apocalypse by John, who, after saying that he had seen “the lamb with seven horns and seven eyes,” went on to add, by way of explanation, “which are the seven spirits of God sent into the whole world.”¹⁵ This the prophet Isaiah more clearly explains when, speaking of the Lord who was to be born in the flesh, he says, “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.”¹⁶ The reason why there were seven rows of net in both capitals is that it was through the grace of one and the same septiform Spirit that the Fathers of both Testaments received the privilege of election. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.10.¹⁷

7:18 Columns with Two Rows

THE VIRTUE OF LOVE AND THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. BEDE: True, there were two rows of networks right around the capital, but both rows were repeated seven times over until the capital was encircled and the row rejoined itself after going full circle. Nor is the figure of the mystery obscured by the fact that there are two rows of network since it is well known that the virtue of love consists of two distinct aspects, namely, when we are bidden to love God with our whole heart, our whole mind and our whole strength and our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁸ But both of those rows have seven rows of nets because without the grace of the Holy Spirit neither God nor the neighbor can be loved. For

the statement “because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”¹⁹ remains true. But where the love of God is, there, assuredly, the love of the neighbor also is poured into the hearts of the faithful because, of course, the one cannot be had without the other. Furthermore, these networks were made to cover the capitals, that is, to encircle them completely, because, rightly understood, every page of holy Scripture echoes throughout with the sound of the grace of love and peace. For the capitals are indeed the volumes of the divine Word, the networks are the bonds of mutual love, and the capitals are covered with networks when the sacred words, if I may say so, are shown on all sides to be clothed with the gift of love. For even in the things that we do not understand in the Scriptures, love is abundantly in evidence. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.11.²⁰

7:19 Capitals of Lily Work

THE GLORY AND BEAUTY OF IMMORTALITY. BEDE: What else can the lilies mean but the glory of the heavenly homeland and the beauty of immortality fragrant with the flowers of paradise? What else can the four cubits mean but the word of the gospel, which promises us entry into eternal happiness and shows us the road by which we may reach it? Therefore, when holy teachers show us the promised threshold of the heavenly kingdom in the four books of the holy gospel, it is as if the tops of the pillars display the lily work of four cubits that is on them. Taking this text literally, it should be noted that when the lily work on the capitals is recorded as having been of four cubits and the words “in height” or “in width” are not added, it is, of course, left to the reader’s judgment whether this ought to be understood as referring to height or to width. It is agreed beyond the slightest doubt that a pillar that a

¹⁴TTH 21:76-77*. ¹⁵Rev 5:6. ¹⁶Is 11:2-3. ¹⁷TTH 21:78. ¹⁸See Mk 12:30-31. ¹⁹Rom 5:5. ²⁰TTH 21:78-79*.

rope of twelve cubits spanned would be four cubits thick. For the circumference of every circle is three times the length of its diameter. Finally because the bronze sea was ten cubits in diameter, as we read in what follows, it was thirty cubits in circumference. But because the lily work is said to have been four cubits, whether this means in width or height, at all events, the meaning of the figure is clear, because it is only through the gospel that the voice most ardently longed for has sounded: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."²¹ ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.13.²²

7:20 *Two Hundred Pomegranates*

RECEIVING THE CROWN OF ETERNAL LIFE.

BEDE: We have said that the pomegranates were a type of either the whole church or of each individual believer,²³ but the number one hundred that was originally applied to the right hand was sometimes apt to be used as a figure of eternal beatitude. There were twice this number of pomegranates around the second capital to suggest mystically that the people of both Testaments who were to be unified in Christ were to be brought in to receive the crown of eternal life. In keeping with this figure are the words written about the apostles fishing after the Lord's resurrection when they saw him standing on the shore: "For they were not far from the land, but, as it were, two hundred cubits, dragging the net with the fish."²⁴ For the disciples indeed drag the net full of large fish for two hundred cubits to the Lord who is already on the shore showing the effects of his resurrection when holy preachers entrust the word of faith to both Jews and Gentiles and drag the elect of both peoples from the waves of this present world and lead them to the glory of the peace and immortality to come. The circumference, therefore, of the second capital has two rows of pomegranates when the sublimity of the heavenly kingdom assembles the elect of both peoples in one citadel of peace. ON THE TEMPLE 2.18.15.²⁵

7:21 *Jachin and Boaz*

JACHIN AND BOAZ. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [The Scripture] calls the [pillar] on the south "Jachin," indicating through it the humility of the priesthood; while the one on the north, called "Boaz," signifies the power of kingship. It is possible that in Hebrew the two pillars indicate the two powers. The capitals at their top symbolize the power that is due to priests and kings and the weights of government, which are imposed on them. The sculptures, the lily work and the garlands of flowers²⁶ signify the brightness and dignity of priesthood and kingship. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 7.21.²⁷

7:23 *The Molten Sea*

SYMBOLS OF PURIFICATION, BAPTISM AND

SALVATION. BEDE: "He also made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, completely round." This molten sea was made as a figure of the laver of salvation in which we are cleansed for the remission of our sins. For priests were washed in it, as the Chronicles assure us;²⁸ but it is agreed that all the elect are called priests in a typological sense in the Scriptures since they are members of the high priest Jesus Christ. And rightly has Scripture given the name of sea to this vessel, in memory, that is, of the Red Sea in which once, through the destruction of the Egyptians and the deliverance of the people of God, the form of baptism was anticipated, as the apostle explains when he says, "that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea."²⁹ Now the sacrament of baptism both requires of us purity of life and promises us the glory of eternal life in the world to come, both of which things are denoted in this bronze sea in one sentence where it is said to be ten cubits from

²¹Mt 4:17. ²²TTH 21:81. ²³See TTH 21:79-81. ²⁴Jn 21:8. ²⁵TTH 21:83. ²⁶See 1 Kings 5:16-18. ²⁷CSCO 229:106. ²⁸See 2 Chron 4:6 ²⁹1 Cor 10:1-2.

brim to brim. For by the Ten Commandments in the law the Lord expressed all that we must do. Likewise by the denarius he indicated the reward of good deeds when he foretold that it was to be given to those working in the vineyard.³⁰ The reason why the sea was ten cubits from brim to brim was that the whole choir of the faithful from the first one baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to the last to believe and be baptized at the end of the world must enter on one and the same way of truth and hope for a common crown of righteousness from the Lord. It was completely circular in order to signify that the whole universe all the way around was to be cleansed in the laver of life from the filth of its sins.

In this regard the remark is well made that “its height was five cubits,” because, of course, whatever fault we have committed with the sense of sight or hearing or smell or taste or touch, all this the grace of God washes away from us through the ablution of the life-giving font. But the remission of past sins is not enough if one does not thereafter devote oneself to good works; otherwise, if the devil, after leaving a person, sees such a one to be lacking in good actions, he comes back in greater numbers and makes “the last state of that person worse than the first.”³¹

Hence it is fittingly added, “And a line of thirty cubits compassed it all the way around.” For by the line can fittingly be meant the discipline of the heavenly precepts with which we are restrained from the indulgence of our passions since Scripture says that “a threefold cord is not easily broken.”³² [This is] because, of course, the observance of the commandments of God, which is established in the hearts of the elect by faith, hope and the love of an eternal reward, cannot be frustrated by any obstacle of temporal things. And the line encircles the sea when by works of piety we strive to enhance the sacrament of baptism that we have received. Now this line is aptly said to be three cubits long. For five times six make thirty. By the number six in which the Lord both made humankind when it did not exist and remade it when it had perished, our good actions

are also rightly represented, and six is multiplied by five to make thirty, when we humbly subject all our bodily senses to divine things. However, there is also another sense in which we can quite appropriately take this number thirty as applying mystically to the sea. For three tens make thirty. And after the flood, from the issue of Noah’s three sons, the human race filled the whole expanse of the universe;³³ for the tribe of Shem occupied Asia, Ham’s descendants occupied Africa, and the progeny of Japheth occupied Europe and the islands of the sea. And because, together with the performance of good works and the hope of heavenly rewards, the sacrament of baptism was to be administered to all the nations, it was fitting that a line of thirty cubits should encircle the sea, in which the water of baptism was prefigured. But it must also be said that the Lord at the age of thirty years came to the Jordan to be baptized by John.³⁴ For since by his baptism that he received at the age of thirty he consecrated for us the water of the laver of salvation, it is right that a line should encircle the sea, which is a figure of our baptism, so that, by the gift of him who underwent baptism without sin, it might be signified that baptism was specifically given to all of us who believe in him for the remission of our sins. ON THE TEMPLE 2.19.1-3.³⁵

7:24 *Two Rows of Panels*

EXAMPLES FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE FAITHFUL. BEDE: “And a carved work under its brim surrounded it, encircling the sea for ten cubits. There were two rows cast of chamfered sculptures.”³⁶ Since it has been said above that a line of thirty cubits encircled the sea and it is now added that this carved work under the brim went around it for ten cubits, it is obvious from both accounts that the vessel was bent backwards and

³⁰See Mt 20:2. ³¹Lk 11:24-26. ³²Eccles 4:12. ³³See Gen 9:18-19.

³⁴See Lk 3:23. ³⁵TTH 21:84-86*. ³⁶The text of Vg (used by Bede) differs here from the Hebrew text, which reads, “There were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast.”

spread out like a bowl, because from a circumference of thirty cubits, which it measured at the brim, it narrowed to ten cubits. The chamfered sculpture is one that represents some historical events. Hence also the chamfered sculptures surrounding the sea rightly denote examples of former times that we must judiciously ponder to see by what works the saints have pleased God from the beginning and with what obstinacy the reprobate persisted in crimes and with what wickedness they perished because of their crimes; how in the beginning of the nascent world Cain was condemned for the malice of envy and Abel crowned for the merit of his uprightness;³⁷ how Lamech was cursed for his adultery and murder³⁸ and Enoch brought back to paradise for the grace of his piety;³⁹ how after the flood Ham was detested by his father for his lack of filial piety and the peoples of Shem and Japheth were granted a perpetual blessing for their reverential obedience;⁴⁰ how Abraham was made the heir of the divine promise in recognition of his faith⁴¹ while the numerous other nations were left in their ancestral unbelief; how when the Lord came in the flesh, Judea was rejected for the offense of unbelief and the Gentiles brought back to salvation by the grace of faith, and other things of the kind in both Testaments, which, when judiciously and devoutly contemplated, are of great profit to all earnest-minded people. And that perhaps is the reason why two orders of chamfered sculptures were made in the bronze sea, namely, that those who were immersed in the font of baptism may listen carefully to the stories of both Testaments; and the reason why they were ten cubits in circumference was that they might strive to imitate whomsoever they perceived in these stories to have been committed to carrying out the heavenly commands and totally rapt in the pursuit of heavenly rewards. ON THE TEMPLE 2.19.4.⁴²

7:25 *The Sea Was Set on Twelve Oxen*

THE SEA AND THE OXEN. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [The sea] is set on the oxen in order not to be defiled by the ground. The oxen allude to the per-

fect structure of the created world, because it was prescribed in the Law that this animal should be offered in sacrifice;⁴³ at the same time, the nourishment of human beings reaches its maturity through the strength of the ox. Their number of twelve refers to the constant revolution of an entire year which is accomplished in twelve months. Through their division into groups of three, which are set toward each cardinal point, [the Scripture] alludes to the four seasons. Finally, "the interior of the house" is called "the space under the sea." The water contained in the sea was used for the washing of the victims. It is possible that small ships and other objects, which are connected to the sea, were on it, and for this reason it was called "the sea." BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 7.25.⁴⁴

7:26 *Its Brim Was Like the Brim of a Cup*

THE PASSION OF THE LORD AND THE GLORY OF HIS RESURRECTION. BEDE: For by the brim of a cup is expressed the taste of the Lord's passion, and by the leaf of a crisped lily the glory of his resurrection is openly revealed. For that the chalice of his passion is indicated in the cup is attested by the Lord, who on approaching his passion prayed to his Father, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this chalice from me";⁴⁵ but the lily, which, in addition to the grace of a most pleasant fragrance, displayed a white color on the outside and a golden color on the inside, appositely suggests the glory of the resurrection of him who showed the disciples the immortality of his body externally and at the same time taught that there was within him a soul shining with divine light. One can also fittingly take the crisped lily as the "mediator of God and mankind"⁴⁶ himself crowned with glory and honor on account of the suffering of his death, who prior to his passion was still, as it were, a closed lily and

³⁷See Gen 4:3-16. ³⁸See Gen 4:19-24. ³⁹See Gen 5:24. ⁴⁰See Gen 9:20-27. ⁴¹See Gen 15:4-6. ⁴²TTH 21:86-87*. ⁴³See Lev 1:3. ⁴⁴CSCO 229:106-7. ⁴⁵Lk 22:42. ⁴⁶1 Tim 2:5.

shone forth as an illustrious human being by reason of his signs and wonders, but after his resurrection and ascension showed himself to the citizens of the heavenly homeland a crisped lily because he showed forth in his assumed humanity the power of the divine glory that he had with the Father before the world was.⁴⁷ ON THE TEMPLE 2.19.8.⁴⁸

7:27 *The Measurements of Each Stand*

FIGURES OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. BEDE: However, that each of the bases was four cubits long and four cubits high is easy to understand. For the length refers to the patience of long endurance, the width to the expansiveness of love, the height to the hope of heavenly reward. Moreover, there are four principal virtues on which the rest of the structure of the virtues depends, namely, prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice, and the reason why the length and width of the bases was four cubits was that holy preachers, whether they endure outwardly the adversities of the world, the lengthy exile and present labors, or expand their heart in the love of their Creator and of their neighbors with inward joy, always pay attention to the virtues, that is, by prudently distinguishing between good things and evil, courageously bearing adversity, restraining their heart from its desire of pleasures and maintaining uprightness in their manner of acting. But the height of the bases is three cubits when, through the exercise of the virtues that they practice by the endurance of evils and the love of what is good, they strive with sustained resolve to attain the vision of the holy Trinity. ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.3.⁴⁹

7:28-29 *Borders Within the Frames*

THE SAINTS ARE TIRELESS IN PERFORMING GOOD WORKS. BEDE: Hence the surface of the bases was not level at any point, but whichever side one turned, it was carved with mystical figures because the minds of the saints, indeed their

whole way of life, displays the charm of the virtues in everything, and not an empty or idle hour passes them by that they fail to have time for good works or words or, at all events, thoughts. They have little crowns carved on them when they yearn with untiring longing for entry into eternal life; they have ledges when, amid their longing for the life of heaven that is above, they never undo the bonds of fraternal intercourse that is at hand; they have lions between the little crowns and ledges when they so raise their minds to hope for heavenly things and so open them out to the love of their neighbor that they do not shirk the zealous exercise of stern denunciation on any sinners entrusted to their charge. In addition to lions, they have oxen when they employ even the invective of correction in a spirit of meekness, when, in the heat of rebuking, they never cease to have the cloven hoof of prudent action and word or to roll the words of divine reading around in the mouth as if ruminating on them. Finally, blessed Stephen, the one who was the pillar of excellence of the Lord's temple, seemed to show the fierce teeth and claws of a lion when he said to his persecutors, "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit; which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" and so forth;⁵⁰ but in saying this he showed how much of the compassion of bovine meekness he nurtured in his heart within, when, for these same persecutors raging to kill him, he knelt and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."⁵¹ But because we can have neither hope of things eternal in heaven, nor love of neighbor on earth, nor the fervor of trenchant zeal nor the gentleness of compassionate restraint, without knowledge of the holy Scriptures, it is aptly remarked that after crown and ledges, after lions and oxen, cherubim too were carved. For it is generally accepted that cherubim are a type of sacred scripture, whether because the two cherubim on the propitiatory of

⁴⁷Jn 17:5. ⁴⁸TTH 21:89. ⁴⁹TTH 21:94-95. ⁵⁰Acts 7:51-52. ⁵¹Acts 7:60.

the ark were fashioned as a figure of the two Testaments that sing in harmony of Christ or because the name itself means “much knowledge.”⁵² ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.5.⁵³

7:30 Four Bronze Wheels and Axles of Bronze

THE FOUR WHEELS ARE THE FOUR BOOKS OF THE GOSPELS.

BEDE: The four wheels are the four books of the Gospels, which are very aptly compared with wheels because, just as the wheel’s whirling motion can travel with the greatest rapidity wherever it is steered, so with the Lord’s help through the instrumentality of the apostles the word of the gospel filled all the regions of the world in a short space; as the wheel raises from the earth the chariot laid on it, and when raised carries it where the driver steers it, so the preaching of the gospel lifts up the minds of the elect from earthly cravings to heavenly desires and, having lifted them up, guides them to progress in good works or to the ministry of preaching, in whichever direction the helping grace of the Spirit wills. For since, in the text that follows, it says that “they were the kind of wheels usually designed for a chariot,” and moreover, we read of the saints, “The chariot of God is attended by ten thousands; thousands of them that rejoice,”⁵⁴

why, then, is it that the wheels of the bases are compared with the wheels of chariots, unless it is that one and the same word of the gospel makes some of those whom it teaches chariots of God and others pillars of God’s temple? ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.7.⁵⁵

7:31-32 An Opening Within the Crown

UNITY IN BAPTISM AND PERFECTION OF GOOD WORKS.

BEDE: The mouth of the laver was one cubit on account of the unity of confession and faith because we are all baptized in the confession of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as the apostle says: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”⁵⁶

And the mouth itself was at the top of the capital⁵⁷ to teach that the way to the heavenly kingdom had been opened to us through baptism. But the actual laver was a cubit and a half in size, in view, no doubt, of the perfection of good works and the beginning of contemplation. For the whole cubit in the laver denotes the perfection of good works. ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.9.⁵⁸

7:38 Each Basin Held Forty Baths

THE NUMBER OF PERFECTION. BEDE: The number forty conventionally typifies great perfection because, of course, four tens make forty; now there are ten precepts whereby our whole code of conduct is laid down in the divine law, but four books of the Gospels in which entry into our heavenly homeland was opened to us through the plan of the Lord’s incarnation. And because all who are involved in the ministry of sacred baptism must, together with the faith and mysteries of the gospel, show the fruits of upright conduct, it is fitting that each of the lavers in which the whole burnt offerings were washed should hold forty baths. ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.12.⁵⁹

7:39 The Sea Set on the Southeast Corner of the House

THE BATH OF BAPTISM. BEDE: “And the sea he set on the right side of the temple facing the east southwards.”⁶⁰ And this was placed in the same court to the east. His words, “on the right side of the temple,” he repeats when he says “southwards.” For those who entered the court from the east had first to turn southwards, where the sea stood in the very corner ready for the priests to

⁵²See Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72.4[line 11]). ⁵³TTH 21:95-96. ⁵⁴Ps 68:17 (67:18 Vg). ⁵⁵TTH 21:97. ⁵⁶Eph 4:5-6. ⁵⁷This is the reading of 1 Kings 7:31 in Vg, whose text is employed by Bede throughout his commentary. ⁵⁸TTH 21:99. ⁵⁹TTH 21:101*. ⁶⁰Instead of “he set the sea on the southeast corner of the house,” which is the reading of the Hebrew Bible, the text of Vg, which is employed by Bede, reads, “And the sea he set on the right side of the temple facing the east southwards.”

wash; then, as they proceeded inside, they were met by lavers placed on either side for washing the victims; inside these was a bronze dais five cubits long and five cubits wide and three cubits high, on which Solomon stood when dedicating the temple;⁶¹ then as they proceeded further they came to the altar of burnt offering facing the south side of the court, then the temple porticoes or vestibule in which were bronze pillars around the door of the temple. Therefore, the fact that he placed the sea at the right side of the temple signifies that it is through the bath of baptism we must reach the kingdom of heaven, which is properly represented by the term "right hand." For "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved."⁶² For where right as well as left hand are taken in the positive sense, they indicate either Judea and the Gentiles, as we have said above in the explanation of the bases, or the present and future life of the church, or the happy and sad things of the world, or something of the sort, but where the right hand by itself is used in the positive sense, it more frequently stands for eternal joys. But the fact that he made the sea face eastwards has virtually the same significance, namely, that the splendor of eternal glory is revealed to us through the bath of the holy font; the fact that it was at the south side of the court signifies that the faithful are apt to be kindled into a blazing fire of genuine love through the reception of the Holy Spirit, for in the Scriptures the heat of the noon-day sun customarily meant the ardor of love and the light of the Holy Spirit, through whom this love is poured forth in the hearts of the elect. ON THE TEMPLE 2.20.15.⁶³

7:45-46 All the Vessels Were Cast in the Plain of the Jordan

WHY WERE ALL THE VESSELS CAST IN THE REGION OF THE JORDAN? BEDE: It is appropriate that the vessels of the Lord's house were cast in the region of the Jordan, namely, in the river in which our Lord deigned to be baptized and by his immersion in the waves of its waters changed the

element for us into a bath for sins. For every baptism of the faithful in which they are consecrated to the Lord is celebrated on the model of his baptism whereby he himself sanctified the waters. It is proper that the vessels of the Lord's house should have been made in the country of the Jordan, for there is no other way for us to become vessels of election and mercy than by looking to his baptism that he underwent in that river and making sure that we too are washed in that life-giving river. However, it must be noted that he says these vessels were made not only in the country around the Jordan but also in its plains to signify the multiplication of the faithful that was to take place not only in Judea but also in the wide world of all the nations in fulfillment of the prophecy that says, "The plains and everything in them will rejoice."⁶⁴ ON THE TEMPLE 2.21.1.⁶⁵

7:48 A Golden Table for the Bread of the Presence⁶⁶

THE GOLDEN TABLE IS THE SACRED SCRIPTURE. BEDE: The table of gold is the sacred Scripture, rich in the light of spiritual understanding of which the psalmist says to the Lord, "You have prepared a table before me in the presence of those who afflict me."⁶⁷ For lest our enemies who afflict us should divert us into the path of error, our Creator has prepared for us a table of knowledge to strengthen us in the true faith. For the loaves of proposition are the holy teachers whose salutary words or works, anyone who searches in the divine pages will find proposed to us as a model for living. Hence it was prescribed in Exodus that twelve of these loaves be made,⁶⁸ that is, on account of the twelve apostles through whose ministry both the New Testament Scripture was written and the mysteries of the Old Testament revealed by the condescension of the Lord. That is to say, this number designates not

⁶¹See 1 Kings 8:63-64. ⁶²Mk 16:16. ⁶³TTH 21:102-3*. ⁶⁴Ps 96:12 (95:12 Vg). ⁶⁵TTH 21:103-4*. ⁶⁶Or proposition. ⁶⁷Ps 23:5 (22:5 Vg). ⁶⁸See Exod 25:30; Lev 24:5-6.

only these apostles but also all who, by proclaiming the word, administer the nourishment of life to the faithful, because, of course, all follow the same norm of teaching as the apostles received from the Lord. ON THE TEMPLE 2.22.4.⁶⁹

7:49 Lampstands of Gold, Five on the South Side and Five on the North⁷⁰

A TYPE OF THE WORDS OF GOD. BEDE: For just as the tables are rightly used as a type of holy Scripture because they both minister righteousness to those hungering for the bread of the word and bear the vessels of the heavenly ministry, that is, they propose for our imitation the actions of the righteous, so also by these lampstands the words of God are symbolized, that is, because they give the light of wisdom to the erring. That is why the psalmist says, "A lamp to my feet," and so forth;⁷¹ that, too, is why Solomon says, "Because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light."⁷² Moreover, the reason why five lampstands were placed on the right and five on the left is quite easy to see from our discussion of the tables. But when he said five on the right and five on the left, he added fittingly: "over against the oracle." For the oracle, where the ark was, as has often been said, stands for the way to the heavenly homeland: "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God,"⁷³ privy, that is, to his Father's secrets. And the temple lampstands of gold were placed opposite the oracle because the words of God always have in view the abode of the heavenly city that they may instill into our hearts the knowledge and desire of it and inflame those who take their fleshy origin from the earth to long for and to merit a place of everlasting abode in heaven. ON THE TEMPLE 2.24.1.⁷⁴

7:50 The Sockets⁷⁵ Were of Gold

THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF ANGELS OR SAINTS. BEDE: If the doors of the inner house of the Holy of Holies are the ministries of angels that unlock the entrance to celestial life for us

when we have left the body, and [if] the doors of the house of the temple are the holy teachers and priests who throw open to us the first thresholds of the present church by teaching, baptizing and communicating to us the mysteries of the Lord's body and blood, what are the hinges of both doors? They are the minds and hearts of these angels or saints by which they cleave fixedly to the contemplation and love of their Creator so that those who never turn their gaze from the will of him whom they serve may thereby properly fulfill the ministry entrusted to them. For the gates are opened and closed at the appropriate time, but at no time do they leave their hinges, because both angels and holy people, whether they receive the faithful and the elect in this life of faith or in the other life of vision, keep their minds ever firmly rooted in love. These hinges are well said to have been made of gold for this reason, namely, either because of the merit of their own glory or because of the love they have for God. ON THE TEMPLE 2.25.1.⁷⁶

7:51 The Things That David Had Dedicated

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SACRED OFFERINGS OF DAVID. BEDE: Silver applies to the clarity of eloquence, gold to the brilliance of wisdom and vessels generally to rational creatures; and David, Solomon's father, sanctifies the silver when God the Father strengthens speakers with the grace of the Holy Spirit to speak the word of the gospel; he sanctifies the gold when he enlightens those endowed with natural ability by filling them with his Spirit in order to contemplate the wonders in his law; he sanctifies the vessels too when, having bestowed the grace of this Spirit on all the church's children in general that they may love the gifts of eternal salvation, he inflames them with a desire for them. This silver, this gold,

⁶⁹TTH 21:109-10. ⁷⁰The text of Vg, used by Bede, reads, "five on the right hand, and five on the left." ⁷¹Ps 119:105 (118:105 Vg). ⁷²Prov 6:23. ⁷³Col 3:1. ⁷⁴TTH 21:112-13. ⁷⁵"Hinges" in the text of Vg. ⁷⁶TTH 21:116*.

these consecrated vessels Solomon brings into the temple, when, after the universal judgment is over, our Lord brings into the joy of his heavenly kingdom all the elect. These are the company both of teachers and the rest of the faithful, and he lays up the various kinds of vessels, silver or gold, in the treasuries of the Lord's house when he hides in the covert of his countenance away from the bustle of human beings those who have merited to enjoy the abundance of his sweetness. It is fitting that the treasuries in which the vessels of election should be hidden are many, whereas the house of the Lord in which these treasuries are is one; for on the one hand, the church in which all the elect are contained is one, however much they may differ in merits, and on the other hand, the heavenly homeland promised to all the

elect is one and not of different kinds, even though, just as "star differs from star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."⁷⁷ Both of these things the Lord, the very judge and distributor of rewards, has shown in one sentence when he says, "In my Father's house there are many mansions."⁷⁸ The reason why Solomon made one house of the Lord but furnished it with many treasuries to accommodate the vessels of various kinds, though it was sanctified with only one blessing, was that there is one house of the Father not made with hands that will last eternally in heaven but many mansions in it to receive all who fear him. ON THE TEMPLE 2.25.3.⁷⁹

⁷⁷1 Cor 15:41-42. ⁷⁸Jn 14:2. ⁷⁹TTH 21:116*.





THE INAUGURATION OF THE TEMPLE

1 KINGS 8:1-21

OVERVIEW: The two weeks of festivity prefigure the festivals of the Christian church and the day of the last judgment (EPHREM). The biblical writer indicates only the most important object preserved in the ark, namely, the two tablets of stone. Solomon blessed his people while standing on a bronze pillar according to the custom of kings (ISHO'DAD).

8:1-2 *At the Festival in the Seventh Month*

SYMBOLS OF CHRIST AND THE LAST JUDGMENT. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The two weeks [of festivity] and the two solemn celebrations were accomplished by the people of the Lord with the greatest joy. The former prefigured the festivals of our church, which Christ began with the mystical dedication of his temple and the transferring of the flesh which he had assumed, to heaven; the

latter foreshadowed the last day, the greatest of all solemn days, that will dawn for all saints after the resurrection of the flesh. And the distribution of the ministries and offices in the heavenly and everlasting temple will follow that day. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 8.1.¹

8:9 *The Two Tablets of Stone*

THE BIBLICAL AUTHOR MAKES NO OMISSIONS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The words "there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone" does not mean that the author did not know that there were also the jar [containing the manna], the staff [of Aaron], and so forth. He simply wants to signify all the rest by mentioning the most important part, because he writes for

¹ESOO 1:463.

the Jews who already knew the other objects.
BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 8.9.²

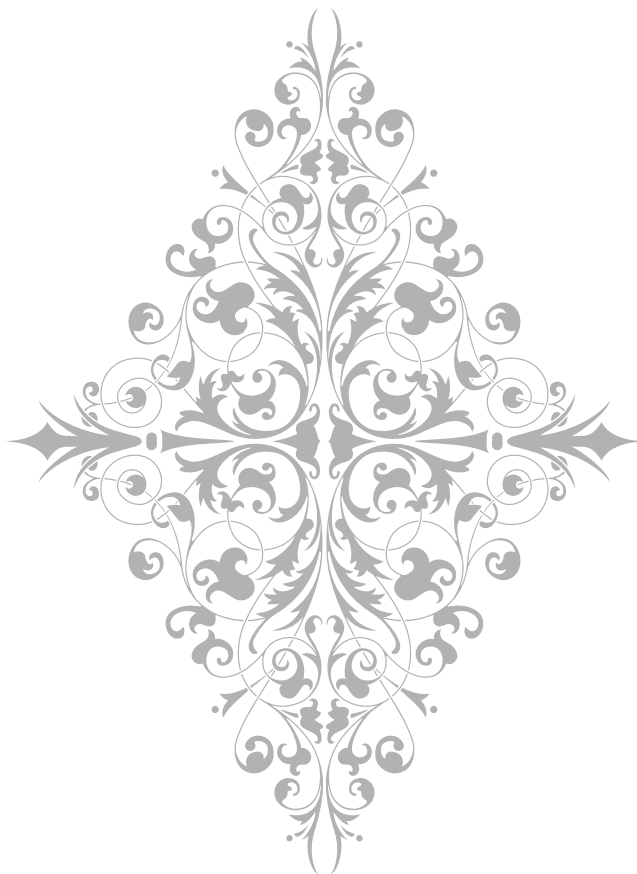
8:14 *The King Blessed the Assembly*

BLESSING FROM THE PILLAR. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: While the king prayed and blessed the people, he stood on a pillar of bronze whose height was five cubits and whose width was two

cubits.³ He climbed it by means of a flight of steps. All the kings stood on it when they needed to speak to the people. This is why [the Scripture] says, "And when she looked up, Jehoash stood on the pillar, according to the royal custom."⁴ BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 8.14.⁵

²CSCO 229:107-8. ³See 2 Chron 6:13. ⁴2 Kings 11:14. ⁵CSCO 229:108.





SOLOMON PRAYS BEFORE
THE ALTAR OF THE LORD
1 KINGS 8:22-53

OVERVIEW: Solomon prayed not only for his people but also for the foreigners and the strangers who distrusted the nation of Israel and were often hostile to it (EPHREM). The incarnation of the Lord is foreshadowed in the words pronounced by Solomon: “Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?” (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). In Solomon’s words, “Even heaven and the highest cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built,” we have a further proof that God cannot be contained in any material space (FULGENTIUS). In Solomon’s words, “Only you know what is in every human heart,” there is also a foreshadowing of Christ’s omniscience during his life on earth (CHRYSOSTOM).

8:22-23 *Solomon Stood Before the Altar*

SOLOMON’S PRAYER WAS FOR ALL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Now notice that Solomon did not only pray for his people but also for the foreigners and the strangers who distrusted the nation of Israel and were often hostile to it, so that the son of David might show the God of David to everyone in general, by praying for his enemies and by speaking ahead of time for us those future words: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”¹ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 8.21.²

8:27 *Will God Dwell on Earth?*

A FORESHADOWING OF THE LORD’S INCARNATION. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: Solomon the son of David, in the books styled *The Reigns of the Kings*, comprehending not only that the

structure of the true temple was celestial and spiritual but had also a reference to the flesh, which he who was both the son and the Lord of David was to build up, both for his own presence, where, as a living image, he resolved to make his shrine, and for the church that was to rise up through the union of faith, says expressly, “Will God in very deed dwell with humans on the earth?” He dwells on the earth clothed in flesh, and his abode with humans is effected by the conjunction and harmony that obtain among the righteous and that build . . . a new temple. For the righteous are the earth, being still encompassed with the earth; and earth, too, in comparison with the greatness of the Lord. Thus also the blessed Peter does not hesitate to say, “You also, as living stones, are built up, a spiritual house, a holy temple, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”³ And with reference to the body, which by circumscription he consecrated as a hallowed place for himself on earth, he said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.” The Jews therefore said, “In forty-six years was this temple built, and will you raise it up in three days?” “But he spoke of the temple of his body.”⁴ FRAGMENT 12.3.⁵

SOLOMON’S WORDS ANNOUNCE THE COMING OF CHRIST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Afterwards Solomon, hearing his father David say these things, and having built a wondrous house and foreseeing him who would come to it, says in astonishment, “Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell on earth?” Yes, says David in

¹Mt 5:44. ²ESOO 1:463. ³1 Pet 2:5. ⁴Jn 2:19-21. ⁵ANF 2:584-85*, referred to as *Fragment 36* in TLG.

anticipation in the psalm inscribed “For Solomon,” wherein it is said, “He shall be like rain coming down on the fleece”;⁶ “rain” because of his heavenly origin but “on the fleece” because of his humanity. For rain, falling on fleece, falls noiselessly; so that, the mystery of his birth being unknown, the wise men said, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” And Herod, being troubled, inquired concerning him who had been born, and said, “Where is the Christ born?”⁷ CATECHETICAL LECTURES 12.9.⁸

GOD CANNOT BE CONTAINED BY ANY MATERIAL SPACE. FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE: Therefore, the one God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, fills up the whole, contains the whole; as the whole is in each thing, so the whole is in everything; as the whole is in small things, so the whole is in the largest creatures. This is true of nature but not of grace. When it creates human beings, it does not by the same act save them. While it makes them, it does not by the same act remake them. While it makes that sun to rise over the good and the evil, it does not do the same when the sun of justice rises on those on whom the light, not of the flesh but of the heart, is poured by the gift of convenient mercy. As it belongs to all to be born through nature, it does not in the same way belong to all to be reborn through grace. Since the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit by nature are one God, eternal and infinite, there is nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing above the heavens, nothing in any nature that he made that has not been made, where the same one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, could be missing. In God, just as there is no mutability of times, so there is no spatial capacity. As Solomon truly said at the dedication of the temple in these words: “Even heaven and the highest cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built.” LETTER (FULGENTIUS TO SCARILA) 10.7.⁹

8:37 *Blight, Mildew, Other Plagues*

BLIGHT AND MILDEW. ISHO‘DAD OF MERV:

[The Scripture] defines them as diseases deriving from changes in the weather. Blight [occurs when] wheat does not grow. Therefore [we read] these words: “Pharaoh saw ears blighted by a burning wind.”¹⁰ Mildew derives from excessive heat and constant bad weather and descends on wheat in the form of drops like rain. One who ignores it calls it “dew,” but it burns and dries up wheat when it falls on it. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 8.37.¹¹

8:38 *The Afflictions of Their Hearts*

GUILT WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED. ISHO‘DAD OF MERV: The words “knowing the rebellion of their own heart,” mean that, when they are saved, they will know that God had previously turned away from them and had crushed them by misfortunes because they had sinned and acted rebelliously. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 8.38.¹²

8:39 *God Knows What Is in Every Human Heart*

A PREDICTION OF JESUS’ OMNISCIENCE. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: “When he was in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, many believed in his name, seeing the signs that he was working. But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them.”¹³ For those disciples were more dependable who came to him not only by reason of miracles but also because of his teaching. Miracles, indeed, attracted the more slow-witted, but prophecies and teaching, the more intelligent. And those who were won over by teaching were, in truth, more steadfast than those won by miracles. Christ has even called them blessed, saying, “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.”¹⁴ That the others were not of his true disciples the next words show, for the Evangelist added, “Jesus did not trust himself to them.”¹⁵

⁶Ps 72:6 (71:6 Vg). ⁷Mt 2:2, 4. ⁸FC 61:232*. ⁹FC 95:430-31. ¹⁰Gen 41:6. ¹¹CSCO 229:108. ¹²CSCO 229:108. ¹³Jn 2:23-24. ¹⁴Jn 20:29. ¹⁵Jn 20:24.

Why? In that he knew all people and because he had no need that anyone should bear witness concerning humankind, for he himself knew what was in humanity. What this means is as follows: He who dwells in the very hearts of people and enters into their minds did not give heed to outward words. Knowing clearly that the fervor of these people was transient, he did not feel confidence in them as full-fledged disciples, nor did he entrust all his teachings to them as if they were already firm believers. Now to know what is in the hearts of people belongs to him who “has fashioned the heart of each of them,”¹⁶ that is, to

God, for “you only,” Scripture says, “know what is in every human heart.” He did not, then, need witness in order to know the minds of his own creatures; therefore, he did not have confidence in them by reason of their inconstant faith. People who know neither the present nor the future often both say and confide everything without hesitation to those who treacherously approach them and who will presently forsake them, but not so Christ, for he clearly knows all secrets. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 24.I.¹⁷

¹⁶Ps 33:5 (32:15 LXX). ¹⁷FC 33:232-33.



SOLOMON'S BLESSING AND SACRIFICE

1 KINGS 8:54-66

OVERVIEW: Solomon also demonstrates in his speech that every human being is endowed with free will (CASSIAN). The two altars set by Solomon in the temple of God symbolize the altar of our body and the altar of our heart (CAESARIUS). Solomon, in dismissing the people, who blessed the king and set out for their own dwellings joyfully, foreshadows Christ, who, after bringing to completion the gift of resurrection, dismisses his elect joyfully to their eternal dwelling places (BEDE).

8:58 *Walk in God's Ways and Keep His Commandments*

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF OUR FREE WILL. JOHN CASSIAN: For Holy Scripture supports the freedom of the will where it says: "Keep your heart with all diligence,"¹ but the apostle indicates its weakness by saying "The Lord keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."² David asserts the power of free will, where he says, "I have inclined my heart to do your righteous acts,"³ but he also teaches us its weakness, by praying and saying, "Incline my heart unto your testimonies and not to covetousness."⁴ Solomon also: "The Lord incline our hearts to himself that we may walk in all his ways and keep his commandments and ordinances and judgments." CONFERENCE 13.10.⁵

8:64 *Consecrating the Court in Front of the Temple*

THE ALTAR OF THE BODY AND THE ALTAR OF THE HEART. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: We read that two altars were set up in the temple built by Solomon, one outside and one within. On the one that was outside, the sacrifice of animals took place, while on the one inside, the burning of

incense was offered. Let us see, brothers, whether there are two altars set up in ourselves, the one that is of the body and the other that is of the heart. God, finally, asks a twofold sacrifice of us: the one, that we be chaste in body; the other, that we should be pure of heart. For this reason good works are offered on the exterior altar, that is, in our body. May holy thoughts emit a sweet fragrance in our hearts, and let us continually do what is pleasing to God on the altar or our heart. We celebrate the consecration of an altar with joy and in right order of things at the time when we offer the altars of our heart and body purified in the sight of the divine majesty and with a good conscience. SERMON 228.2.⁶

8:66 *The People Blessed the King*

A SYMBOL OF THE JOY OF ETERNAL LIFE.

BEDE: But we should note this too: having explained the dedication and subsequent festival, Scripture concludes, "And Solomon dismissed the people, who blessed the king and set out for their own dwellings joyfully and glad of heart for all the goodness the Lord had done for David his servant and for his people Israel." When he has brought to completion the gift of resurrection, our Lord dismisses his elect joyfully to their eternal dwelling places. Surely he does not move them further away from his presence but lets them pass into the dwelling place of the heavenly fatherland after the division at the final judgment (which, according to the saying of the apostle, we know will take place in the air),⁷ so that each may receive his promised seat in the kingdom in proportion to his deserts. What is said here, that the

¹Prov 4:23. ²Phil 4:7. ³Ps 119:112 (118:12 LXX). ⁴Ps 119:36 (118:36 LXX). ⁵NPNF 2 11:427. ⁶FC 66:169. ⁷See 1 Thess 4:17.

people set out for their own dwellings, refers to the setting-out of which our Lord speaks in the Gospel: "In my Father's house are many mansions."⁸ And it is well said that the people set out for their own dwellings while blessing the king, because this is the single supremely tranquil and joyful action of the heavenly citizens, singing hymns of thanksgiving to their Maker. Thus is it written, "Happy are they who dwell in your house; they will praise you forever."⁹ Thus the same prophet [David] has filled the final seven psalms¹⁰ with the sweetness of the divine praises; moreover, in the eighth psalm before the end of the psalter,¹¹ he commemorates by blessing the Lord for his victory in the fight in which he killed the giant [Goliath]. In this he clearly indicates that all who triumph in their contests against the malignant enemy here below will sing the praises of their Maker and Helper there, where they will have true rest. "They blessed the king and set out for their own dwellings joyfully and glad of heart

for all the goodness the Lord had done for David his servant and for his people Israel." The just do indeed go into the dwellings of the heavenly mansions joyfully because of the goodness they have received from the Lord. Although the labors of this age are burdensome and prolonged, whatever ends in eternal blessedness seems short-lived and trifling. Hence each one of us, dearly loved, must press on with his devout actions by exerting himself to the extent of his ability by encouraging, entreating and rebuking in the building up of the house of God, lest, if the heavenly King catches sight of anyone slothful now in the work [of building] his temple, he may make him an outcast from his great solemn celebration at the time of the dedication. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.24.¹²

⁸Jn 14:2. ⁹Ps 84:4 (83:5 Vg). ¹⁰Ps 145:1-147:11; 147:12-150:6 (144-150 LXX). ¹¹Ps 144 (143 Vg). ¹²CS 111:252-53.





THE LORD APPEARS TO
SOLOMON A SECOND TIME
1 KINGS 9:1-25

OVERVIEW: Only our wickedness can turn God's gifts away from us (ISHO'DAD). In God's words, "Israel shall be for perdition and a reproach to the people, and this house shall be desolate," there is a foreshadowing of the ruin of Israel after the killing of Jesus (LACTANTIUS).

9:3 *There for All Time*

OUR WICKEDNESS TURNS GOD'S GIFTS AWAY. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: How can God say that he will always be in this temple when he threatens to destroy the house? The gifts of God

are without second thoughts, as far as it depends on him, but our wickedness turns them away from us. In fact, he does not simply give gifts but gives them in order that we may repent. That is why he says in Jeremiah, “And if I shall pronounce a decree on a nation and kingdom, to rebuild and to plant it, and they do evil before me, so as not to listen to my voice, then I will repent of the good that I spoke of, to do it to them.”¹

BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 9.3.²

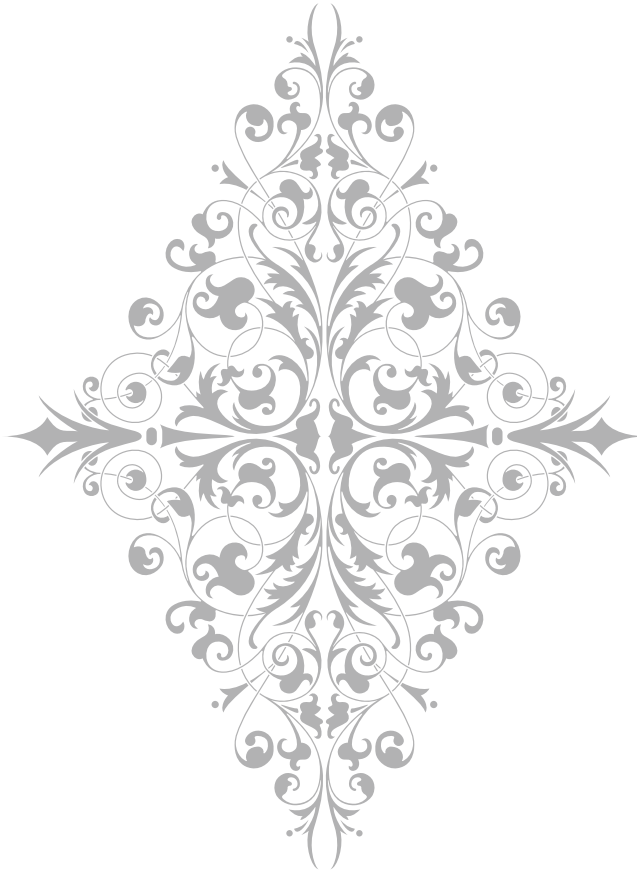
9:7-9 *This House Will Become a Heap of Ruins*

PREDICTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. LACTANTIUS: After a short time the emperor Vespasian subdued the Jews and laid waste their lands with the sword and fire, besieged and reduced them by famine, overthrew Jerusalem, led the captives in triumph and prohibited the others who were left from ever return-

ing to their native land. And these things were done by God on account of that crucifixion of Christ, as he before declared this to Solomon in their Scriptures, saying, “And Israel shall be for perdition and a reproach to the people, and this house shall be desolate; and every one that shall pass by shall be astonished, and shall say, ‘Why has God done these evils to this land, and to this house?’ And they shall say, ‘Because they forsook the Lord their God and persecuted their King, who was dearly beloved by God, and crucified him with great degradation; therefore has God brought on them these evils.’” For what would they not deserve who put to death their Lord, who had come for their salvation? EPITOME OF THE DIVINE INSTITUTES 46.³

¹Jer 18:9-10; here Isho'dad quotes the LXX instead of the Syriac Peshitta. ²CSCO 229:108-9. ³ANF 7:241. See CSEL 19:719 where the reference is to *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 41.7.





POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER OF ISRAEL

1 KINGS 9:26–10:29

OVERVIEW: The queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon in order to be enlightened by him (EPHREM). The sending by the Ethiopian queen of the treasures of the nations to Jerusalem signifies that the church would bring gifts of the virtue and faith to the Lord (BEDE). Like the queen of Sheba, we must admire God's riches and embrace his treasures of wisdom (ORIGEN). Solomon divided his servants into classes, which were recognizable according to the uniform they wore (ISHO'DAD). Solomon is a type of Christ, while the queen of Sheba foreshadows the faithful women who will listen to the word of Jesus (AMBROSE). Solomon is also a figure of the church of the saints, who are the living temples of Christ (CAESARIUS). As the queen of Sheba came from her distant land to Solomon, so the church came together from the four regions of the world to Christ (SEVERUS). Silver signifies the holy doctrine (of Christ), which must be spread all over the world (EPHREM).

10:1 *The Queen of Sheba Came to Test Solomon*

ENLIGHTENED BY SOLOMON'S WISDOM.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The queen of Sheba was a sheep that had come into the place of wolves. The lamp of truth did Solomon give her who also married¹ her when he fell away. She was enlightened and went away, but they² were dark as their manner was. THE PEARL, HYMN 3.3.³

10:2 *Gold and Precious Stones*

THE CHURCH WILL BRING GIFTS OF FAITH TO THE LORD. BEDE: We read also in the book of Kings that the queen of the South⁴ came from the end of the earth to listen to the wisdom of

Solomon. Actually, it was customary for that nation to be always ruled by women, whom they called Kandakes.⁵

The sending by the Ethiopian queen of the treasures of the nations to Jerusalem signifies that the church would bring gifts of the virtue and of faith to the Lord. The etymology of her name is also appropriate, for in Hebrew Candace [Kandake] means "exchanged."⁶ In the Scriptures (in the psalm "For those who will be exchanged") it is she to whom it was said, "Hear, daughter, and see, and incline your ear. Forget your people and your father's home,"⁷ and so forth. COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 8.27.⁸

10:4 *She Observed All the Wisdom of Solomon*

WE MUST EMBRACE THE RICHES OF OUR

LORD. ORIGEN: The Scriptures express astonishment that the queen of Sheba came from "the end of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom." When she saw his dinner, his furnishings and the attendants in his place, she was astounded and wholly in a state of wonder. If we do not embrace the great riches of our Lord, the great furnishings of his Word and the wealth of his teachings; if we do not eat the "bread of life";⁹ if we are not fed with the flesh of Jesus and do not drink his blood; if we disdain the banquet of our Savior, we should realize that God has both "kindness and severity."¹⁰ Of these, we should pray more for his kindness on us, in Christ Jesus our Lord. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 38.6.¹¹

¹This is a Jewish tradition (partly based on Song 1:5), which was commonly accepted by Syriac writers. ²The Jews. ³NPNF 2 13:295. ⁴Of Sheba; the LXX, Vg and VL read "of Saba." ⁵See Pliny *Natural History* 6.35, 186. ⁶Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72.144.3). ⁷Ps 45:10 (44:11 Vg). ⁸CS 117:82. ⁹Jn 6:35. ¹⁰Rom 11:22. ¹¹FC 94:158.

10:5 *Solomon's Servants and Their Clothing*

DIVIDED INTO CLASSES. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The words “the attendance of the servants [and their clothing].” It seems that Solomon, in his wisdom, had divided into classes all his servants, that is, all the craftsmen that did their duty, so that they might be identifiable from their clothing and uniforms which [indicated] the different classes of the bakers, the cooks, the cupbearers. Everyone was recognizable from his gear. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 10.5.¹²

10:6-8 *The Report Was True*

SOLOMON COMBINES IN HIMSELF JUSTICE AND PRUDENCE. AMBROSE: We entrust our case to the most prudent person we can find and ask advice from him more readily than we do from others. However, the faithful counsel of a just person stands first and often has more weight than the great abilities of the wisest of people: “For better are the wounds of a friend than the kisses of others.”¹³ And just because it is the judgment of a just person, it is also the conclusion of a wise one: in the one lies the result of the matter in dispute, in the other readiness of invention. And if one connects the two, there will be great soundness in the advice given, which is regarded by all with admiration for the wisdom shown and with love for its justice. And so all will desire to hear the wisdom of that person in whom those two virtues are found together, as all the kings of the earth desired to see the face of Solomon and to hear his wisdom. No, even the queen of Sheba came to him and tried him with questions. She came and spoke of all the things that were in her heart and heard all the wisdom of Solomon, nor did any word escape her. Who she was whom nothing escaped, and that there was nothing which the truth-loving Solomon did not tell her, learn, O man, from this which you hear her saying, “It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your words and of your prudence, yet I did not believe those that told it me until I came

and my eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me. You have added good things over and above all that I heard in my own land. Blessed are your women and blessed your servants, who stand before you and hear all your prudence.” Recognize the feast of the true Solomon and those who are set down at that feast; recognize it wisely and think in what land all the nations shall hear the fame of true wisdom and justice and with what eyes they shall see him, beholding those things that are not seen. “For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”

What women are blessed but those of whom it is said “that many hear the word of God and bring forth fruit”?¹⁴ And again: “Whosoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”¹⁵ And who are those blessed servants, who stand before him, but Paul, who said, “Even to this day I stand witnessing both to great and small”;¹⁶ or Simeon, who was waiting in the temple to see the consolation of Israel?¹⁷ How could he have asked to be allowed to depart, except that in standing before the Lord he had not the power of departing, but only according to the will of God? Solomon is put before us simply for the sake of example, of whom it was eagerly expected that his wisdom should be heard. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 2.10.50-53.¹⁸

SOLOMON IS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH OF THE SAINTS. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: In almost all places from the east to the west where the Christian religion is practiced, your manner of life¹⁹ for the glory of God is preached with most illustrious fame. It is rightly required of you that what is believed in your case should also be proved. With the Lord's help, then, do what you have always done, and preserve charity, humility, meekness and obedience in such a way that what is believed about you in the whole world may be augmented

¹²CSCO 229:109. ¹³Prov 27:6. ¹⁴Lk 11:28. ¹⁵Mt 12:50. ¹⁶Acts 26:22. ¹⁷See Lk 2:25. ¹⁸NPNF 2 10:51-52*. ¹⁹Caesarius is referring to holy men who have the reputation of saints.

by the deeds of an ever spotless life. Then whoever has merited to see you will be able to give verbal utterance to the sentence uttered by that queen who wanted to seek out Solomon as a type of the church. When each one of you like living temples of Christ, adorned with the pearls of good works, filled with the burnt offerings of prayers and fragrant with the spices of virtues has merited to be contemplated, then immediately breaking forth with the voice of exultation, may he exclaim and say with that queen, “The report I heard in my country” about the life of this saintly community “is true.” Behold, now in truth “I have discovered that they were hardly telling me the half”; for I have merited to see with my eyes much greater things than I first heard with my ears. When anyone merited to seek and behold you like angels placed on earth, he rejoiced at such things and uttered words with his own lips. Then he happily announced throughout the whole world: Consider and see how much glory is added to you and how precious and holy a joy is produced for the universal church throughout the entire world. SERMON 236.3.²⁰

10:10 A Great Quantity of Gifts

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA AS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The queen of Sheba was a type of our church. She came from her distant land to king Solomon, the church came together from the four regions of the world to Christ. What [the queen] ignored, she learned from Solomon, and she went back to her land with many gifts. Here the mystery which had

remained hidden for centuries and generations was finally revealed: after she had been taught to despise earthly possessions, she was made a participant and dispenser of the heavenly treasure. Why do not we imitate the queen of the South, whom our mother [the church] emulated, by offering gold, precious stones and spices to Christ? The transaction is that we lose worthless things, so that we may get great ones, which we search for and lack in the highest degree. SYRIAC FRAGMENT ON I KINGS 10.10.²¹

10:27 Silver as Common in Jerusalem as Stones

SILVER SIGNIFIES THE HOLY DOCTRINE OF CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: This means that the knowledge of divine things must be imparted to all nations everywhere through the advent and manifestation of Christ; and Isaiah predicted the coming of Christ in the clearest way by saying, “The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”²² The Scripture usually employs the symbol of silver to signify the holy doctrine [of Christ]. Indeed it is a pure, bright and sonorous metal, and its qualities are extraordinarily appropriate to Christ’s gospel. Haggai predicted that the temple of the Lord, which is the church of Christ, must be filled with this kind of silver.²³ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 10.27.²⁴

²⁰FC 66:212-13*. ²¹ESOO 1:466. This passage is attributed by the editor Assemani to Severus of Antioch (ninth century), who is the medieval compiler of the catena including Ephrem’s commentary. ²²Is 11:9. ²³See Hag 2:8. ²⁴ESOO 1:467.



SOLOMON'S LAPSE INTO IDOLATRY 1 KINGS 11:1-13

OVERVIEW: Solomon was not blamed for marrying the Gentile daughter of Pharaoh, but later he took other wives and was led to idolatry by them (EPHREM). Solomon obtained wisdom through spiritual love but lost it through carnal love (AUGUSTINE). Solomon was not the Messiah promised by God, because God knew that Solomon would fall (AUGUSTINE). Solomon allowed his wives to practice idolatry instead of opposing them (ISHO'DAD). The Gentile wives of Solomon turned Solomon aside from the fear of God to their idols by means of their allurements (EPHREM). Solomon's apostasy and idolatry teach us that no hope must be placed in any human being (AUGUSTINE). Solomon was not punished by

God for his idolatry thanks to the merits of his father, David (CHRYSOSTOM).

11:1-2 Solomon Loved Many Foreign Women

SOLOMON'S CRIME IS A CONSEQUENCE OF HIS MARRIAGES. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: In the previous chapters the Scripture related the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh and did not rebuke him because she was the one wife only who did not secretly practice the religion of her homeland and was no reason of offense for him. But later he took other wives, so that the holy Scripture justly condemned both the previous

marriage and these new ones. And there were four reasons for this: the first was his open transgression against religion because he had brought back [Israel's] ancient idolatry which he had previously rejected; the second was that he took many wives against the clear precept of the Law; the third was that he loved these wives to distraction; the fourth was his apostasy from the worship of the true God which derived, as the Law had predicted, from such marriages. Therefore, with good reason the Scripture emphasizes many times, with very severe words, that the crime of Solomon was a consequence of his familiarity with these women. A further detail, which increases Solomon's guilt, is that he did not only cause harm with his actions but also with his example. He was harmful not only because he was corrupted but also because he corrupted the kings that followed him, with the exception of one or two. Solomon was certainly the first among the leaders and kings of Israel who established public ceremonies and sacrifices of idolatry through the authority of magistrates. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 11.1.¹

SOLOMON RULED BY CARNAL PASSIONS.

AUGUSTINE: However, in [David's] son Solomon libido was not a passing guest; it reigned as a king. Scripture does not pass this over in silence but blames him as a lover of women. His beginnings were redolent with the desire for wisdom; when he had obtained it through spiritual love, he lost it through carnal love. CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION 3.21.31.²

SOLOMON WAS NOT THE MESSIAH PROMISED BY GOD. AUGUSTINE: [God] promised that something everlasting would spring from David's seed. Then Solomon was born, and he became a man of such profound wisdom that everyone supposed God's promise concerning David's offspring had been fulfilled in him. But no, Solomon fell and so made room for people to stretch their hope toward Christ. God can neither be deceived nor deceive us, so we can be certain that he did

not ground his promise in Solomon, for he knew Solomon would fall. The divine purpose was that after Solomon's fall you would look to God and earnestly press him for what he had promised.

Did you lie, then, Lord? Do you go back on your promises? Do you fail to deliver what you swore to give? Perhaps God will counter you by saying, "I did swear, and I did promise, but that man did not persevere." But how can that be the answer? Did you not foresee, O Lord God, that he would not persevere? Of course you foresaw it. Why, then, did you promise me something that would last forever and attach that promise to someone who would not persevere? You said to me, "'If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they break my commandments and violate my covenant,'³ nevertheless my promise shall endure, and my oath shall be fulfilled. 'Once I have sworn in my holiness,'⁴ within myself." In that most secret place you swore it, in the fountain from which the prophets drank, those prophets who belched out for us the words, "Once have I sworn in my holiness, and I will not lie to David."⁵ Make good your oath then, and deliver what you promised. I was stripped away from David of old, lest in that David we should hope for its fulfillment, and so that you can say to us, "Keep hoping for what I promised."

Even David himself was aware of this. Consider what he says: "Yet you, you yourself, have rejected him to nothing."⁶ So what has become of your promise? "You have put off your Anointed."⁷ The speaker has doleful things to relate, but by these very words he cheers us, because he is implying, "What you promised stands absolutely firm, O God, for you have not taken your Anointed right away from us, but only put him off." EXPOSITION 2 OF PSALM 88.6-7.⁸

¹ESOO 1:468. ²FC 2:142. ³Ps 89:30 (88:31 LXX, Vg). ⁴Ps 89:34-35 (88:35-36 LXX, Vg). ⁵Ps 89:35 (88:36 LXX, Vg). ⁶Ps 89:38 (88:39 LXX, Vg). ⁷Ps 89:38 (88:39 LXX, Vg) (LXX; the Hebrew text reads, "you are full of wrath against your anointed"). ⁸WSA 3 18:295-96*.

11:3 *Solomon's Wives Turned Away His Heart*

SOLOMON ALLOWED HIS WIVES TO WORSHIP IDOLS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The words "the wives turned away his heart" do not mean that Solomon himself apostatized and worshiped the idols but that he gave [his wives] freedom to worship their idols without preventing them or converting them, as his father David [had done]. Therefore, since "man and wife become one flesh,"⁹ and the Scripture usually attributes to them both the action of one because of their union . . . this is why [Solomon] is justly rebuked for allowing his wives to adore [the idols]. Silence, as they say, expresses consent. Other commentators¹⁰ assert that [Solomon] worships the idols but is not punished, even though he deserved it, thanks to his father and all his merits and toil in building the house. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 11.3.¹¹

GENTILE WOMEN TURNED SOLOMON ASIDE FROM THE FEAR OF GOD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The hands of the sinful woman were stretched out over his feet, that they might receive a gift from his divinity.¹² Our Lord, therefore, showed his humanity so that the sinful woman might approach him. He also revealed his divinity in order that the Pharisee might be found guilty by him. Consequently, the sinful woman could scoff at the cunning thoughts of him who had been scoffing at her tears. She, through her love, brought into the open the tears that were hidden in the depths of her eyes, and [the Lord], because of her courage, brought into the open the thoughts that were hidden in the Pharisee. The sinful woman thought he was like God. Her faith was witness to this. Simon thought he was [merely] like a man. What he had worked out in his mind showed this. Our Lord, therefore, standing in the middle, worked out a parable between the two of them, so that the sinful woman might be encouraged through his pronouncing the parable and the Pharisee might be denounced through the explanation of the parable.

But now, likewise, we are in the middle; and like Solomon we have fallen between women. But, even if we, like Solomon, have fallen between women, we are not, like Solomon, wounded by women. For these Gentile women were turning Solomon aside from the fear of God to their idols by means of their allurements. We place the faith of the Gentile women above the heroic exploits of the Hebrew women. For the latter, through the wholeness of their bodies, rendered Solomon's healthy faith sick, while the former, through their being healed, restore our ailing faith to health. Who therefore would not [wish] to be healed [by such faith]? COMMENTARY ON TATIAN'S DIATHESSARON 7.18.¹³

11:7-8 *Solomon Built a Place for Chemosh and Molech*

NO HOPE MUST BE PLACED IN ANY HUMAN BEING. AUGUSTINE: Solomon was in his time David's son, a great man, through whom many holy precepts and healthful admonitions and divine mysteries have been wrought by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Solomon himself was a lover of women and was rejected by God: and this lust was so great a snare to him that he was induced by women even to sacrifice to idols, as Scripture witnesses concerning him. But if, by his fall, what was delivered through him were blotted out, it would be judged that he had himself delivered these precepts and not that they were delivered through him. The mercy of God, therefore, and his Spirit, excellently wrought that whatever of good was declared through Solomon, might be attributed to God; and the man's sin, to the man. What marvel that Solomon fell among God's people? Did not Adam fall in paradise? Did not an angel fall from heaven and become the devil? We are thereby taught that no hope must be placed in any human being. EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 127.1.¹⁴

⁹Gen 2:24. ¹⁰Isho'dad refers to unknown sources. ¹¹CSCO 229:110-11. ¹²See Lk 7:38, 44-46. ¹³ECTD 137-38. ¹⁴NPNF 1 8:606*.

11:13 *God Will Not Tear Away the Entire Kingdom*

GOD'S CLEMENCY TOWARD SOLOMON ON ACCOUNT OF DAVID. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: The son of this David, Solomon by name, was caught by the same snare as his father, and out of complacency to women fell away from the God of his fathers. You see how great an evil it is not to master pleasure, not to upset the ruling principle in

nature and for a man to be slave of women. This same Solomon, then, who was formerly righteous and wise but who ran a risk of being deprived of all the kingdom on account of his sin, God permitted to keep the sixth part of the government on account of the renown of his father. LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE 2.2.¹⁵

¹⁵NPNF 1 9:112.





A REBELLION AT THE END
OF SOLOMON'S REIGN
1 KINGS 11:14-43

OVERVIEW: When Solomon sinned and departed from the ways of the Lord, “the Lord stirred up the adversary,” namely, the devil, “against Solomon” (CYPRIAN). God’s gifts are showered on everyone, but humans refuse them deliberately (ISHO’DAD). When the twelve tribes of Israel were being rent, the prophet Ahijah rent his garment, but since Christ’s people cannot be rent, his coat, woven throughout as a single whole, was not rent by its owners (CYPRIAN). The

words of the prophet Ahijah announce the line of kings descending from David, which will lead to Jesus (ISHO’DAD).

11:14 *The Lord Raised an Adversary Against Solomon*

POWER IS GIVEN TO EVIL AGAINST US ACCORDING TO OUR SINS. CYPRIAN: The adversary has no power against us unless God has

previously permitted it, in order that all our fear and devotion and obedience may be turned to God, since in temptations nothing is permitted evil, unless the power is granted by God. . . . Moreover, power is given to evil against us according to our sins, as it is written: "Who has given Jacob for spoil and Israel to those who despoiled him? Has not God, against whom they have sinned and were unwilling to walk in his ways and to hear his law, even poured out upon them the indignation of his fury?"¹ And again when Solomon sinned and departed from the precepts and the ways of the Lord, it is set down: "And the Lord stirred up the adversary² against Solomon himself." *THE LORD'S PRAYER* 25.³

11:31-32 *Take Ten Pieces*

GOD'S ABSOLUTE GENEROSITY. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Here God's mercy is absolutely evident. Even though he knew how wicked Jeroboam was, [God] appoints him king in order to show that, as far as it depends on him, his gifts are never denied but showered on everyone. Humans themselves, however, refuse them deliberately. *BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 11.31.*⁴

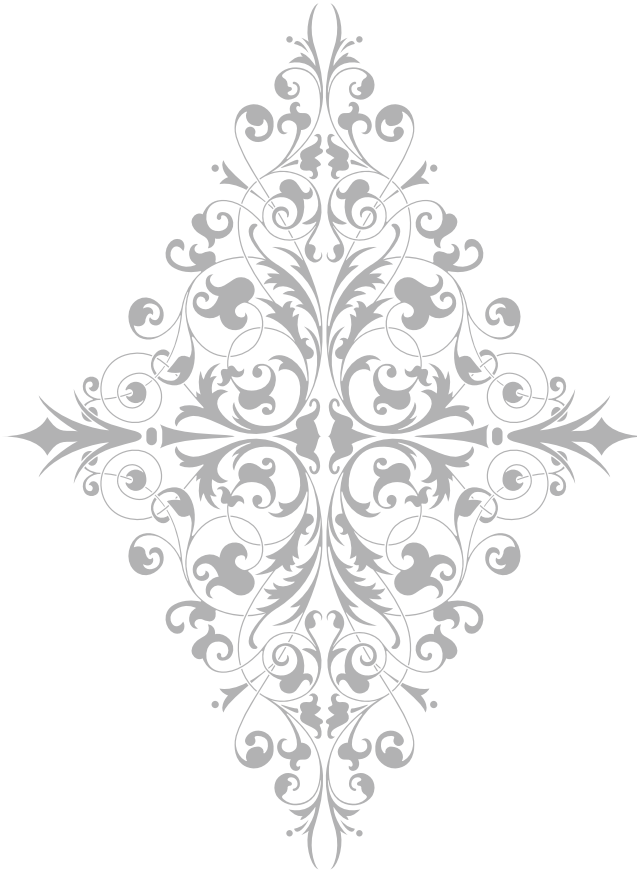
THE NATION OF CHRIST WILL NEVER BE DIVIDED. CYPRIAN: In the Gospel there is a proof of this mystery of unity, this inseparable bond of harmony, when the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not cut or rent at all. The garment is received whole and the coat taken into possession unspoiled and undivided by those who cast lots for Christ's garment, asking who should put on Christ. Holy Scripture says of this, "But for the coat, because it was not sewn but woven from the top throughout, they said to each other: Let us not rend it but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."⁵ He showed a unity that came from the top, that is, from heaven and the Father, a unity that could

by no means be rent by one who received and possessed it. Its wholeness and unity remained solid and unbreakable forever. He who rends and divides the church cannot possess the garment of Christ. In contrast, when at Solomon's death his kingdom and people were being rent, the prophet Ahijah, meeting King Jeroboam in the field, rent his garment into twelve pieces, saying, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the Lord: Behold, I rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten scepters to you; but he shall have two scepters for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city that I have chosen, to put my name there." When the twelve tribes of Israel were being rent, the prophet Ahijah rent his garment. But since Christ's people cannot be rent, his coat, woven throughout as a single whole, was not rent by its owners. Undivided, conjoined, coherent, it proves the unbroken harmony of our people who have put on Christ. By the type and symbol of his garment he has manifested the unity of the church. *THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH* 7.⁶

11:36 *One Tribe for David's Son*

CHRIST, THE KING DESCENDING FROM DAVID. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The words "so that David may always have a lamp" refer to that small part of the kingdom which was like the sun in the abundance of its light: "Your throne will be like the sun before me."⁷ Moreover, as we light many firebrands from a lamp, so a large number [of kings] will descend from the royal lineage of David "until he, to whom kingship belongs, comes."⁸ *BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 11.36.*⁹

¹Is 42:24-25. ²Cyprian interprets Solomon's adversary Hadad, the Edomite, as a symbol of Satan. ³FC 36:149*. ⁴CSCO 229:112. ⁵Jn 19:23-24. ⁶LCC 5:128-29*. ⁷Ps 89:36 (Peshitta). ⁸Adapted quotation from Gen 49:10. ⁹CSCO 229:111.



JEROBOAM LEADS THE
TEN TRIBES TO SECESSION
1 KINGS 12:1-25

OVERVIEW: Rehoboam demonstrates through his foolish behavior that an excess of honors and power lead people to insane arrogance (BASIL). Rehoboam rejected the salutary counsel of the elders and yielded to the words of men of his age by his own will (AUGUSTINE). The people, however, reject his leadership (AMBROSE). The tribes that moved into Samaria had a king from the tribe of Ephraim (JEROME). The people were divided into the kingdom of ten tribes under Jeroboam and the kingdom of two tribes under Rehoboam, and those under Jeroboam were called Israel, and those under Rehoboam Judah. There is another Israel, which is not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (ORIGEN).

12:14 I Will Add to Your Yoke

POLITICAL HONORS CAUSE INSANE ARROGANCE. BASIL THE GREAT: [Not only by reason of wealth] but also because of political honors do people exalt themselves beyond what is due their nature. . . . The position they occupy is entirely out of keeping with reason, for they possess a glory more unsubstantial than a dream. They are surrounded with a splendor more unreal than the phantoms of the night, since it comes into being or is swept away at the nod of the popu-

lace. A fool of this sort was that famous son of Solomon, youthful in years and younger still in wisdom, who threatened his people desiring a milder rule with an even harsher one and thereby destroyed his kingdom. By his threat, the very expedient whereby he hoped to be elevated to a more royal state, he was bereft of the dignity already his. Strength of arm, swiftness of foot and comeliness of body—the spoils of sickness and the plunder of time—also awaken pride in people, unaware as they are that “all flesh is grass and all the glory of humankind as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen.”¹ ON HUMILITY.²

12:15 Rehoboam Did Not Listen to the People

REHOBOAM ACTED ACCORDING TO HIS OWN WILL. AUGUSTINE: Who can help but tremble at the thought of these judgments of God whereby he accomplishes whatever he pleases even in the hearts of wicked people, while yet rendering to each according to his merits? Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, rejected the salutary counsel of the elders, not to deal harshly with the people, and yielded to

¹Is 40:6-7. ²FC 9:476-77*.

the words of men of his own age by replying with threats to those who should have been given a gentle reply. And how did this come about, except by his own will? But as a result of it, the ten tribes of Israel withdrew from him and set up for themselves another king, Jeroboam, that the will of God, who had been angered, might be accomplished, as he had also foretold that it would come to pass. For what does the Scripture say? “And the king condescended not to the people, for the Lord was turned away from him to make good his word, which he had spoken though Ahias, the Silonite, to Jeroboam the son of Nabat.” All this was certainly done by human will, but in such a way that the “turning way” came from the Lord. ON GRACE AND FREE WILL 21.42.³

12:16 *What Share Do We Have in David?*

REHOBOAM’S INJUSTICE IN RULING HIS PEOPLE.

AMBROSE: Justice, then, especially graces people who are set over any office; on the other hand, injustice fails them and fights against them. Scripture itself gives us an example, where it says that when the people of Israel, after the death of Solomon, had asked his son Rehoboam to free their neck from their cruel yoke and to lighten the harshness of his father’s rule, he, despising the counsel of the old men, gave the following answer at the suggestion of the young men: “He would add a burden to the yoke of his father and change their lighter toils for harder.” Angered by this answer, the people said, “We have no portion in David or inheritance in the son of Jesse. Return to your tents, O Israel. For we will not have this man for a prince or a leader over us.” So, forsaken and deserted by the people, he could keep with him scarcely two of the ten tribes for David’s sake. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 2.18.93-94.⁴

12:25 *Jeroboam Built Shechem*

A KING FROM THE TRIBE OF EPHRAIM.

JEROME: We have learned in the books of Kings that under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, Jero-

boam, the son of Nabat, made a division among the people and led ten tribes into Samaria. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, however, remained under the rule of Rehoboam; and many likewise from the tribe of Levi who were dwelling in Jerusalem as priests and Levites—as it is written in Paralipomenon⁵—returned to the temple of God, that is, to Jerusalem. Thus, there were three tribes in Judea: Judah itself the royal tribe, and Benjamin, and later the Levites from the various tribes, when they had come to the temple. They who were in Samaria had a king from the tribe of Ephraim. Just as they who held sway in Judea had a king from the tribe of Judah and from the family of David, so they who prevailed in Samaria had a king from the tribe of Ephraim, and their kings were called Ephraim. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS II (Ps 77 [78]).⁶

THE CONSTANT DIVISION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

ORIGEN: The people were divided in those times into the kingdom of ten tribes under Jeroboam and the kingdom of two tribes under Rehoboam. And those under Jeroboam were called Israel, and those under Rehoboam Judah. And the division of the people persisted, according to the history, until today. For we know of nothing in the history that united Israel and Judah “into the same nation.”⁷ Then Israel first, under Jeroboam and under his successors, sinned excessively, and Israel sinned so much beyond Judah that they were sentenced by Providence to become captives “to the Assyrians until the sign,”⁸ as the Scripture says. After this, the sons of Judah also sinned, and as captives they were sentenced to Babylon, not until a sign, as Israel, but for “seventy years,” which Jeremiah prophesied⁹ and Daniel also mentioned.¹⁰ HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 4.2.¹¹

ISRAEL ACCORDING TO THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

ORIGEN: The Scriptures tell us that God

³FC 59:300-301. ⁴NPNF 2 10:58. ⁵2 Chron 11-13. 16. ⁶FC 48:85*. ⁷Jer 3:18. ⁸2 Kings 17:23. ⁹See Jer 25:11. ¹⁰See Dan 9:2. ¹¹FC 97:30.

chose a certain nation on the earth, which they call by several names. For the whole of this nation is termed Israel and also Jacob. And when it was divided in the times of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the ten tribes subject to him were called Israel, while the remaining two, along with the tribe of Levi, being ruled over by the descendants of David, were named Judah. And the whole of the territory which the people of this nation inhabited, being given to them by God, received the name of Judea, the metropolis of which is Jerusalem—a metropolis, namely, of numerous cities, the names of which lie scattered

about in many other passages of Scripture but which are enumerated together in the book of Joshua the son of Nun. Such, then, being the case, the apostle, elevating our power of discernment above the letter, says some-where, “Behold Israel according to the flesh,”¹² as if there were an Israel “according to the Spirit.” And in another place he says, “For they who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God” nor are “they all Israel who are descended from Israel.”¹³ ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 4.I.20-21.¹⁴

¹²1 Cor 10:18. ¹³Rom 9:6-8. ¹⁴ANF 4:369-70* (from the Greek).



THE REVIVAL OF THE CULT
OF THE GOLDEN CALVES
1 KINGS 12:26-33

OVERVIEW: Jeroboam introduced again the cult of the golden calves in order to cause political dis-

sension, which might be useful to him in his fight for kingship (EPHREM). Jeroboam feared that if he

came to God's temple in Jerusalem, his subjects might be alienated from his allegiance and reattached to David's blood successors as the royal dynasty so that, with this in mind, he established idolatry in his own kingdom (AUGUSTINE). Jeroboam set up golden calves as gods for the people to keep them from seeking the living God (CHRYSOLOGUS).

12:28 Jeroboam Made Two Golden Calves

WHY DID JEROBOAM MAKE TWO CALVES OF GOLD? EPHREM THE SYRIAN: While he prepared to establish the reign which was reserved to him by God according to the predictions of the prophets Shemaiah and Ahijah, Jeroboam thought that nothing could be more useful for his purpose than kindling the hatred of the two opposite parties to the highest possible degree, so that he might preclude any chance of reconciliation and peace. Therefore, in order that those who already distrusted each other might be removed from each other even further, he introduced a new reason for dissension concerning the worship of God. He persuaded his party to leave behind their Jewish rites and to take up the religion of the Egyptians which was superior to all other religions, just as Egyptian wisdom and power were greater than those of the Canaanites and the Jews. Since the majority of the tribes agreed, he proposed to worship the ancient idols of the Hebrews, namely, two calves of gold, and dedicated them by using, according to the old custom, the formula "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."¹ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 12.18.²

JEROBOAM'S FEAR OF LOSING POWER. AUGUSTINE: For all that, King Jeroboam of Israel, who had proof that God was true, when he got the kingdom God had promised, was so warped in mind as not to believe in him. Actually, he feared that if he came to God's temple in Jerusalem (as all Jews without exception were bound by divine ordinance to do for the offering of sacrifices), his

subjects might be alienated from his allegiance and reattached to David's blood successors as the royal dynasty. With this in mind, he established idolatry in his own kingdom and, with shocking impiety, tricked God's people into joining him in the worship of idols. Even so, God did not entirely give up sending prophets to reprimand the king, and his successors who continued his idolatry and the people themselves. For it was in Israel that there appeared Elijah and his disciple, Elisha, both magnificent prophets and wonder workers as well. CITY OF GOD 17.22.³

12:30 The People Went to Worship the Calf

THE CITY OF DAN. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "The people went before the other [god] as far as Dan." In order to worship the calf, the crowd walks in procession before it. Dan is the city that is now called Panias. When Israel took possession of the promised land, the children of Dan moved to take hold of that town and called it Dan. Two springs originated from there: Yor and Dan. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 12.30.⁴

THE SCANDAL CAUSED BY JEROBOAM'S IDOLATRY. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS: Now let us talk also about the second kind of scandal, which, we said, arises from human cleverness. . . . Jeroboam raised up a scandal. He set up as gods for the people, golden calves—pitiful images—to keep them from seeking the living God, the true temple, God's law, the rightly appointed kings and their ancestral rites. Consequently, the whole people thus delivered over to error became a source of scandal like that given, according to the apostle,⁵ when a person eats, as harmless to his own conscience, the flesh of animals that were sacrificed to idols. He thinks that through such conduct he may well bring contempt on the inanimate stones and wooden gods that can neither sanctify nor profane anything. But what he thinks is an exam-

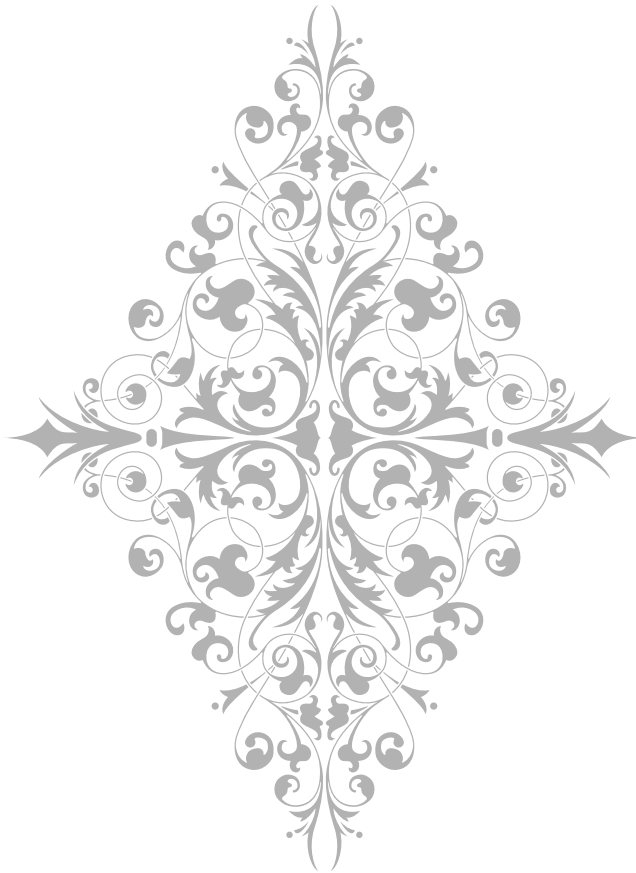
¹Exod 32:4. ²ESOO 1:473. ³FC 24:79*. ⁴CSCO 229:112-13.

⁵See 1 Cor 8:7-8; 10:23-30.

ple of his faith becomes an occasion of error for uninstructed people, for it leads them not to contempt but to worship, and it causes the meal to appear to be a banquet of religious honor to those very inanimate gods that he is intentionally diminishing by this ridicule. Consequently, the

apostle wisely concludes and explains, "And through your 'knowledge' the weak one will perish, the brother for whom Christ died."⁶ SERMON 27.⁷

⁶1 Cor 8:11. ⁷FC 17:72-73.





THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH 1 KINGS 13:1-32

OVERVIEW: Jeroboam's hand, which had withered by sacrilege, was healed by true religion (AM-BROSE). The old prophet may either be a sincere man who invited the true prophet out of human sympathy or a false prophet who tried to seduce him (ISHO'DAD). The prophet paid the severe penalty of his breach of fast (TERTULLIAN). The Lord punished the prophet mildly, for it was not from his own obstinacy that he refused to carry out the command but because of the deceit of another

person (AUGUSTINE). The lion was not urged by hunger but acted in compliance with God's order (ISHO'DAD). The man of God was corrected temporarily even at the point of death rather than being punished after death (AUGUSTINE). The prophet's disobedience was atoned for by his death, because the lion attacked the living prophet and killed him, yet did not dare touch him once he was dead (GREGORY THE GREAT). Even holy people have been given over to great sufferings on ac-

count of some slight sins, because the divine clemency does not permit the least blemish or stain to be found in them on the day of judgment (CAS-SIAN). When the old prophet insists in saying that he wants to be buried in the grave of the prophet, he foreshadows baptism, which is the grave of the Emmanuel (EPHREM). The old prophet insists on being buried besides the true prophet, because he knows that the tomb of the true prophet will never be violated (AUGUSTINE).

13:4-6 *Jeroboam's Hand Withered*

THE MERCY OF GOD AND THE POWER OF REPENTANCE. AMBROSE: But when in the temple of our God, that wicked king Jeroboam took away the gifts that his father had laid up and offered them to idols on the holy altar, did not his right hand, which he stretched, wither, and his idols, which he called on, were not able to help him? Then, turning to the Lord, he asked for pardon, and at once his hand, which had withered by sacrilege, was healed by true religion. So complete an example was there set forth in one person, both of divine mercy and wrath, when he who was sacrificing suddenly lost his right hand but when penitent received forgiveness. CONCERNING VIRGINS 2.5.38.¹

13:11 *An Old Prophet in Bethel*

WHICH WAS THE OLD PROPHET'S REAL INTENTION? ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Some authors² assert that [the old prophet] was not an impostor but invited [the true prophet] to eat out of human sympathy in order to refresh and thank him for admonishing Jeroboam. And that is why God did not harm him as a consequence of this. According to others, he was a false prophet because, if he had been a true prophet, as others maintained, he would have not seduced a true prophet, and his children would not have served in a house of idols;³ therefore it was in order to seduce him that he went to meet the prophet. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 13.11.⁴

13:19 *The Man of God Ate with Him*

A PUNISHMENT FOR BREAKING THE FAST.

TERTULLIAN: For even if God does prefer the works of righteousness, still, these works are not without sacrifice, which represents a soul afflicted with fasts. He, at all events, is the God to whom neither a people incontinent of appetite nor a priest nor a prophet was pleasing. To this day the "monuments of concupiscence" remain, where the people, greedy of "flesh"—until, by devouring without digesting the quails, they brought on cholera—were buried. Eli breaks his neck before the temple doors,⁵ his sons fall in battle, his daughter-in-law expires in childbirth.⁶ For such was the blow that had been deserved at the hand of God by the shameless house, the defrauder of the fleshy sacrifices.⁷ Sameas,⁸ a man of God, after prophesying the issue of the idolatry introduced by king Jeroboam (the drying up and immediate restoration of that king's hand; after the rending in two of the sacrificial altar), being on account of these signs invited [home] by the king by way of reward, plainly declined [for he had been prohibited by God] to touch food at all in that place. However, having presently afterwards rashly taken food from another old man who deceitfully professed himself a prophet, he was deprived of burial in his fathers' sepulchers, in accordance with the word of God then and there uttered over the table. For he was felled by the rushing of a lion on him along the way and was buried among strangers; and thus he paid the penalty of his breach of fast. These will be warnings both to people and to bishops, even spiritual ones, in case they may ever have been guilty of not controlling their appetite. ON FASTING 16.⁹

¹NPNF 2 10:379-80. ²Isho'dad refers to unknown sources. ³The unknown source quoted by Isho'dad supposes that the children of the false prophet were servants in the sanctuary of Bethel. ⁴CSCO 229:113. ⁵See 1 Sam 4:13-18. ⁶See 1 Sam 4:17-21. ⁷See 1 Sam 2:12-17, 22-25. ⁸The name Sameas (Shemaiah) is not mentioned in the Hebrew text, where the prophet remains anonymous, but only in the LXX and VL. Probably there is a confusion with the prophet Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22). ⁹ANF 4:112-13*.

13:21-22 *His Body Not Returned to the Ancestral Tomb*

A MILD PUNISHMENT. AUGUSTINE: Yet from that love of the human heart, because of which “no one ever hated his own flesh,”¹⁰ if people believe that anything would be lacking to their bodies after death that in their own people or country the solemnity of burial demands, they become sad . . . , and before death they fear for their bodies that which has no effect on them after death. Thus we read in the book of Kings that God through a prophet threatens another prophet who transgressed his word, that his body should not be returned to the sepulcher of his ancestors. Scripture records it in these words: “Thus says the Lord: Because you have not been obedient to the Lord and have not kept the commandment that the Lord your God commanded you, and [you] have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place where he commanded you that you should not eat bread or drink water, your dead shall not be brought in the sepulcher of your ancestors.” If we consider the extent of this punishment according to the Evangelist, where we learn that after the body has been slain there is no occasion to fear that the lifeless members will suffer, it should not be called punishment. But, if we consider it in relation to the love of a person for his own flesh, then he might have been frightened and saddened while living at what he was not to feel when dead. This, then, was the nature of the punishment: The soul grieved that something would happen to its body, although, when it did happen, the soul did not grieve. Only to this extent did the Lord wish to punish his servant, for it was not from his own obstinacy that he refused to carry out the command, but, because of the deceit of another person who was deceiving him, he thought he obeyed when he did not obey. **THE CARE TO BE TAKEN FOR THE DEAD** 7.9.¹¹

13:24-28 *A Lion Killed Him*

THE LION ACTED ACCORDING TO GOD’S COM-

MAND. ISHO‘DAD OF MERV: Through the words “a lion killed him” [the Scripture] shows that [the lion] strangled and killed him according to God’s command. And through the sentence “it did not eat him,” it shows that [the animal] was not urged by hunger but acted in compliance with God’s order. And this was done in order that Jeroboam and his priests might understand that, if this had happened to the prophet just because he had eaten, something extremely more serious would happen to those who made offerings to the idols. **BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS** 13.24-28.¹²

THE MAN OF GOD WAS CORRECTED TEMPORARILY. AUGUSTINE: It is not to be imagined that one has been so annihilated by the teeth of a beast that his soul has then been snatched away to infernal punishment, since the same lion who killed his very body guarded it. Even the beast of burden on which the man had been riding was unhurt and with great courage stood in the presence of the wild beast at the destruction of his master. By this miraculous sign it is made clear that the man of God was corrected temporarily even at the point of death rather than that he was punished after death. On this subject the apostle Paul, when he had made mention of certain unpleasant infirmities and death experienced by many, said, “But if we judged ourselves, we should not thus be judged by the Lord. But when we are judged, we are being chastised by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”¹³ **THE CARE TO BE TAKEN FOR THE DEAD** 7.9.¹⁴

SANCTIFIED IN THE DEATH HE SUFFERED.

GREGORY THE GREAT: It is written in the Scriptures, “But the just man, though he die early, shall be at rest.”¹⁵ What, then, does it matter to the just if they undergo harsh treatment at death, since they are on their way to eternal life? Sometimes, perhaps, it is a fault of theirs, slight though

¹⁰Eph 5:29. ¹¹FC 27:362-63. ¹²CSCO 229:113. ¹³1 Cor 11:31-32.

¹⁴FC 27:363. ¹⁵Wis 4:7.

it be, that has to be expiated by such a death. For this reason the reprobate are given power over the just while they are still alive. But, once the just have died, the wicked are punished all the more severely because of the cruel power they exercised against holy people. This is demonstrated in the case of the barbarian who was permitted by God to strike down the deacon but was not allowed to rejoice over his death. It is also verified in holy Scripture. The man of God, for instance, who was sent to Samaria stopped on the way for a meal, contrary to God's command. For this disobedience he was killed by a lion. But Scripture at once adds that the donkey and the lion were standing by the dead prophet, and "the lion had not eaten of the dead body." From this passage we see that the sin of disobedience was atoned for by his death, because the lion attacked the living prophet and killed him, yet did not dare touch him once he was dead. God allowed the beast to kill, but not to eat of its kill, because the prophet, though blameworthy in life, was sanctified in the death he suffered as a punishment for his disobedience. In the first instance the lion took away the life of a sinner; in the second he stood guard over the body of a just man. *DIALOGUE* 4.24-25.¹⁶

DIVINE CLEMENCY DOES NOT PERMIT THE LEAST STAIN. JOHN CASSIAN: We know that even saintly men have been given over in the flesh to Satan and to great afflictions for some very slight faults, since the divine mercy will not tolerate the very least spot or stain to be found in them on the day of judgment, and purges away in this world every spot of their filth, as the prophet, or rather God himself says, in order that he may commit them to eternity as gold or silver refined and needing no penal purification. "And," he says, "I will clean purge away your dross, and I will take away all your sin; and after this you will be called the city of the just, a faithful city."¹⁷ And again: "Just as silver and gold are tried in the furnace, so the Lord chooses hearts."¹⁸ And again: "The fire tries gold and silver, but man is tried in

the furnace of humiliation."¹⁹ And this also: "For the Lord chastens those whom he loves, and he disciplines every son whom he receives."²⁰ We see a clear instance of this in the case of the prophet and man of God in the third book of Kings who was immediately destroyed by a lion for a single disobedience, in which he was implicated not of set purpose nor by the fault of his own will but by the enticement of another. As the Scripture says of him: "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the word of the Lord, and the Lord delivered him to the lion, and it killed him according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke." The punishment for his present offense and his careless error—together with the reward for his righteousness—for which the Lord gave over his prophet in this world to the destroyer appeared in the moderation and abstinence of the beast of prey, when that most savage creature did not dare even to taste the carcass that was given over to him. *CONFERENCE* 7.25-26.²¹

13:31 *The Grave of the Man of God*

AN ALLEGORY OF FUTURE SALVATION THROUGH BAPTISM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN:

While this old man insists in saying to his sons that he wants them to bury him, their father, in the grave of the prophet Shemaiah²² and hopes that his bones will find peace, he represents the allegorical type of an ancient Adam who exhorts and even urges his sons to lower him into baptism, which is the grave of the Emmanuel. Through him all those who have been buried with him through baptism certainly hope for peace and life.²³ On the other hand, when this same old man lies and deceives the other prophet, he represents the Jewish people, about whom we read in the psalm: "But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their

¹⁶FC 39:216-17. ¹⁷Is 1:25-26. ¹⁸Prov 17:3 (LXX). ¹⁹Sir 2:5. ²⁰Heb 12:6. ²¹NPNF 2 11:371*. ²²The anonymous prophet, simply defined as "a man of God" at the beginning of the chapter (1 Kings 13:1), is identified by Ephrem with the prophet Shemaiah (cf. 1 Kings 12:22-24). ²³Rom 6:4.

tongues.”²⁴ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS
13:20.²⁵

NO ONE WILL VIOLATE THE TOMB OF THE MAN OF GOD. AUGUSTINE: Well did the man who had deceived the man of God bury him with honor in his own tomb and give orders that he himself should be buried next to his bones, hoping thus to spare his own bones. He knew that the time would come according to the prophecy of that man of God when Josiah, king of the Jews, would dig up in the land the bones of many dead and with them defile the sacrilegious altars that had been set up for graven images. He spared that tomb where the prophet lay who more than three

hundred years before had predicted these things. And because of him the burying place of the man who deceived him was not violated.²⁶ By that love because of which no one ever hated his own flesh, he provided for his own corpse, while he had slain his soul by deceit. From this fact, then, because each one naturally loves his own flesh, it was punishment for him to learn that he would not be in the tomb of his fathers. So he took care that his bones be spared by burying them next to him whose tomb no one would violate. **THE CARE TO BE TAKEN FOR THE DEAD** 7:9.²⁷

²⁴Ps 78:36 (77:36 LXX). ²⁵ESOO 1:479. ²⁶See 1 Kings 13:24-32; 2 Kings 23:16-18. ²⁷FC 27:363-64.





THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM 1 KINGS 13:33–14:20

OVERVIEW: Jeroboam tries to cheat the prophet Ahijah in order to get the cure for his ill son from God whom he has abandoned. Through divine revelation Ahijah immediately discloses Jeroboam's deceit (EPHREM). Jeroboam neglected those commandments that David had kept (JEROME). Only true prophets must be consulted for any kind of prediction (ORIGEN). In his attitude toward Jeroboam, God shows again his infinite mercy (ISHO'DAD).

14:1-3 Jeroboam Sends His Wife to See the Prophet Ahijah

JEROBOAM'S HOPELESS ATTEMPT AT OBTAIN-

ING HIS SON'S CURE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "At that time Abijah son of Jeroboam fell sick," and [the king], being worried for the health of his son, sent his wife to the prophet Ahijah because he was confident that through the prayers of that holy man he would obtain from God, whom he had repudiated, the healing of his son. And he did not want the queen to appear [before the prophet] without a present against the custom of the ancestors. Therefore "she took ten loaves of bread," that is, ten soldiers' biscuits, "a jar of honey and dry fruits"¹; the Greek text has *staphylas*, that is, grapes,

¹The text of the Peshitta reads "dry fruits" instead of "cakes."

instead of dry fruits. He did not want her to offer a regal present, lest she might appear in her real nature. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 14.1.²

14:6 *Why Do You Pretend to Be Another?*

NOBODY CAN DECEIVE GOD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door, he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam; why do you pretend to be another?” He heard her coming in, [the text] says, because he could not see anymore after his eyes had become dim from his old age. Yet through divine revelation he understood that she was Jeroboam’s wife, even though she wanted to hide this from the prophet, whom she knew to be justifiably enraged [with her husband]. Therefore the prophet, beginning his speech, harshly attacked Jeroboam and condemned with very severe words his violation of pacts and piety and his oblivion to all the benefits that he had received from the generous hand of God, so that [the prophet] finally predicted huge calamities, the destruction of the kingdom and the complete ruin of [Jeroboam’s] entire family. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 14.6.³

14:8 *You Have Not Kept God’s Commandments*

GOD’S COMMANDMENTS CAN BE OBSERVED BY EVERYBODY. JEROME: “The Lord is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plentiful in mercy.”⁴ “The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.”⁵ You hear that his mercies are so great, and do you dare to put your trust in your own virtue? “Let all your works, O Lord, confess to you.”⁶ If people are also part of his works, then all people should confess their sins. We read it said in Samuel about Solomon: “He shall build a house to my name, and I shall establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”⁷ And again: “If he commits any iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of people, but my mercy I will not take away from him.”⁸ After

giving thanks to God, David said in conclusion, “And this is the law of humankind.”⁹ Have recourse, O Lord, always to your mercy, and sustain the weakness of my flesh by your divine assistance. “What have I to do,” he says, “with you also, you sons of Sarvia? Let Shimei curse. The Lord had bid him curse David. And who shall say to him, why have you done so?”¹⁰ For the will of God is not to be discussed but kindly accepted. And in another place: “The Lord commanded that the profitable counsel of Ahitophel be defeated that he might bring evil on Absalom,”¹¹ whose counsel was certainly the counsel of God. And for what reason was the power of the free will subverted by a greater power? Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin, is reproved for having neglected the commandment of the Lord, and it is said to him, “I gave you the kingdom of the house of David, and you have not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing that which was well pleasing in my sight.” Therefore, the commandments of God are possible, which we know David had kept; and yet, we find holy people growing weary in maintaining justice forever. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.20.¹²

14:12 *When Your Feet Enter the City, the Child Shall Die*

ONLY THE PROPHETS MUST BE CONSULTED. ORIGEN: There is therefore no absurdity in the prophets [of the Jews] having uttered predictions even about events of no importance, to soothe those who desire such things, as when Samuel prophesies regarding three donkeys that were lost,¹³ or when mention is made in the third book of Kings respecting the sickness of a king’s son. And why should not those who desired to obtain auguries from idols be severely rebuked by the

²ESOO 1:480. ³ESOO 1:480. ⁴Ps 103:8 (102:8 LXX, Vg). ⁵Ps 145:9 (144:9 LXX, Vg). ⁶Ps 145:10 (144:10 LXX, Vg). ⁷2 Sam 7:13-14. ⁸2 Sam 7:14-15. ⁹2 Sam 7:19. ¹⁰2 Sam 16:10. ¹¹2 Sam 17:14. ¹²FC 53:327-28. ¹³See 1 Sam 9:20.

administrators of the law among the Jews, as Elijah is found rebuking Ahaziah and saying, “Is it because there is not a God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baalzebub, god of Ekron?”¹⁴ AGAINST CELSUS 1.36.¹⁵

14:13 *Something Pleasing to the Lord*

GOD IS ALWAYS MERCIFUL TOWARD SINNERS.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: [The Scripture] calls “something pleasing” the fact that [Jeroboam] sent his wife to the prophet of God and not to the impostors and diviners. We must constantly admire the mercy of God, who increases many times over

every good [action] performed by mortals and then returns it to them. This is quite evident from what he did for that father of the error of the calves and protector of the iniquity of Baal, namely, Ahab.¹⁶ Because of his fast of one day, and the night in which he slept in sackcloth, punishment was averted from his house and his kingdom for three years in order to show [God's] mercy and exhort sinners to repentance. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 14.13.¹⁷

¹⁴2 Kings 1:3. ¹⁵ANF 4:412. ¹⁶See 1 Kings 16:30-33. ¹⁷CSCO 229:114.



THE IMPIETY OF
REHOBOAM AND ABIJAM
1 KINGS 14:21–15:8

OVERVIEW: The Lord willed to be born from the sinful stock of Rehoboam in order to take on him all the sins of humankind (ORIGEN). The prostitution practiced at the time of Rehoboam was spread by demons who wanted to corrupt God's creatures (ISHO'DAD). Rehoboam increased the worship of idols and was supported in this by his impious mother. Abijam reigns in Judah after Rehoboam and is able to defeat in battle the superior forces of the Israelites (EPHREM).

14:21-23 Rehoboam Sinned More Than All His Ancestors

BORN OF SIN TO SAVE US FROM SIN. ORIGEN: Our Lord and Savior had come for this end, to take on himself humanity's sins. God "made him who had committed no sin to be sin for our sake."¹ For this reason, he came down into the world and took on the person of sinners and depraved people. He willed to be born from the stock of Solomon, whose sins have been recorded,² and from Rehoboam, whose transgressions are reported, and from the rest of them, many of whom "did evil in the sight of the Lord."³ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 28.2.⁴

14:24 Male Temple Prostitutes

PROSTITUTION SPREAD BY DEMONS.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "There was also prostitution in the land." [The Scripture] does not refer to the mere [prostitution] of bodies, nor to that of the soul, which is idolatry, but to that [prostitution] spread by demons among the Gentiles in order to corrupt God's creature and work, namely, humanity. And this [form of prostitution] did not exist among the people. It is in this regard that the Fathers warned the children of the church, "[to abstain] from prostitution, from anything that has been strangled and from blood."⁵ This is a first form of that prostitution: before being united in marriage according to the law,⁶ the virgins had intercourse with the priests of the demons. A second form took place when in the course of one or two years the virgins devoted themselves to prostitution for the satisfaction of Satan and later became property of men, that is, they sat along the roads and sold their bodies. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 14.24.⁷

¹2 Cor 5:21. ²See 1 Kings 11:6-8. ³1 Kings 15:26, 34. ⁴FC 94:116. ⁵Acts 15:20. ⁶That is, in the ancient time of paganism. ⁷CSCO 229:114-15.

14:25 Shishak Attacks Jerusalem

A PUNISHMENT OF IDOLATRY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Rehoboam spread and increased the idolatry introduced by Solomon after being instigated in this sin by his Gentile mother Naamah. And this seems to be hinted at in the Scripture which reports Rehoboam's apostasy just after mentioning his impious mother. Many examples that occur in this book, such as those of Maacah,⁸ Jezebel⁹ and Athaliah,¹⁰ amply demonstrate how the marriages made with foreign women had the power to corrupt the customs of the Israelites in this regard. Therefore, since God wanted to punish the offense caused by the violation of piety, he allowed Shishak, the king of Egypt, to enter Judea with a huge army, to conquer Jerusalem, to plunder the temple and the royal house and to destroy everything. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 14.25.¹¹

15:1-7 Abijam Began to Reign

ABIJAM DEFEATED JEROBOAM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah," and under his rule the Jews obtained a magnificent victory over the Israelites in a battle, which was greater than all those fought before in their civil wars. It is said that after the two multitudes of soldiers were drawn up in fighting order, Abijam appeared to have four hundred thousand men, and Jeroboam eight hundred thousand. The Jews won, while the number of the Israelites who fell in action was larger than five hundred thousand, which is an extremely rare occurrence in history. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 15.1.¹²

⁸See 1 Kings 15:13. ⁹See 1 Kings 16:31. ¹⁰See 2 Kings 11:1. ¹¹ESOO 1:481. ¹²ESOO 1:482.



ASA RESTORES THE WORSHIP
OF GOD IN JUDAH
1 KINGS 15:9-24

OVERVIEW: Asa restores the cult of the Lord in Judah and banishes the impious Maacah, mother of his father, Abijam (EPHREM). God has foretold that the images of the many false gods would be overturned and has commanded them to be overturned (AUGUSTINE). The devil tried to tempt Asa through his mother but was defeated (APHRAHAT). Asa erred in not removing the high places, which were places of worship consecrated to idols, and was saved only through the merits of his ancestor David (JEROME) The high places were not altars dedicated to idols, but to God, even though they were built against the command of the Law, which prescribed to worship God in Jerusalem only (ISHO'DAD). In his old age, Asa was diseased in his feet as a punishment for his sins (CHRYSOSTOM).

15:9-13 Asa Removed All the Idols

ASA RESTORES THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: In the meantime, Asa devoted himself to the reconstruction of the ruins of religion. He destroyed the temples of the idols, smashed the statues, set the sacred woods on fire and removed the ignominy of the effeminate priests. He also drove away Maacah, the mother of his father, Abijam. [She] was the high

priestess of that abomination, and he chased her off from that place of honor that she was holding and broke her idols and burned them. Therefore, after removing the worship of the idols in this manner, he restored the holy rites of true religion and constantly protected all the sacred institutions for the forty-one years in which he ruled over the state. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 15.1.¹

GOD HAS COMMANDED THAT IDOLS BE OVERTURNED. AUGUSTINE: Look for a little at those books on the Republic² from which you drew that ideal of the most devoted citizen: that there should be no limit or legitimate restriction on his service. Look, I beg you, and notice with what high praise frugality and temperance are there spoken of, as well as fidelity to the marriage bond, and chaste, honorable and upright conduct. When a state excels in these, it can truly be said to bloom. But in churches in growing numbers all over the world, as in holy gatherings of peoples, these principles are taught and learned; above all, the devotion by which the true and truth-giving God is worshiped, who not only commands these principles to be kept

¹ESOO 1:482. ²See Cicero *De Republica* fragment 4.7.7.

but also gives them fulfillment. It is by these that the human mind is prepared and made fit for the divine society and for its habitation in the eternal heavenly country. Hence he has foretold that the images of the many false gods would be overturned and has commanded them to be overturned. LETTER 91.³

ASA DEFEATED THE DEVIL. APHRAHAT: Furthermore, the adversary tempted Job through his children and his possessions, and when he could not prevail over him, he went and brought against him his armor, and he came, bringing with him a daughter of Eve, who had caused Adam to sink, and through her mouth he said to Job, her righteous husband, "Curse God."⁴ But Job rejected her counsel. King Asa also conquered the Accursed-of-life, when he wished to come in against him, through his mother. For Asa knew his craftiness and removed his mother from her high estate and cut in pieces her idol and cast it down. DEMONSTRATION 6.3.⁵

15:14 *The High Places Not Taken Away*

ASA IS SAVED THROUGH THE MERIT OF DAVID. JEROME: Regarding many kings of the line of David, we read that they were saved not through their own merit but through the virtues of their father, David, who did that which was pleasing in the sight of God. And we come to Asa, the king of Judah, of whom it is written: "Asa did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as did David, his father." And after a lengthy account of his many virtues, the story is concluded with these words: "But the high places he did not take away. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect with God all the days of his life." You see that he, too, is referred to as just, and his heart, indeed, was perfect with God, and yet he erred in that he did not take

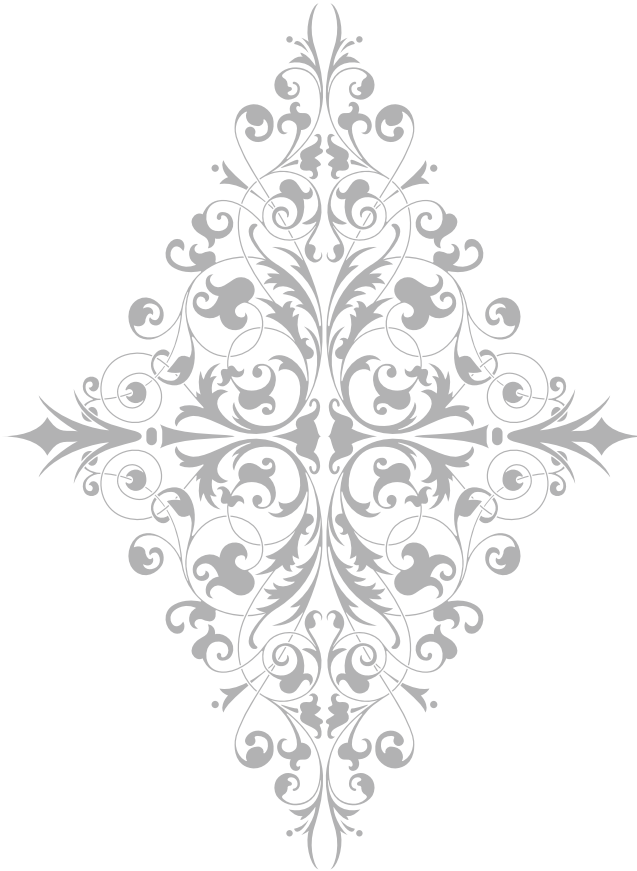
away the high places, as, we read, Hezekiah and Josiah had done. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.21.⁶

MANY ALTARS DEDICATED TO GOD. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "High places" refers to the altars that had been erected for the true God. This means that sacrifices were offered to God in any place, just like Solomon offered a thousand holocausts to God in Gibeon.⁷ Therefore the words "the high places were not taken away [by Asa]" mean that they did not worship or sacrifice before a single altar according to the commandment of God, that is, in Jerusalem, as is prescribed by the Law.⁸ [The Scripture] does not speak here about the altars [consecrated] to idols but about those consecrated to the true God. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 15.14.⁹

15:23 *Asa Was Diseased in His Feet*

EVERY BLOW MUST BE ENDURED WITH GRATITUDE. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: "What, then," you will say, "do all illnesses come in punishment for sin?" No, not all, but many do; some spring from laxity. I say this because gluttony and drunkenness and sloth give rise to sicknesses of this kind. Accordingly, we must be watchful for one thing only: that we bear every blow with gratitude. At times the blow comes to chastise sin, as in the book of Kings we see a man [i.e., King Asa] seized with a foot disease for this reason. On the other hand, the blow might be inflicted to increase righteousness still further, as God says to Job, "Do you think that I have had dealings with you for any other reason than 'that you might be justified?'"¹⁰ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 38.1.¹¹

³FC 18:43. ⁴Job 2:9. ⁵NPNF 2 13:365-66. ⁶FC 53:328*. ⁷See 1 Kings 3:4. ⁸See Deut 12:13. ⁹CSCO 229:115. ¹⁰Job 40:8. ¹¹FC 33:369-70.





THE FOUR KINGS OF ISRAEL
1 KINGS 15:25–16:28

OVERVIEW: God had entrusted Baasha with the task of restoring the true religion, but he and his successors persevered in their idolatry and impiety (EPHREM). God's words against Baasha and his house were pronounced against all sinners, and especially against the pagans and the heretics (RABANUS MAURUS). Baasha was allowed to punish Nadab's impiety with death, but since he did not fear such punishment and behaved impiously

as well, he was condemned to suffer the same punishment (ISHO'DAD).

16:1 *The Word of the Lord*

THE EVIL OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: [Baasha] was appointed king by God and was sent to restore the true religion which had been destroyed by Jeroboam and his

successor Nadab, and to take revenge on the evil that was committed as well as impiety. He was certainly able to accomplish in the best possible way his first task, as he completely erased the progeny of both Jeroboam and Nadab. However, with regard to his second task, he promoted their impiety by perversely and foolishly worshiping the idols of both [his predecessors] and did not destroy at all the calves made by Jeroboam but incited his own subjects to adore them. Therefore the prophet Jehu harshly condemns the crime of Baasha's ungrateful soul in this passage and proclaims the revenge which will strike him shortly. So Baasha was deprived of his kingdom and life for this reason, and after the killing of Elah, his son and successor, in the second year of his reign, Zimri took hold of the power and kept it for seven days, as is written. Then he was put under siege by Omri in Tirzah, and after the city had been conquered, [Zimri] took refuge in the palace and set himself on fire together with the royal house. Omri, the founder of Samaria, succeeded him. He died after twelve years and left his reign to his son. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 16.1.¹

16:2-4 God Will Consume Baasha and His House

WORDS ADDRESSED TO ALL SINNERS.

RABANUS MAURUS: "Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have caused my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, therefore, I will consume the past actions² of Baasha and the past actions of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the air shall eat." These words were pronounced against all sinners, and especially against the pagans and the heretics. Indeed, those who always add new sins to their old sins and are depraved by the examples of evil

become the greatest in their crimes. "I will cut off the past actions of Baasha," [the Lord] says, "and the past actions of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat." The Lord cuts off the past actions of Baasha when he takes revenge on the sin of the wicked after the end of life. And he cuts off the past actions of his house when he condemns the inhabitants of that house to eternal torments. And he will make the house of Baasha like the house of Jeroboam son of Nabat when he gives the sinners who persevere in their iniquity to the torments of hell together with the devil and his angels. In fact, Baasha, as we have already said, is interpreted as "confusion" or "dryness," Jeroboam as "he who divides the people," and Nabat as "spontaneous." Therefore, when one follows the confusions of errors and sinners and neglects the possibility of having a wife of spiritual grace, then his past actions will be cut off as those of the devil. COMMENTARY ON THE THIRD BOOK OF KINGS 15.³

16:7 Like the House of Jeroboam

BAASHA WILL BE PUNISHED. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "... In being like the house of Jeroboam, and also because he destroyed it." This does not mean that Elah killed Jeroboam, but that Baasha, father of Elah, killed the son of Jeroboam. And he is not threatened with evils by the prophet because he killed him but because he does not fear the punishment which was performed by his hands as a consequence of Nadab's sins.⁴ And since he is at the moment imitating the evil actions of that one, he will undergo the same punishment as well. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 16.7.⁵

¹ESQO 1:486. ²Rabanus is quoting from Vg, which reads "the past actions of Baasha and the past actions of his house." ³PL 109:203-4.

⁴Nadab was Jeroboam's son and was killed by Baasha (1 Kings 15:25).

⁵CSCO 229:116.



THE BEGINNING OF AHAB'S REIGN
AND THE PROPHECY OF ELIJAH
1 KINGS 16:29–17:7

OVERVIEW: Ahab increased the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam by establishing more pagan cults and by building new altars (EPHREM). Ahab demonstrated all his insolence and impiety in refuting the words of Joshua and in rebuilding the city of Jericho (ISHO'DAD). Elijah appeared when Ahab's arrogance was at its climax, so that the impious king not only practiced idolatry but also persecuted the prophets and saints. Elijah was sent to show with words and actions of power the truth of the curses, which the fathers had proclaimed against the transgressors of the Law (EPHREM). So great is the power of fasting that a word sent from the fasting mouth of Elijah closed heaven to the sacrilegious (AMBROSE). The wadi signifies both the stream coming out of the sanctuary, where the

sick are healed, and the baptism of the Lord. The Scripture shows that animals of an evil nature, such as the raven, performed what was ordered to them by God and provided for the necessities of the prophet, whereas the children of Israel, even though they were endowed with reason, did not want to observe the law of God (ISHO'DAD). The ravens that took care of blessed Elijah at the Lord's bidding prefigured the Gentiles and their church (AUGUSTINE). Bread represents perfection and justice accomplished together, while meat refers to the mortification of flesh (EPHREM). Elijah was fasting while he was alone at the Wadi Cherith and never boasted about his fasting (AMBROSE).

16:29-30 *Ahab Did Evil in God's Sight*

AHAB'S IMPIOUSNESS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: This is that Ahab who thought that he would make little progress in the new religion [i.e., idolatry] if he worshiped only the gods introduced by Jeroboam. Therefore he established rites for Baal, the god of the Sidonians, built his temple in the royal city, erected altars and planted sacred groves. And these actions bitterly enraged the prophets and the other worshipers of the true God. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 16.29.¹

16:34 *Hiel of Bethel Built Jericho*

AHAB'S INSOLENT IN REBUILDING JERICHO. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Jericho remained in ruins as a sign and memory of the power of God and the victory of the people of Israel. But the insolent Ahab decided to refute the words of Joshua² and said, "As the words of his master Moses, who said, 'The sky over your head shall be bronze and the earth under you iron'³ did not happen, so the words of his disciple will not happen." However, when [the city] was re-established at the cost of Abiram's death, his firstborn, the people feared God and showed him that he was not allowed to rebuild the city, so he stopped. But, a bit later, he attributed all these events to chance and resumed his work by setting the gates of the city. Then Segub, his youngest son, died. For this reason Elijah burned with zeal and stopped heaven for three and a half years. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 16.7.⁴

17:1 *Elijah Spoke to Ahab*

AT THE CLIMAX OF AHAB'S REBELLION. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Exactly at the time when the prophet and father of the prophets Elijah appeared, the rebellion of Ahab and his wife Jezebel had increased to such an extent that they not only trampled the law and fear of God underfoot, nor were content to promote the worship of idols, nor even persecuted and killed the prophets and the saints. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.1.⁵

WHY WAS ELIJAH SENT? EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elijah was sent to prevent Ahab's insane rage and to show with words and actions of power and vigor the truth of the curses that the fathers had proclaimed against the transgressors of the law of God, as they were not vain threats. . . . Moses wrote a large book of curses and ordered Joshua to proclaim them before the assembly of all the tribes of Israel with great clamor and loudly. He especially mentions the harsh famine and the other evils that follow it, the deprivation of the rain, the aridity and infertility of the land. Ahab despised and laughed at them, because he saw how abundant his supplies were, thanks to his father who was an impious king like him. Therefore, that arrogant king necessarily had to be punished for his arrogance.

But the main reason why Elijah was sent was Jezebel, whose pride the Lord wanted to humiliate and whose falsehood he wanted to disclose. She had actually appointed herself as minister of Baal and had entrusted herself with the religious service for this god. She also proclaimed that Baal was the supreme god who ruled over those living in heaven and on earth and sent rain, watered the skies and gave fertility to the ground. She took as witnesses her fellow citizens, the Sidonians and the Tyrians and the other peoples of Phoenicia who were prosperous in those days in wealth and possessions more than any other of the neighboring nations and were also the most fervent worshipers of Baal. It was with good reason and according to justice that Elijah rose and came at that time of distress, and finally issued a stern rebuke against Ahab and his leaders and threatened to bring on them a sky of iron, as Moses had predicted, and a land of bronze.⁶ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.1.⁷

THE POWER OF FASTING. AMBROSE: Great is the virtue of fasting; in short so splendid is the

¹ESOO 1:486. ²See Josh 6:26. ³Deut 28:23. ⁴CSCO 229:116-17.

⁵ESOO 1:487. ⁶See Deut 28:23. ⁷ESOO 1:487-88.

warfare that it delighted even Christ to fast; and so mighty that it raised people to heaven. And, that we may use human rather than divine examples, a word sent from the fasting mouth of Elijah closed heaven to the sacrilegious people of the Jews. For when an altar had been set up to an idol by Ahab, at the word of the prophet for three years and six months dewy rain did not fall on the earth. A worthy punishment fittingly to check insolence, that heaven should be closed to the impious who had polluted the things of earth! It was also right that a prophet, for the condemnation of a sacrilegious king, was sent to a widow in Zarephath of Sidonia, who, since she preferred piety to food, merited that she alone should not feel the distress of the general drought. And so the “urn of barley meal did not fail”⁸ when the water of the torrent failed. Why should I present the rest of this history? While fasting he raised the widow’s son from the dead,⁹ while fasting he brought down rain at his word,¹⁰ while fasting he drew down fire from heaven, while fasting he was snatched in a chariot to heaven,¹¹ and by a fast of forty days he gained the presence of God.¹² Then finally, he deserved more when he fasted more. With fasting mouth he caused the waters of the Jordan to stand, and with dusty footsteps he passed over the channel of the overflowing stream suddenly become dry.¹³ The divine will judged him to be just and worthy of heaven, so that with his very body he was snatched up, since he lived the heavenly life in the body and exemplified on earth the manner of living above. ON ELIJAH AND FASTING 2.2-3.¹⁴

17:3 *Hiding by the Wadi Cherith*

TYPOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE WADI.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: From the typological point of view this symbol has two meanings. The stream [wadi] of Elijah prefigures that, at the fullness of time, the Messiah will come and will send the sinners to the stream that comes out of the sanctuary, just like the one that Ezekiel saw.¹⁵

That is the stream that gives healing to the sick when its waters are applied. The [second meaning is that] the stream is the baptism of the Messiah. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.¹⁶

17:6 *The Ravens Brought Bread and Meat*

WHY WAS ELIJAH NOURISHED WITH THE HELP OF RAVENS? ISHO‘DAD OF MERV: It is

taught: When the priests, his brothers, saw that he had escaped the anger of Ahab, they saved for him a part of the food and bread reserved [to them], and a raven brought it to him through divine intervention.

The Schools say,¹⁷ A raven stole the [food] from houses, inns, markets and peasants, since it is an impudent, wild and merciless bird by nature. It has no natural love for its young and does not feed them, but another bird adopts them and feeds them. Through this [the Scripture] shows that animals of such a nature performed what God ordered them to do and provided for the necessities of the prophet, whereas the children of Israel, even though they were endowed with reason, did not want to observe the law of God.

At the same time, the fact that [Elijah] was nourished by ravens, and then that the “wadi dried up,” occurred through the mercy of God in order to induce the prophet to pity and compassion toward the people, so that his spirit might relent and he might pray God to send rain. But when, in spite of this, his anger against the people was not appeased, [God] ordered him to go among the nations, in order to show him that the plague of famine has spread among them as well, and that he had at least to show compassion for the nations, if he could show any for the people; but [this happened] also because there was

⁸1 Kings 17:22. ⁹See 1 Kings 17:16. ¹⁰See 1 Kings 18:45. ¹¹See 2 Kings 2:11. ¹²See 1 Kings 19:8. ¹³See 2 Kings 2:8. ¹⁴PsT 19:45. ¹⁵See Ezek 47. ¹⁶ESOO 1:489. ¹⁷Isho‘dad is referring to the Nestorian exegetical school, which prevailed in Syriac biblical exegesis from the fifth to the sixth centuries and was mostly based on the biblical commentaries by Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428).

nobody among the people who was worthy of receiving Elijah.

Other [authors]¹⁸ say, The bread and the food were made from the elements every day through an angelic operation, just like the manna had been made from air and the quails from the sea, and just like the half cake was brought to Paul the anchorite,¹⁹ and the bunch of dates was brought by a lion to the anchorite of the desert of Sodom.²⁰ But [the food was not brought to Elijah] by an angel, as it was to John,²¹ nor by a man, as Daniel received it by Habakkuk,²² but by a raven, in order to show that there is nothing impure in the creation of God—just as God gave to Samson water to drink from the jaw of a donkey²³—and in order to signify, at the same time, the abrogation of the prescriptions of the Law. According to other authors, the angels were disguised as ravens. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 17.6.²⁴

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BREAD AND MEAT.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “The ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening.”²⁵ The bread represents perfection and justice accomplished together. This is the bread about which Isaiah says that it is given to those “who will live on the heights, and whose refuge will be the fortress of the rocks, and whose eyes will see the king in his beauty.”²⁶ Indeed, bread, which is the principal nourishment of human beings, indicates quite appropriately their main good. With regard to meat, the fact that it was brought in the evening shows two things: the first is the mourning of penitence, as the psalmist says: “Weeping may linger for the night,”²⁷ and the mortification of flesh and the hard toils, which the penitents marching toward perfection suffer. But their grief will become joy in the morning when the sun of justice, which dispels the darkness of sin, rises.

And these words have an even higher meaning, because they are also referred to God the Word, who clothed himself with the flesh of our humanity and came to us in the evening, that is, at the consummation of times, and “filled with

good things the hungry”²⁸ through the Holy Spirit, which “God poured out on them richly through the Messiah, our Savior.”²⁹ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.³⁰

A FIGURE OF THE CHURCH OF THE GENTILES.

AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): Blessed Elijah typified our Lord and Savior. Just as Elijah suffered persecution by the Jews, so our Lord, the true Elijah, was condemned and despised by the Jews. Elijah left his own people, and Christ deserted the synagogue; Elijah departed into the wilderness, and Christ came into the world. Elijah was fed in the desert by ministering ravens, while Christ was refreshed in the desert of this world by the faith of the Gentiles. Truly, those ravens that took care of blessed Elijah at the Lord’s bidding prefigured the Gentiles, for on this account it is said concerning the church of the Gentiles, “I am dark and beautiful, O daughter of Jerusalem.”³¹ Why is the church dark and beautiful? It is dark by nature, beautiful by grace. Why dark? “Indeed, in guilt I was born, and in sin my mother conceived me.”³² Why beautiful? “Cleanse me of sin with hyssop, that I may be purified; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”³³ Why dark? The apostle says, “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin.”³⁴ Why beautiful? “Who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³⁵ Truly, the church of the Gentiles was like a raven, when it despised the living and before receiving grace served idols as dead bodies. SERMON 124.1.³⁶

¹⁸Isho’dad refers to unknown sources. ¹⁹See Jerome *Vita Pauli* 10 (PL 23.24). ²⁰See Theodoret of Cyr *Religiosa Historia* (PG 82:1361-64).

²¹Maybe an allusion to John the Baptist, but there is no trace of this episode in any extant commentary. ²²See Dan 14:33-38 (Vg). ²³See Judg 15:19. ²⁴CSCO 229:117-18. ²⁵The Peshitta version employed by Ephrem reads, “The ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening” instead of “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening.” ²⁶Is 33:16-17. ²⁷Ps 30:5 (29:6 LXX). ²⁸Lk 1:53. ²⁹Tit 3:6. ³⁰ESOO 1:490.

³¹Song 1:4. ³²Ps 50:7. ³³Ps 50:9. ³⁴Rom 7:23. ³⁵Rom 7:24, 25. ³⁶FC 47:209-10*.

ELIJAH PRACTICED FASTING AT THE WADI CHERITH. AMBROSE: Therefore do not boast when you fast, do not glory lest fasting profit you nothing; for those things that are done for ostentation will not prolong their fruit into the future, but they consume the reward for present deeds. Elijah was in the desert that no one might see him fast except the ravens alone, when they supplied him with food. Elisha was in the desert where no food except poisonous wild gourds could be found.³⁷ John was in the desert, where he could find only locusts and wild honey.³⁸ Feasts

were served to those fasting by the holy ministry of angels. Daniel dined among fasting lions. He dined on the dinner of another; the wild beasts did not taste theirs.³⁹ Feasts fly to those who fast, the feet stagger of those who dine: manna descended from heaven to those who were fasting,⁴⁰ the sin of prevarication ascended from those who were banqueting. ON ELIJAH AND FASTING II.40.⁴¹

³⁷See 2 Kings 4:39. ³⁸See Mt 3:4. ³⁹See Dan 14:32. ⁴⁰See Exod 16:13-15; 32:6. ⁴¹PSt 19:73*.



A MIRACLE OF RESURRECTION
IN ZAREPHATH
1 KINGS 17:8-24

OVERVIEW: God sends Elijah to the city of Zarephath, so that he may see the distress of its inhabitants and change his hardness into mercy (EPHREM). The widow, whom Elijah meets on arriving at Zarephath, symbolizes the future church of Christ (AUGUSTINE). When Elijah sees her dressed in rags and miserably thin, he is moved to compassion for the first time (EPHREM). The widow is gathering sticks, which signify the mystery of the cross, and Elijah asks her for water, which foreshadows baptism in Christ (AUGUSTINE). By asking for a cake, Elijah teaches the widow that some of the first fruits of her crops have to be offered to God (ISHO'DAD). The widow receives a great reward for her faith and devotion. The widow does not blame the judgment of God for the death of her child but recognizes that she is struck because of her sins (EPHREM). In his action of stretching himself on the child three times and crying out to the Lord, Elijah foreshadows the mysteries of baptism and the resurrection in Christ (EPHREM, AUGUSTINE).

17:9 *Go to Zarephath*

GOD SENDS ELIJAH TO ZAREPHATH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: God sends Elijah to a city of [Gentile] people in order to change his hardness into mercy. He who had given him power over rain and dew did not want to withdraw by force what he had granted him. He wanted, nevertheless, to help the world which was tormented by starvation, but only with the consent of his servant. That is why he sends to the big city of Zarephath Elijah, who had stayed hidden to that time in the

valley of Cherith, so that he may see with his own eyes the distress of its inhabitants, even though they had given no cause for that suffering, as they had not participated in the rebellion of Ahab. And even if they did not observe the law of Moses, they did not ridicule it, because they did not know it. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.¹

THE WIDOW SYMBOLIZES THE FUTURE CHURCH OF CHRIST. AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): After this, Elijah was commanded to set out for Zarephath of the Sidonians, in order that he might be fed there by a widow. Thus, the Lord spoke to him, "Go to Zarephath of the Sidonians: I have commanded a widow there to feed you." How and by whom did God command the widow, since there was almost no other prophet at that time except blessed Elijah, with whom God spoke quite plainly? Although the sons of some of the prophets lived at that time, they feared the persecution of Jezebel so much that they could scarcely escape even when hidden. "I have commanded a widow," said the Lord. How does the Lord command, except by inspiring what is good through his grace within a soul? Thus, God speaks within every person who performs a good work, and for this reason no one should glory in himself but in the Lord. Were there not many widows in Judea at that time? Why was it that no Jewish widow merited to offer food to blessed Elijah, and he was sent to a Gentile woman to be fed? That widow to whom the prophet was sent typified the church, just as the ravens that ministered

¹ESOO 1:490.

to Elijah prefigured the Gentiles. Thus, Elijah came to the widow because Christ was to come to the church. SERMON 124.2.²

17:10-12 *A Widow Gathering Sticks*

ELIJAH IS MOVED TO COMPASSION. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: When Elijah reached the gate of Zarephath, he met a woman and immediately realized, through the Holy Spirit, that she was the widow about whom God had talked to him. She was there and looked at him. It seems to me that Elijah had asked his Lord whether she was the one, as he was afraid that his severity would be weakened if he began to make inquiries about the widows of Zarephath. And, at the same time, the woman had received the order to feed the prophet through revelation, dream or another means. This is, in fact, what the words of God to Elijah indicate: "I have commanded a widow there to feed you."

When he found her barefoot and dressed in rags in the act of gathering some wood, wasted by starvation and made miserably thin, he had the impression of seeing a burned stick, and he himself was ashamed of asking her for bread so that he first asked her for water. Later he added the request of bread. He knew for sure that a jug of flour would not have been lacking thanks to the promise of his Lord. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.³

SYMBOLS OF THE CROSS AND BAPTISM.

AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): Let us further see where blessed Elijah found that widow, dearly beloved. She had gone out to get water and to pick up sticks of wood. Let us now consider what the water and the wood signify. We know that both are very pleasing and necessary for the church, as it is written: "He is like a tree planted near running water."⁴ In the wood is shown the mystery of the cross, in the water the sacrament of baptism. Therefore, she had gone out to gather two sticks of wood, for thus she replied to blessed Elijah when he asked her for food: "As the Lord

lives, I have nothing but a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am going out to gather two sticks that I may make food for me and my son . . . and we will eat it and die." The widow typified the church, as I said above; the widow's son prefigured the Christian people. Thus, when Elijah came, the widow went out to gather two sticks of wood. Notice, brothers, that she did not say three or four, nor only one stick; but she wanted to gather two sticks. She was gathering two sticks of wood because she received Christ in the type of Elijah; she wanted to pick up those two pieces because she desired to recognize the mystery of the cross. Truly, the cross of our Lord and Savior was prepared from two pieces of wood, and so that widow was gathering two sticks because the church would believe in him who hung on two pieces of wood. For this reason that widow said, "I am gathering two sticks that I may make food for me and my son, and we will eat it and die." It is true, beloved; no one will merit to believe in Christ crucified unless he dies to this world. For if a person wishes to eat the body of Christ worthily, he must die to the past and live for the future. SERMON 124.3.⁵

17:13 *First Make Me a Little Cake*

AN OFFERING TO GOD IS NECESSARY.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "[First] make me a [little] cake." He certainly did not make this request because he was hungry but to teach the widow that, through the mediation of the priests, some of the first fruits of her crops had to be offered to God. In the same manner Elijah said to the wife of the prophet, "Bring me a full vessel."⁶ BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 17.13.⁷

17:15-16 *She Did as Elijah Said*

GREATNESS OF GOD'S REWARD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "She went and did as Elijah said." Con-

²FC 47:210*. ³ESOO 1:490-91. ⁴Ps 1:3. ⁵FC 47:210-11*. ⁶2 Kings 4:4 (Peshitta). ⁷CSCO 229:118.

sider the faith of the widow, her obedience and charity, and then meditate on the greatness of the reward that he granted her. Indeed it is written, "The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah," nor did the number of her family members diminish, because, in exchange for the nourishment given to the prophet, her dead child was resurrected. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.⁸

17:17-18 *The Son of the Widow Became Ill*

THE HUMILITY OF THE WOMAN. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Observe carefully the tears of that woman, and see her humility in her grief, because she does not at all blame the judgment of God or rise against the prophet. In the humility of her intellect, she recognizes that that sentence struck her because of her guilt, and she says to the prophet, "You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance." ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.⁹

17:19-22 *Elijah Stretches Himself on the Child Three Times*

SYMBOLS OF RESURRECTION AND BAPTISM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "He stretched himself on the child three times and cried out to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again.'" These words contain many symbols. [The Scripture] shows us immediately that through the invocation of the three names¹⁰ a human being will come back to life. If he kills the ancient Adam with the help of the Messiah in the holy baptism. The divine Paul says, "If we have died with the Messiah, we believe that we will also live with him."¹¹ And what follows agrees precisely with this meaning: "He stretched himself on the child," because in this life, which he will give us after we are dead to that ancient Adam, "he will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his

glory."¹² And here you can also see a symbol of the triple descent of the Son of God to the dead: the first symbol consists here in the fact that he was made flesh and included his infinite nature into the womb of the Virgin; the second, that he stretched his body on the wood and was crucified; the third, that whoever accepts death lies in the grave and goes down to Sheol, so that, in order to vivify humankind, God consented to stretch his majesty on our smallness. "O ineffable miracle," which Isaiah calls "wonder,"¹³ "his Lord has come down to the man and has assumed the likeness of a slave."¹⁴ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 17.2.¹⁵

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): As we mentioned, that widow prefigured the church, and her son was a type of the Gentiles. The son of the widow lay dead because the son of the church, that is, the Gentiles, was dead because of many sins and offenses. At the prayer of Elijah, the widow's son was revived; at the coming of Christ, the church's son or the Christian people were brought back from the prison of death. Elijah bent down in prayer, and the widow's son was revived; Christ sank down in his passion, and the Christian people were brought back to life. Why blessed Elijah bent down three times to arouse the boy I believe that the understanding of your charity has grasped even before I say it. In the fact that he bowed three times is shown the mystery of the Trinity. Not only the Father without the Son, nor the Father and Son without the Holy Spirit, but the whole Trinity restored the widow's son or the Gentiles to life. Moreover, this is further demonstrated in the sacrament of baptism, for the old person is plunged in the water three times, in order that the new person may merit to rise. SERMON 124.4.¹⁶

⁸ESOO 1:491. ⁹ESOO 1:491-92. ¹⁰That is, the names of the divine persons of the Trinity. ¹¹Rom 6:8. ¹²Phil 3:21. ¹³See Is 9:6. ¹⁴Phil 2:7. ¹⁵ESOO 1:492-93. ¹⁶FC 47:211-12*.



ELIJAH PRESENTS HIMSELF TO AHAB
1 KINGS 18:1-18

OVERVIEW: God teaches Elijah, through the affliction of the child who had died, that he also is grieved for his creatures tormented by starvation and thirst. The Lord orders Elijah to appear before Ahab exactly on the day when the king was searching for food to feed the horses and mules of his house, in order that the impious king may come to know the providence of God toward all creatures (EPHREM). While a rich person is a slave

subject to his properties, one who has nothing fears no confiscation or loss of riches (CHRYSOSTOM). God gives Elijah authority over the spirit of the king (EPHREM).

18:1 God Will Send Rain

GOD INTENDS TO MOVE ELIJAH TO COMPASSION. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “After many days

the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year of the drought, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth.'" The Lord, by giving life back to the child, granted grace to Elijah. He had taught him through the affliction of the child, who had died, that his Lord was also grieved for his creatures tormented by starvation and thirst, even though he did not want to destroy or sever the link of the word of his servant against his will. After preparing the spirit of Elijah through this thought, he calls him and says to him, "Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth." ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.1.¹

18:5 Grass to Keep the Horses and Mules Alive

A WAY TO SHOW GOD'S MERCY TO THE IMPIOUS KING. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Observe again and see how the Lord orders Elijah to appear before Ahab exactly on the day when [the king] had taken up the heavy burden of searching for food to feed the horses and the mules of his house. This was part of the divine plan, so that the impious king might come to know the providence of God toward all creatures, even toward horses and mules, and to realize how much more the Creator would be ready to make up the indigence of the king if he had not been ungrateful to God and had not lightheartedly taken advantage of his favors. And God showed this same benevolence of his good will and indulgence toward animals when he said to Jonah, "And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons, who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"² ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.1.³

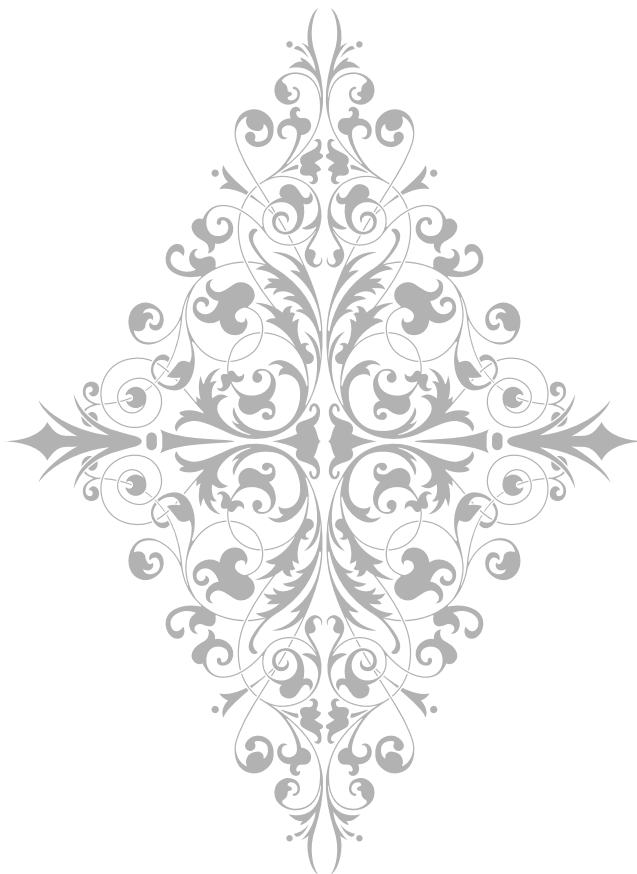
18:17-18 I Have Not Troubled Israel, but You Have

POVERTY PRODUCES BOLDNESS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: Were Elijah and John then lacking in

boldness? Did not the one reprove Ahab, and the other Herod? The latter said, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother Philip's wife."⁴ And Elijah said to Ahab with boldness: "It is not I that trouble Israel, but you and your father's house." You see that this poverty especially produces boldness? For while the rich person is a slave, being subject and in the power of every one wishing to do him hurt, one who has nothing fears no confiscation or fine. So, if poverty had made people to lack in boldness, Christ would not have sent his disciples with poverty to a work requiring great boldness. ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS 18.4.⁵

ELIJAH'S REPROACH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" He answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house." "It is you and your father Omri who ruined this people, because through your abominable customs and your evil commandments you corrupted their spirit and their worship and ridiculed the holy law that God had given them, and for that reason rain and dew stopped falling from heaven, and people were overwhelmed by starvation. Therefore it is not my words, which are good, but it is your actions, which are disgusting and trouble Israel." And this freedom of speech torments Ahab greatly, but he does not fight back or rebuke Elijah about anything, as is related in the two histories of the kings, so that you may know the authority that the Lord had given Elijah over the spirit of the king and the fear toward his prophet that he had put in [Ahab's] heart. This is what [God] had done in the ancient times to Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron, when they spoke with harshness and afflicted him [with their actions] even more than with their words. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.8.⁶

¹ESOO 1:494. ²Jon 4:11. ³ESOO 1:494. ⁴Mk 6:18. ⁵NPNF 1 14:453*. ⁶ESOO 1:495-96.



THE DEFEAT OF THE PRIESTS OF BAAL

1 KINGS 18:19-40

OVERVIEW: The priests of Baal rely on their slyness in order to defeat the authority of Elijah, but to no avail. With the words “I alone am left as a prophet to the Lord,” Elijah did not calumniate the just, because they were no longer to be found, but rather he was denouncing sinners (EPHREM). Elijah orders the priests of Baal to sacrifice first, in order to show that he is not trying to take any advantage over them (ISHO’DAD). In passing among the pieces of the victim lying on the altar, the priests of Baal make use of a typical pagan practice (EPHREM). Elijah and the priests of Baal had fixed a deadline for the fire, which had to burn the bull, in order that nobody might find any excuse about the failure of his sacrifice (ISHO’DAD). In pouring water on the wood and in calling the fire on it, Elijah foreshadows the baptism in Christ and in the fire of the Holy Spirit (AMBROSE, ORIGEN). Elijah, who abolished the sacrifices of the pagan priests through the burnt offering, gives us a living image of the whole burnt offering, which the Emmanuel made on the mount Golgotha (EPHREM). The fire that burns the victim on the wood symbolizes the breath of the Holy Spirit, which consumes every sin (AMBROSE). Elijah, who was concerned for the safety of the assembly, killed the priests of Baal in order to be the only one who could be accused of their murder (EPHREM).

18:19 *Israel and the Prophets of Baal Assemble at Mount Carmel*

ANY HOPE IN THE SLYNESS OF BAAL’S PROPHETS IS VAIN. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel.” Now, it is amazing how the king obeyed Elijah, who asked him for a general gathering of the people; and how also the people obeyed him

humbly, even though he bitterly reproached them for their evil actions. It is also amazing how his request was granted, when he asked to be allowed to fight against the prophets of Baal. It is certain that they could not find a way to avoid meeting him, and they even looked for him, if it is true what some of the doctors¹ say. And we also know that in our days false and deceiving people do the same. Therefore they thought that the prophets of Baal would make an altar in which they would have someone, who, at their sign, would set the fire and destroy the wood and the bull that were on the altar. And since they were confident in this scheme, they came to the fight, confident of the expected victory and in order to provoke Elijah. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.8.²

18:22 *The Only Prophet of the Lord Left*

AN ACCUSATION AGAINST SINNERS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: When Elijah said, “I alone am left as a prophet to the Lord,” he was not speaking against the just, because they were no [longer] to be found. Rather he was denouncing sinners, because they had done away with [the just]. He did not wish it to be, therefore, that he alone be found just, and for this reason, he could not be found by them for three years,³ for he had discovered that they were not worthy of being visited by God. COMMENTARY ON TATIAN’S DIATHESSARON 7.14.⁴

18:25 *Choose One Bull and Prepare It First*

NO EXCUSE FOR THE PRIESTS OF BAAL. ISHO’DAD OF MERV: [Elijah] ordered [the proph-

¹Ephrem alludes to unknown authors who commented or preached on Kings. ²ESOO 1:496-97. ³See 1 Kings 18:1. ⁴ECTD 135*.

ets of Baal] to sacrifice first, in order that they might not have any excuse [by saying], “If we had sacrificed first, [Baal] would have accepted our sacrifice, but now he is angry with us, because we have sacrificed last.” They planned to set the fire secretly, according to their custom, but were prevented by divine power at this time. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 18.25.⁵

18:26 *They Limped Around the Altar*

THE DANCE OF THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “They limped about the altar that they had made.” This means they had cut the bull in pieces and passed among the pieces lying on the altar by going from side to side. The Scripture shows us another image of this in the sacrifice of Abraham. He divided the animals and saw a torch of fire passing among the pieces.⁶ And Jeremiah mentions something similar when he reproaches the Jews because they had become similar to the pagan people and passed among the pieces of their sacrifices: “I will make [those who transgressed my covenant] like the calf which they cut in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf shall be handed over to their enemies.”⁷ ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.26.⁸

18:29 *Until the Time of the Offering*

A TIME FIXED FOR THE SACRIFICE. ISHO‘DAD OF MERV: [Elijah and the prophets of Baal] had agreed to fix a specific time and deadline [by saying], “We will stay until this hour, and he whose sacrifice is not accepted will die.” Otherwise they might have said, “Today [our sacrifice] was not accepted, but it will be accepted tomorrow.” BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 18.29.⁹

18:33-34 *Elijah Prepares a Sacrifice*

A TYPE OF THE BAPTISM IN CHRIST.

AMBROSE: Moreover, if anyone has not been baptized, let him be converted all the more securely by receiving the remission of his sins, [so that baptism] as a kind of fire may consume his sins, because Christ baptizes in fire and spirit. Hence, you read of this type in the books of Kings, where Elijah placed wood upon the altar and told them to pour water on it from urns. “And he said, ‘Do the same the second time.’ And they did it the second time. And he said, ‘Do the same also the third time,’” and when the water dripped about, Elijah prayed, and fire descended from heaven. You, O mortal, are on an altar, you who are purified by water and whose sin is burned out that life may be renewed; for fire consumes wood and stubble. Do not fear the fire through which you are enlightened. Therefore it is said to you, “Come to him to be enlightened.”¹⁰ Take up the yoke of Christ; do not fear because it is a yoke; hasten because it is light. It does not bruise the neck but adorns it. Why do you hesitate, why do you delay? It does not bind the neck with chains but unites the mind by grace. ON ELIJAH AND FASTING 22.83.¹¹

CHRIST BAPTIZES WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE.

ORIGEN: And what is the source of your belief that Elijah who is to come will baptize? Did he not even baptize the wood on the altar in the times of Ahab, when it required a bath that it might be burned up when the Lord appeared in fire? He commanded the priests to do this, and not only once, for he says, “Do it a second time, when also they did it a second time,” and “Do it a third time, when also they did it a third time.” How, then, will he who did not himself baptize at that time, but gave the task to others, baptize when he has come in fulfillment of the things said by Malachi?¹² Christ, therefore, does not baptize in water, but his disciples.¹³ He reserves for himself the act of baptizing with the

⁵CSCO 229:120. ⁶See Gen 15:10, 17. ⁷Jer 34:18-20. ⁸ESOO 1:497. ⁹CSCO 229:120. ¹⁰Ps 34:5 (33:6 LXX, Vg). ¹¹PSr 19:107. ¹²See Mal 4:5-6. ¹³See Jn 4:2.

Holy Spirit and fire.¹⁴ COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.125.¹⁵

18:38 *The Fire of the Lord Consumed the Offering*

A LIVING IMAGE OF THE EMMANUEL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elijah, who on mount Carmel abolished the sacrifices of the pagan priests, ministers of vanity, through the burnt offering which he offered to the living God, gives us a living image of the burnt offering that the Emmanuel made on Mount Golgotha, bringing to an end through his own sacrifice which was offered only once,¹⁶ all the sacrifices prescribed by Moses, as well as the burnt offerings which the pagans offered to their infamous gods. “Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench.” You acted justly, Elijah, and quite wisely! Your fire will consume the stones, and the worshipers of the stones¹⁷ will blush for their shame. It will consume the wood, and those who make their gods out of carved wood will be upset and will turn away from their madness. It will consume the bull, so that nobody may ever worship the bull. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.26-38.¹⁸

THE BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CONSUMES EVERY SIN. AMBROSE: In the time of Elijah, also, fire came down when he challenged the prophets of the heathen to light up the altar without fire. When they could not do so, he poured water three times over his victim, so that the water ran around about the altar; then he cried out, and the fire fell from the Lord from heaven and consumed the burnt offering. You are that victim. Contemplate in silence each single point. The breath of the Holy Spirit descends on you; he seems to

burn you when he consumes your sins. The sacrifice that was consumed in the time of Moses was a sacrifice for sin, wherefore Moses said, as is written in the book of the Maccabees: “Because the sacrifice for sin was not to be eaten, it was consumed.”¹⁹ Does it not seem to be consumed for you when in the sacrament of baptism the whole outer person perishes? “Our old self is crucified,”²⁰ the apostle exclaims. Herein, as the example of the Fathers teaches us, the Egyptian is swallowed up—the Hebrew arises renewed by the Holy Spirit, as he also crossed the Red Sea dry shod—where our fathers were baptized in the cloud and in the sea.²¹ DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 3.18.106-7.²²

18:40 *Elijah Killed the Priests of Baal*

ELIJAH’S CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF THE ASSEMBLY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon, and cut their throats²³ there.” There is no doubt that the people rose against the prophets of shame and brought them before Elijah. But it is not entirely clear who killed them. The Scripture says that Elijah cut their throats. And this is in perfect agreement with the true spirit of Elijah, who was concerned for the safety of the assembly: he tried to be the only one who could be accused of the murder of the prophets. Indeed, he knew that Jezebel would have claimed vengeance for the shed blood of her priests. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.40.²⁴

¹⁴See Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16. ¹⁵FC 80:204*. ¹⁶See Heb 7:27. ¹⁷Ephrem refers here to the marble statues of the pagans. ¹⁸ESOO 1:497. ¹⁹Macc 2:11. ²⁰Rom 6:6. ²¹See 1 Cor 10:1-2. ²²NPNF 2 10:85. ²³This is the reading in the Syriac Bible employed by Ephrem. ²⁴ESOO 1:497.

ELIJAH PUTS AN END TO THE DROUGHT

1 KINGS 18:41-46

OVERVIEW: Elijah, seeing that the people had turned away from their evil thoughts and that the priests of Baal had received a just sentence, announces the rain to the king. In order to show clearly that Elijah had bound the heavens and now opened them, it was necessary that the people see the prophet in the act of causing the rain to come down through the power of his prayer (EPHREM). Elijah prayed for rain to come on the earth, while Christ prayed that divine grace might come down into human hearts (AUGUSTINE). Elijah ran to Ahab to comfort him in his distress and fear for the sudden weather changes, but the king was unworthy of the honor accorded to him by the prophet (EPHREM).

18:41 A Sound of Rushing Rain

A REWARD FOR THE REPENTANCE OF THE PEOPLE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of rushing rain.'" Elijah, after acknowledging that the people, thanks to the miracle that he had showed them, had turned away from their evil thoughts, and that the priests of Baal, their deceivers, had received a just sentence, wisely prophesies and announces the rain to the king. And he asks his Lord for a new miracle, in order to confirm his first miracle and accomplish his

promise. Indeed, he had promised his people to give them rain if they repented of their iniquity. Therefore he prophesies [the coming of the rain], because he is certain that God is reconciled with his people in consequence of their repentance and the killing of the prophets who had misled them. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.40.¹

18:42 Elijah Went to the Top of Carmel

ELIJAH MUST SHOW THE POWER OF HIS PRAYER. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel." He does not go to Jerusalem in order to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, even though he knows the commandment of the law, which prevents the Jews from sacrificing outside the place that God had appointed as holy for them. He goes up to top of the Carmel in order to ask for rain, even though he knows that Solomon had mentioned the rain in his prayer for the people² and the Lord had promised him that he would have given rain to those who prayed to him inside the temple of Jerusalem. Therefore Elijah prayed, so that they might see the miracle, because many of them still had not realized that the famine that overwhelmed them had been sent by the Lord through Elijah, who had prayed to

¹ESOO 1:498. ²See 1 Kings 8:35-36.

him. In order that the word might confirm that Elijah had bound the heavens and now opened them, it was necessary that the people saw the prophet kneeling down in prayer, in the act of causing the rain to come down through his prayer. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.42.³

18:44 *A Little Cloud Rose from the Sea*

ELIJAH PRAYED SEVEN TIMES. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person's hand is rising out of the sea." Before going up, Elijah prayed seven times. He did this, in the first place, in order to invite the people who were waiting for the rain, to meditate on the greatness of the grace that they received from their Lord; second, in order to teach them that even if their prayers were not fulfilled [immediately], they should not cease from multiplying their prayers until they were fulfilled at the time appointed by God. And at the seventh time a cloud bringing rain appeared, so that they might know that God had released [them] from the bondage of the famine into the abundance of his mercy in the fourth year, even though he had originally fixed the term to the seventh. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.44.⁴

ELIJAH AS A TYPE OF CHRIST. AUGUSTINE (CAESARIUS OF ARLES): After this blessed Elijah presented himself to the king, "went up to Mount Carmel and put his head between his knees," praying the Lord to send rain on the earth. "And he said to his servant, 'Look toward the sea.'" When the boy reported that he saw nothing at all, he told him, "Go and look seven times." The seventh time he returned and said, "'I see a little cloud rising out of the sea like a person's foot.' And suddenly the heavens grew dark, and there fell a great rain." For this reason, as we said, Elijah prefigured our Lord and Savior. Elijah prayed and offered sacrifice; Christ offered himself as a spotless sacrifice for the whole world. Elijah prayed for rain to come on the earth; Christ prayed that divine grace might come down into

the hearts of humankind. When Elijah told his servant, "Go and look seven times," he signified the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit that was to be given to the church. When he declared that he saw a little cloud rising out of the sea, it prefigured the body of Christ, which was to be born in the sea of this world. Therefore, lest anyone doubt, he said that the cloud had the foot of a person who said, "Who do people say the Son of man is?"⁵ After three years and six months, rain came down from heaven at the prayer of Elijah, because at the coming of our Lord and Savior the rain of the word of God happily watered the whole world during the three years and six months in which he deigned to preach. Just as at the coming of Elijah all the priests of the idols were killed and destroyed, so at the advent of the true Elijah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the wicked observances of the pagans were destroyed. SERMON 124.5.⁶

18:45-46 *Elijah Ran in Front of Ahab*

AHAB IS UNWORTHY OF THE HONOR ACCORDED HIM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: In my opinion Elijah accorded a great honor to Ahab, of which he was unworthy, when he ran in front of him like a servant. And there are two reasons for this. In the first place, [the prophet intended] to comfort with his company the terrified and trembling king who was troubled in his spirit by the sudden weather changes that had occurred. It seems that he was taken by a great fear when, in a second, the sun had veiled its light and a heavy darkness had spread over all the land. And in that obscure and thick darkness he saw lightning and heard terrifying peals of thunder and a storm of violent winds and the rain falling like a cataract. Indeed, it was necessary that the atmosphere was clothed with such a dress in order to show the greatness of the sign that God had accomplished before his prophet. But the main reason for this action was that the king, who saw the honor that

³ESOO 1:498. ⁴ESOO 1:498. ⁵Mt 16:13. ⁶FC 47:212-13*.

the prophets, messengers of the Highest, accorded to him, might learn that he had to honor God, his Creator, over all things, might be converted, might fulfill his commandments, observe his laws and obey the prophets sent to him.

See the humility of Elijah, and admire his wisdom before the pride, insanity and foolishness of Ahab. I certainly call mad and senseless one who, after seeing the wind, the water, the fire and the weather subjected to the power of Elijah, and hearing the entire people proclaim his power sim-

ilar to that of God, did not recognize the excellence of his dignity, did not admire his action or honor his person, but in the excess of his pride, let him march before him, as a servant precedes one who is superior to him many times over. Indeed, the king should have let the prophet climb up and sit with him on his chariot. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 18.46.⁷

⁷ESOO 1:498-99.



ELIJAH'S FLIGHT FROM JEZEBEL

1 KINGS 19:1-8

OVERVIEW: Jezebel decides to postpone her revenge against Elijah because she fears to infuriate the people and to be stoned (EPHREM). The providence of God caused the fear in Elijah's soul, because he had slightly turned away from him (ISHO'DAD). Elijah's flight was merely inspired by wisdom, as he had to protect his life and soul from any danger. The death Elijah is asking for is not the one with which Jezebel had threatened

him but a different kind of death (EPHREM). Fear proceeds from a disturbance of the soul, which cannot be faultless (JEROME). A great prophet like Elijah was not fleeing a woman but this world (AMBROSE). The bread baked in the ashes, which the angel offers to Elijah, signifies the toils of penitence (EPHREM).

19:2 *Elijah's Oath*

JEZEBEL DID NOT TAKE HER REVENGE IMMEDIATELY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.'" The insane woman contemplated that after learning from the king what Elijah had done to the prophets of Baal. However, she postponed the revenge that she desired, until the people, who were around [the prophet], were dispersed. In fact, in spite of her madness, she feared to be stoned if the people discovered her scheme to kill the prophet, who was well-known for the justice of his customs and had been seen in the act of releasing the clouds and making rain and fire, through which he had benefited his people by humiliating the arrogance of the friends of Baal and by defeating completely the famine. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.2.¹

19:3 *Elijah Fled for His Life*

GOD'S PROVIDENCE BENEFITS AND CORRECTS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Somebody may ask why Elijah, who did not fear Ahab's authority, was frightened and fled when Jezebel sent him the message. We answer: The providence of God is directed by him and proceeds toward us in two different ways: either by means of benefits or corrections. This is evident from many events. When [Elijah] stopped the heavens,² and tortured the Jews through a famine,³ and killed the prophets of Baal⁴ and made the fire come down on the fifty and fifty,⁵ he did not tremble before the king because [God's] providence assisted him. But when he slightly turned away from him, he could not resist before Jezebel's threats. The same thing happened to David. He was brave and warlike when the army of Israel was frightened by Goliath, and he killed Goliath, because he was supported by divine providence.⁶ But when he was tested through divine desertion, even though the generals of his army surrounded him, he was afraid of the other Philistine.⁷ BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 19.2.⁸

A FLIGHT INSPIRED BY WISDOM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life." It was out of wisdom that he turned away from danger, because it was absolutely wrong that he disposed of his soul, since he had no reason to give it to death, but, on the contrary, he had every reason to keep it alive. And that was done so that the prophets of falsehood might not say that the god—whose worship he had disrupted, whose sacrifices he had despised and whose prophets he had killed—had handed him over to the power of the queen. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.3.⁹

19:4 *Elijah Asked to Die*

WHAT KIND OF DEATH DOES ELIJAH REQUEST? EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "He came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die." He hopes for death, but not for the one with which Jezebel had threatened him, that is, the one that would have given the prophets of Baal the pretext to say that Baal had defeated the God of Israel, otherwise he would have never abandoned his servant in such a danger: therefore he had forsaken him by force. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.4.¹⁰

FEAR CANNOT BE FAULTLESS. JEROME: Elijah, whom John the Baptist followed in spirit and virtue and who caused fire to fall from heaven and the waters of the Jordan to part by his prayers, was afraid of Jezebel and fled, and exhausted, he sat down in the wilderness under a tree, and, wearied from walking, he prayed for death, saying, "It is enough for me, Lord, take away my soul, for I am no better than my ancestors." Who can deny that he was a just man? And yet fear, not to mention of a woman, but of a human being, proceeds from a disturbance of the soul, which cannot be faultless, as David says: "The Lord is my helper; I

¹ESOO 1:500. ²See 1 Kings 17:1. ³See 1 Kings 18:2. ⁴See 1 Kings 18:40. ⁵See 2 Kings 1:10-12. ⁶See 1 Sam 17. ⁷See 2 Sam 21:15-17. ⁸CSCO 229:122. ⁹ESOO 1:500. ¹⁰ESOO 1:501.

will not fear what people can do to me.”¹¹
AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.21.¹²

FLEEING THE IMPIETY OF THE WORLD.

AMBROSE: To be sure, it was not a woman that such a great prophet was fleeing, but it was this world. And it was not death that he feared, for he offered himself to the one that searched for him and said to the Lord, “Take my soul.” He endured a weariness of this life, not a desire for it, but he was fleeing worldly enticement and the contagion of filthy conduct and the impious acts of an unholy and sinful generation. FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD 6.34.¹³

19:5-8 A Cake and a Jar of Water

THE SYMBOLISM OF ELIJAH’S MEAL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.’” Elijah was sleeping under a tree. Now an angel came to him and woke him up (sleep was weighing him down because of his fatigue, affliction and discouragement) and provided him with strength and comfort through the meal that he prepared for him. The nourishment of the prophet consisted of bread baked in the ashes and his drink of water. “And he said, ‘The journey will be too much for you,’” that is, “you will not escape the affliction which you fear, through your

death, as you believe, but through your flight. Therefore the journey is too long for you, and it is not like going to Cherith, a place close by. Rather, you are leaving for a distant location among foreign people where you will get peace and prosperity. That is why, until you are allowed to do so, you must eat and drink and prepare yourself to be strong enough for a long journey, because in a barren and desert land, you will not find any food.”

Allegorically the bread baked in the ashes, which the vigilant [the angel] offers to Elijah, has two different meanings: on the one side, it immediately shows the toils of penitence which the ashes symbolize perfectly, since they are a figure of mourning and of a contrite heart; the unleavened bread soaked in ashes and the water are also the food of the poor and the miserable. But we can say, with greater accuracy, that they are figures of all the righteous, for whom the providence of the Creator has established a course of life in the paths of privation. Therefore he leads them through much suffering, privation of food and a severe fast in order to purify them completely from all the filth of earthly things. Then he guides them to the mountain, which is the perfection and the accomplishment of the saints. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.4.¹⁴

¹¹Ps 118:6 (117:6 LXX, Vg). ¹²FC 53:328-29*. ¹³FC 65:307-8.

¹⁴ESOO 1:501-2.



THE LORD SPEAKS TO ELIJAH AT HOREB

1 KINGS 19:9-18

OVERVIEW: Elijah confirms again before God his zeal in condemning and fighting any form of idolatry and impiety. The earthquake and the fire kindled by the strong winds prefigure the type of the dreadful signs that will precede the final day of judgment. Elijah did not move from his original severity, even when he saw the image of the benevolence of his Lord. Elijah anoints Hazael, Jehu and Elisha, who will become the avengers of the iniquity of Ahab, Jezebel and the people. Only seven thousand people remained faithful to the true religion of God and gave victory to Israel (EPHREM). The words “I have left me seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal” mean that not only the Gentiles have been called to salvation, but the Jews as well (ORIGEN).

19:9-10 *What Are You Doing Here, Elijah?*

ELIJAH’S SEVERITY IN CONDEMNING SIN AND IDOLATRY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” After reaching Horeb, the mountain of God, Elijah spent the night in a cave, and on the next day, when he heard the noise of God coming to him, he went out to the entrance

of the cave where he heard him saying, “What are you doing?” And he answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. That is why I have stopped the heavens, so that it might no longer rain on the sinners, or on the earth either so that it might not give them any food, even though this seems to be a mild punishment for those who deserve a harsh and cruel torture. Should I have been quiet and kept silent while I was seeing the apostasy of an impious people that despised your commandments, abandoned your covenant made on this mountain, and exchanged you for Baal, the idol of the Sidonians, and for the vain cults of the pagans? Or should I have endured the insanity of Jezebel, who persecuted and killed your prophets? But I stood, thanks to the abundance of your mercy, because your powerful hand protected me at the Wadi Cherith and in Zarephath of Sidon. And now you have led me to your sacred mountain, even though the mad queen does not cease from setting up ambushes to destroy my soul.” ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.9.¹

¹ESOO 1:502.

19:11-12 *A Great Wind, an Earthquake and a Fire*

FIGURES ANNOUNCING JUDGMENT DAY.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind." Now, after the wind, the earthquake came, and after the earthquake the fire, and [Elijah] noticed that the Lord was not in the earthquake or in the fire. This was the purpose of such a revelation: the Lord wanted to instruct the prophet through various figures in order to correct his excessive zeal and to lead him to imitate, according to righteousness, the providence of the most High who regulates the judgments of his justice through the abundant mercy of his grace. From the allegorical point of view this is the meaning of the frightening signs that precede the coming of the Lord: the earthquake and the fire kindled by the strong winds prefigure the type of the dreadful signs that will precede the final day of judgment. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.11.²

19:13-14 *What Are You Doing Here, Elijah?*

ELIJAH DOES NOT RECEDE FROM HIS SEVERITY.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant.'" He stayed at the entrance of the cave because he did not dare approach the Lord who was coming to him. He wrapped his face, saying, "The creature is not worthy of seeing his Creator." But he did not move from his first thought, even though he saw the image of the benevolence of his Lord in the symbol that was presented to him, and in addition he experienced his admirable mercy and ineffable love for human beings. Who would not have been astonished by the word of the divine

majesty who asked him with love, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" But Elijah did not change his mind or shut his mouth. Instead he rose against the sinners once again and complained about the sons of his people before the Lord who asked him the reason for his flight. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.13.³

19:15-17 *Anoint Hazael and Jehu as Kings and Elisha as Prophet*

THE THREE ANOINTINGS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram." As I have already said, "the sound of a sweet word"⁴ which comes after the storm and the fire divulged this good news. And what follows this manifestation fits perfectly with this context: Elijah, who had so far fled from Jezebel the queen, is now sent to anoint the kings and to hallow the prophets. And he anoints Hazael as king of Aram with his word; Jehu, son of Namsi, as king of Israel, judge of Ahab and avenger of innocent blood with oil; and Elisha [as prophet] with his mantle. Now, since the Lord had decided that those who had been condemned by Elijah because of their rebellion should receive the just retribution for their iniquity, their condemnation was prepared in this way: a part of the people would be punished by Hazael, king of Aram, whereas Ahab and Jezebel would receive their condemnation from Jehu; finally, if anything had been overlooked by them, Elisha would accomplish the task through the authority that the Lord had given him. And the people truly deserved punishment for not turning from their error. Even after learning the truth through the great and obvious signs that Elijah had performed, they did not abandon the worship of Baal. Also the sins of Ahab and Jezebel were great, well known and evident, and both of them had to be harshly punished for that reason. And since Jezebel had appointed new priests of

²ESOO 1:502-3. ³ESOO 1:503-4. ⁴1 Kings 19:13 (Peshitta).

Baal, her god, in order to replace those who had been killed by Elijah, it was necessary that they received the same punishment as their predecessors.

In addition, other reasons obliged Elijah to raise Elisha to the dignity of prophet exactly at that time when he was about to leave this world: first, in order to assist him in the time of affliction; second, in order to confirm through his word the event of the kidnapping of his master and his ascension to heaven because nobody had ever heard anything like that before. Therefore [Elijah elevated Elisha to the dignity of prophet] in order to cut short the lies of the priests of Baal who could not commend the works of Elijah, their persecutor, and tried with all their might to persuade the people with false words that the disciples of Elijah had entirely invented the kidnapping of their master and pretended that God had raised him to heaven. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.13.⁵

19:18 *Seven Thousand in Israel*

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL GIVE VICTORY TO ISRAEL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Through these words it is clear that seven thousand people remained faithful to the true religion of the ancestors, while the others had turned away from it, even though at the time of Jeroboam, king of the ten tribes, it is written that 800,000 men came out with him to fight.⁶ But it is wonderful how this small troop was precious in the eyes of the Lord, and how, because of it, he gave a double victory to the sons of their people and to Ahab, their king, who were absolutely unworthy of it.

The Scripture says that in those days Ben-hadad, king of Aram, came against Samaria with thirty-two kings.⁷ Now 7,000 men with 232 youths, who preceded the troop, came out of the city,⁸ and fought against the Arameans, and killed them⁹ and defeated that great army. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.18.¹⁰

CALLED TO SALVATION. ORIGEN: [The apostle Paul], treating of those who belong to the circumcision, says, "Those who serve to the example and shadow of heavenly things."¹¹ Now perhaps, through these illustrations, no doubt will be entertained regarding the five books of Moses by those who hold the writings of the apostle as divinely inspired. And if they require, with respect to the rest of the history, that those events that are contained in it should be considered as having happened for an example to those of whom they are written, we have observed that this also has been stated in the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle adduces an instance from the third book of Kings, saying, "I have left me seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal";¹² which expression Paul understood as figuratively spoken of those who are called Israelites according to the election, in order to show that the advent of Christ had not only now been of advantage to the Gentiles but that very many even of the race of Israel had been called to salvation. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 4.1.13.¹³

⁵ESOO 1:504-5. ⁶See 2 Chron 13:3. ⁷See 1 Kings 20:1. ⁸See 1 Kings 20:15, 19. ⁹See 1 Kings 20:20. ¹⁰ESOO 1:505. ¹¹Heb 8:5. ¹²See also Rom 11:4. ¹³ANF 4:362 (TLG reference is *On First Principles* 4.2.6).

THE CALL OF ELISHA

1 KINGS 19:19-21

OVERVIEW: Elisha is a type of the apostles, and the mantle of Elijah signifies the gifts of the Spirit, which the apostles received (EPHREM). The call of Elisha came directly from Christ, who understood his natural inclination to goodness (JOHN THE MONK). Elisha killed the oxen to offer a banquet to his friends, after leaving behind any earthly possession (ISHO'DAD).

19:19-20 *The Passing of the Mantle*

ELISHA IS A TYPE OF THE APOSTLES. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "So he set out from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He passed by him and threw his mantle over him." With his mantle Elijah took Elisha from farming to prophesying. From the symbolic point of view, Elisha represents the type of the apostles to whom our Lord said in the Gospel, "So stay here in the city of Jerusalem until you have been clothed with power from high."¹ Therefore the mantle of Elijah signified the gifts of the Spirit which the apostles would receive. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 19.19.²

THE CALL OF ELISHA CAME FROM CHRIST.

JOHN THE MONK:³

After receiving the garment from the prophetic hand,
at the same time you have received the

privilege,
when you were transformed from worker
into a prophet
through the radiance of the Spirit that was
glorified.
Since you foreknew, O Christ, the inclination to goodness
Of the heart of Elisha, he has understood
with no doubt
The glorious call that you had established
and followed it.

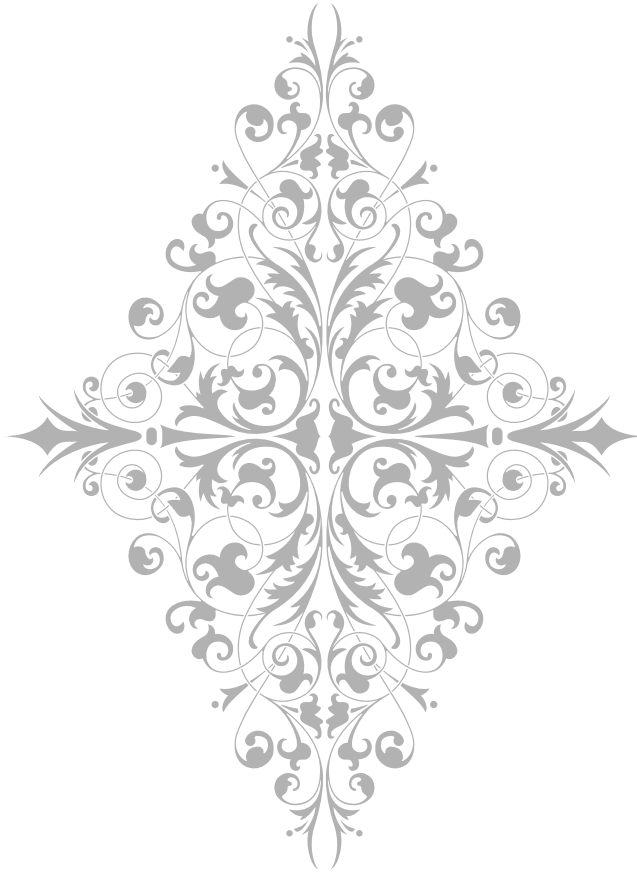
CANON 6, ON ELISHA THE PROPHET, ODE 1.⁴

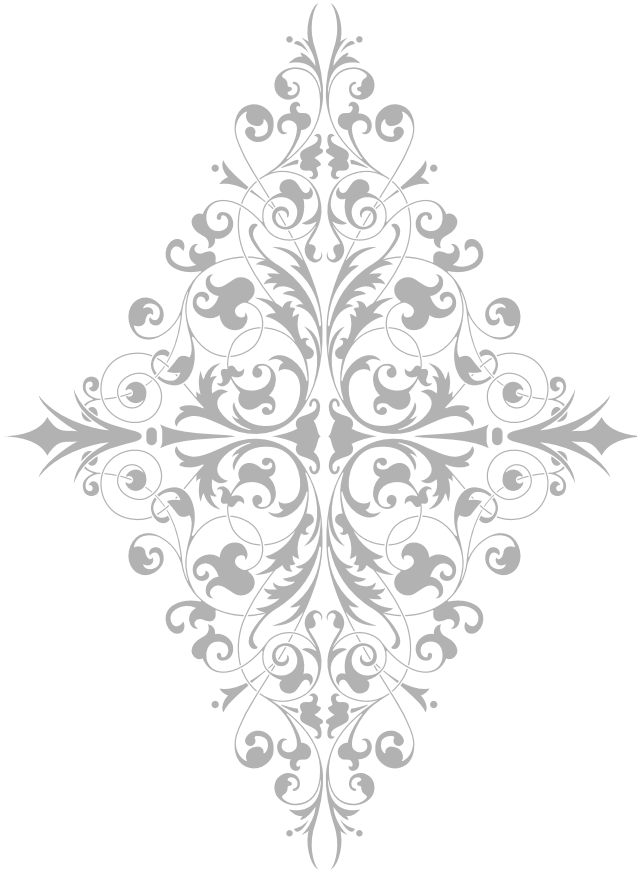
19:21 *Elisha Prepares a Banquet*

ELISHA LEAVES BEHIND ALL WORLDLY

GOODS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "He slaughtered the oxen." He did that not [as a sacrifice] to God, because Elisha was not a priest, but he killed them for a banquet which he offered to his people. From now on, he was lifted above earthly things and did not make use of anything that belonged to this world. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 1 KINGS 19.21.⁵

¹Lk 24:49. ²ESOO 1:505. ³John the Monk, author of a series of odes in honor of Elisha, has been identified by scholars with John of Damascus (c. 660-750). See *Analecta Hymnica Graeca* 10 (1972), 63-64. ⁴*Analecta Hymnica Graeca* 10 (1972), 65. ⁵CSCO 229:124.





THE WARS AGAINST THE ARAMEANS*

1 KINGS 20:1-43

OVERVIEW: The words “let no one who is crooked boast as if he were upright” refer to no bodily deformity but to moral deformity (MAXIMUS). The disastrous defeat of the Arameans was caused by God, who pronounced judgment on their impiety (EPHREM, SALVIAN). The saints are on the mountains, the fallen are in the valleys, because the Lord “is the God of the mountains and not the God of the valleys” (AMBROSE). Ahab makes a treaty with Ben-hadad and allows him to leave, as he thinks that his mercy is better than God’s command (CASSIAN). The man who struck the prophet was saved, whereas the one who spared the prophet was punished: this demonstrates that when God commands, one must not question deeply the nature of the action but only obey. We must always examine the decrees of God before considering the nature of our actions, and whenever we find something that accords with his decree, we must approve that, and only that (CHRYSOSTOM). Ben-hadad, who was notoriously impious and an open and arrogant despiser of divine majesty, fully deserved to be condemned (EPHREM).

20:11 *One Who Puts on Armor*

THE HUMP SYMBOLIZES A SOUL DEFORMED BY EVIL WAYS OF LIFE. MAXIMUS OF TURIN: The hump alludes to thinking or doing something that is ugly for the soul, and it is always a certain twisted deformity of mind that reaches for impure things and is distracted from the sacred threshold of the church by worldly concerns. It seems to me that the prophet spoke in a spiritual sense of this physical deformity to describe instead a deformity of character, when

he says: “Let not the crooked boast in the same way as the upright,”¹ as if he were saying: “Let not the sinner who is deformed by the perversion of his own vices boast as the just person boasts when he is made upright by the sincerity of a good conscience.” For though, O sinner, you rejoice in the stature of your body and you find pleasure in the straightness of your shoulders, your soul is still deformed because of the crookedness of your character. It is only right that the rich person is compared to the camel since the density of its body hinders it from the passing through the needle, while concern for inheritance holds the rich person back from entering the church. For as a small opening does not let the camel in, weighed down by the mass of its members, so also this holy entrance does not accept the rich, weighed down by the mass of transgressions. Each has its own burden: the camel is burdened by his own flesh and the rich by his sins. As the camel is not able to inhabit the extremely confined hole of the needle, so also the rich person is not suitable for the most blessed kingdom of God. The only difference between the two is that the camel is not well suited due to the nature of his body, while his own will renders the rich person crooked. SERMON 32.1.²

20:20-30 *The Arameans Were Defeated*

GOD PUNISHES THE IMPIOUSNESS OF THE ARAMEANS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Here the Scripture relates the two battles of the king of Israel against the Arameans, at which we have

¹1 Kings 20:11 (LXX and VL, used by Maximus; cf. biblical text above). ²Cetodoc 0219a, 32.17.

already hinted,³ and the twin slaughters of the Arameans, of which the second caused the death of 127,000 men, as God took his revenge on the impious voice of the Arameans, who said about the true God worshiped by the Israelites, “The Lord is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys.” ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 20.1.⁴

THE ONLY AUTHOR OF THE VICTORY. SALVIAN THE PRESBYTER: Did not the Lord wish Benhadad, king of Syria, whom besides countless thousands of his own people, thirty-two kings and armies of the same number of kings served, to be conquered by a few foot soldiers of the princes in order that he who was the author of such victory would be acknowledged? THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD 7.8.⁵

THE SAINTS ARE ON THE MOUNTAINS.

AMBROSE: Thus the saints go up to the Lord, the wicked go down to sin; the saints are on the mountains, the guilty in the valleys. “For he is the God of the mountains and not the God of the valleys.” Those who dwelt in the houses of the plain where God does not dwell could not have the house of God within them, for this is the house that God sought from them so that they might build up themselves and rear within themselves the temple of God from living stones of faith. He did not want buildings made with earthen walls or wooden roofs, for the hand of an enemy would have been able to overthrow them. He wanted that temple that is built in human hearts, to whom it might be said, “You are the temple of God,”⁶ in which the Lord Jesus might dwell and from there set out to redeem all humankind. There also could be prepared a sacred chamber in the womb of the Virgin where the King of heaven might live and a human body become the temple of God, which, though it was destroyed, might yet be restored to life on the third day. LETTER 80.⁷

20:34 Ahab Made a Treaty

AHAB BELIEVED THAT HIS MERCY WAS BETTER THAN GOD’S COMMAND. JOHN CASSIAN:

For no one can doubt that when the judgment of our heart goes wrong and is overwhelmed by the night of ignorance, our thoughts and deeds, which are the result of deliberation and discretion, must be involved in the darkness of still greater sins. Finally, the man who in the judgment of God was the first to be worthy to be king of his people Israel, because he was lacking in this “eye” of discretion, was, as if his whole body were full of darkness, actually cast down from the kingdom. While being deceived by the darkness of this “light” and in error, he imagined that his own offerings were more acceptable to God than obedience to the command of Samuel. And so he failed in that very act by which he had hoped to propitiate the Divine Majesty. And ignorance, I say, of this discretion led Ahab the king of Israel, after a triumph and splendid victory which had been granted to him by the favor of God, to imagine that mercy on his part was better than the stern execution of the divine command, which seemed a cruel rule to him. Moved by this consideration, while he desired to temper a bloody victory with mercy, he was on account of his indiscriminating clemency rendered full of darkness in his whole body and condemned irreversibly to death. CONFERENCE 2.2-3.⁸

20:35-38 You Have Not Obeyed the Lord

GOD’S COMMANDS MUST BE OBEYED. JOHN

CHRYSOSTOM: Ahab once captured a king of Syria and, contrary to God’s decree, saved his life. He had the Syrian king enjoy a seat by his side and sent him off with great honor. About that time a prophet came to his companion and said to him, “In the word of the Lord, strike me.” But his companion was not willing to strike him. And the prophet said to him, “Because you would not lis-

³See 1 Kings 19:18, “The Righteous Will Give Victory to Israel.”

⁴ESOO 1:505-6. ⁵FC 3:195. ⁶1 Cor 3:16. ⁷FC 26:449*. ⁸NPNF 2 11:309*

ten to the word of the Lord, behold, you will depart from me, and a lion will strike you." And he departed from him, and the lion found him and struck him. Then the prophet found another man and said, "Strike me." And the man did strike him and wounded him, and the prophet bandaged up his own face.

What greater paradox than this could there be? The man who struck the prophet was saved; the one who spared the prophet was punished. Why? That you may learn that when God commands, you must not question too much the nature of the action; you have only to obey. So that the first man might not spare him out of reverence, the prophet did not simply say "strike me" but said "strike me, in the word of God." That is, God commands it; seek no further. It is the King who ordains it; reverence the rank of him who commands and with all eagerness heed his word. But the man lacked the courage to strike him and, on this account, he paid the ultimate penalty. But by the punishment he subsequently suffered, he encourages us to yield and obey God's every command. DISCOURSE AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS 4.2.1-2.⁹

20:41-43 *Your Life Shall Be for His Life*

LOOK INTO THE DECREES OF GOD. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: After the second man had struck and wounded him, the prophet bound his own head with a bandage, covered his eyes and disguised himself. Why did he do this? He was going to accuse the king and condemn him for saving the life of the king of the Syrians. Now Ahab was an impious man and always a foe to the prophets. The prophet did not wish Ahab to recognize him and then drive him from his sight; if the king drove him away, he would not hear the prophet's words of correction. So the prophet concealed his face and any statement of his business in the hope that this would give him the advantage when he did speak and that he might get the king to agree to the terms he wanted.

When the king was passing by, the prophet

called aloud to him and said, "Your servant went forth to the campaign of war. Behold, a man brought another man to me and said to me: 'Guard this man for me. If he shall leap away and bound off, it will be your life for his life, or you will pay a talent of silver.' And it happened that as your servant turned his eyes this way and that, the man was not there." And the king of Israel said to him: "This is your judgment before me: You killed the man." And the prophet hurried to take the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized that he was one of the sons of the prophets. And he said to the king: "So says the Lord: 'Because you let go from your hand a man worthy of death, it will be your life for his life, and our people for his people.'"

Do you see how not only God but also people make this kind of judgment because both God and people heed the end and the causes rather than the nature of what is done? Certainly even the king said to him, "This is your judgment before me: you killed the man." You are a murderer, he said, because you let an enemy go. The prophet put on the bandage and presented the case as if it were not the king but somebody else on trial, so that the king might pass the proper sentence. And, in fact, this did happen. So after the king condemned him, the prophet tore off the bandage and said, "Because you let go from your hand a man worthy of death, it will be your life for his life and your people for his people." Did you see what a penalty the king paid for his act of kindness? And what punishment he endured in return for his untimely sparing of his foe? The one who spared a life is punished; another, who killed a man, was held in esteem. Phinehas certainly killed two people in a single moment of time—a man and his wife; and after he killed them, he was given the honor of the priesthood.¹⁰ His act of bloodshed did not defile his hand; it even made them cleaner. So you see that he who struck him perishes; you see that he who spared a man's life is punished, while he

⁹FC 68:74-75. ¹⁰See Num 25:6-13.

who refused to spare a life is held in esteem. Therefore, always look into the decrees of God before you consider the nature of your own actions. Whenever you find something that accords with his decree, approve that—and only that. DISCOURSE AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS 4.2.3-7.¹¹

AHAB'S INDULGENCE IS CONDEMNED BY THE PROPHET, EPHREM THE SYRIAN: In the course of these events Ahab's indulgence toward a man who was notoriously impious and an open and arrogant despiser of divine majesty fully deserved to be condemned, just as Saul's clemency toward the king of the Amalekites was reproached with

good reason by Samuel;¹² this is especially true if, as some commentators assert, the same prophet who had promised the victory in the name of God prescribed that a punishment was to be inflicted on Ben-hadad. On the other hand, a mild punishment should have been inflicted on Ahab and his subjects, if they were completely unaware of the will of God. But they could not ignore God's will at all, because the prophet had told them ahead of time that the Arameans would be handed over to them, after the Arameans had violated the majesty of God with their impious insults. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 20.1.¹³

¹¹FC 68:75-77. ¹²See 1 Sam 15:8-33. ¹³ESOO 1:506.





NABOTH'S VINEYARD

1 KINGS 21:1-29

OVERVIEW: Even though the story of Naboth happened a long time ago, we see that it is constantly repeated nowadays. The real rich man is Naboth, who is able to despise the gold of the king and to condemn his earthly covetousness (AMBROSE). Naboth refused to give Ahab his

vineyard, because he knew that the inheritance of the promised land, which all Jews had received through Joshua, was for them as precious as the kingdom of heaven is for us, and so he did not want to be deprived of that divine gift (ISHO'DAD). When Ahab pronounces the words "give to me,"

he does not express need but only his covetousness for earthly possessions. Ahab is led by insatiable greed, so that he merely desires to exclude others from any property. Ahab and Jezebel perfectly represent the behavior of the rich, who are made sad if they are not seizing the property of others (AMBROSE). Elijah pronounces his sentence against the king and the queen and condemns them to be given to the dogs and the house of Ahab to destruction (EPHREM). The punishment decreed by God for Ahab and Jezebel through the words of Elijah is the punishment for all rich and covetous people (AMBROSE). God immediately receives the prayer of Ahab and reconciles with him through the mediation of the prophet, because he sees that the king's repentance is sincere (EPHREM). Like all rich people, Ahab is not sorry in heart but only in countenance (AMBROSE). Through contrition, fasting and the humility of wearing a sackcloth, Ahab is able to obtain God's forgiveness (JEROME). In his infinite mercifulness the Lord conceded the grace of forgiveness to the unworthy Ahab, but Ahab did not cling to the divine favors conferred on him (AMBROSE).

21:1 *Naboth Had a Vineyard*

THE CONSTANT MORAL VALUE OF NABOTH'S STORY. AMBROSE: The story of Naboth is old in time but daily in practice. For who of the rich does not daily covet the goods of others? Who of the wealthy does not strive to drive off the poor person from his little acre and turn out the needy from the boundaries of his ancestral field? Who is content with his own? What rich person's heart is not set on fire by a neighbor's possession? Not, therefore, was one Ahab born, but, what is worse, daily is Ahab born and never dies in this world. If one perishes, many others spring up; there are more to steal than there are to suffer loss. Not one poor man, Naboth, was killed: daily is Naboth struck down, daily is a poor person put to death. Alarmed by this fear, the human race is now departing from its lands; the poor man, car-

rying his latest born, wanders forth with his little ones; his wife follows in tears, as if accompanying her husband to his tomb. Less, however, does she grieve who weeps over the bodies of her dead: for, although she has not her sons yet she does not mourn for exiles, she does not groan at the hunger of her tender brood, which is worse than death. ON NABOTH I.I.¹

NABOTH OWNS THE TRUE WEALTH. AMBROSE: An ancient story tells of the two neighbors, King Ahab and a poor man, Naboth. Which of these do we consider the poorer, which the richer: the one who had been endowed with a king's measure of wealth, insatiable and unsatisfied with his wealth, who longed for the little vineyard of the poor man; or the other, heartily despising a "king's fortune of much gold" and imperial wealth, who was satisfied with his vineyard? Does he not seem richer and more a king, since he had enough for himself and regulated his desires so that he wanted nothing that belonged to others? But was he not very poor whose gold was of no account, while he considered the other's vines of priceless value? Understand why he was so very poor: because riches amassed unjustly are disgorged, but the root of the righteous remains and flourishes like a palm tree. LETTER 55(38).8.²

21:2 *Give Me Your Vineyard*

WHY DID NABOTH REFUSE TO GIVE AHAB HIS VINEYARD? ISHO'DAD OF MERV: What Ahab said to Naboth, that is, that he would have given him the price of his vineyard or [another vineyard], was a lie. But Naboth did not sell his inheritance, first of all because he knew that [Ahab] would not have given him another vineyard in exchange and would not have kept his promise; second, because the Law forbade that an inheritance could be sold from one person to another;³ third, because the inheritance of the promised land, which they had received through

¹PSt 15:47. ²FC 26:306. ³See Lev 25:23.

the mediation of Joshua, was for them as precious as the kingdom of heaven is for us, and Naboth did not want to be deprived of that divine gift. BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 21.2.⁴

AHAB'S WORDS EXPRESS MERE COVETOUSNESS. AMBROSE: Let us hear, then, what [Ahab] says: "Give to me," he cries. What other is the cry of one in want? What other is the cry of one asking public alms, if not "Give to me"? That is, "Give to me," because I am in need, "give to me," because I cannot find any other means of sustenance; "give to me," because there is not to me bread for food, money for drink, price for nourishment, substance for raiment; "give to me," because the Lord has given to you from which you should bestow; he has not given to me. "Give to me," because, unless you give, I cannot have; "give to me," because it is written, "Give alms."⁵ How abject these words, how mean! For they have not the disposition of humility but the fire of covetousness. But in this very degradation, what effrontery! "Give me," he says, "your vineyard." He confesses it is another's, so that he asks what is not due him. ON NABOTH 2.7.⁶

THE WISH TO EXCLUDE OTHERS. AMBROSE: "Give me your vineyard," he says, "so that I may have it for a vegetable garden." This, then, was his whole madness; this was his whole passion: that a space should be obtained for paltry herbs. Not so much therefore do you yourself desire to possess, as it were, something useful, but you wish to exclude others. You have a greater concern about the possessions of the poor than about your own gains. You think it a wrong to you if a poor person has anything that is considered worthy of a rich person's ownership. You believe it your loss, whatever is another's. Why do the injuries done to nature delight you? For all has the world been created, which you few rich people are trying to keep for yourselves. For not merely the possession of the earth but the very sky, the air and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few. ON NABOTH 3.11.⁷

21:9-13 *Naboth Is Killed*

BEHAVIOR TYPICAL OF THE RICH. AMBROSE: How clearly the custom of the rich is portrayed! They are made sad if they are not seizing the property of others; they renounce food, they fast, not that they may lessen their sin but that they may commit crime. You may see them at such times coming to church, dutiful, humble and assiduous, in order that they may deserve to obtain the accomplishment of their wickedness. But to them God says, "Not this fast have I chosen, not if you should wind your head about like a circle and spread also sackcloth and ashes, and not thus will you call an acceptable fast. Not such a fast have I chosen, says the Lord. Loose every bond of injustice, loose the bonds of violent contracts, let them that are broken go free, and tear asunder every unjust writing. Deal your bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harborless into your house. If you shall see one naked, cover him, and you shall not despise the domestics of your seed. Then shall your morning light arise, and your health shall speedily arise, and your justice shall go before you, and the majesty of the Lord shall surround you. Then shall you call, and God shall hear you; even while you speak, he shall say, Here I am."⁸ Do you hear, O rich person, what the Lord God says? You too come to church, not to bestow anything on a poor person but to take away. You fast, not that the cost of your banquet may profit the needy, but that you may obtain spoil from those in want. ON NABOTH 10.44-45.⁹

21:18-23 *I Will Bring Disaster on You*

ELIJAH REPROVES THE ASSASSINATION OF NABOTH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: And the Lord said to Elijah, "Get up,¹⁰ go down to meet King

⁴CSCO 229:125. ⁵Lk 11:41. ⁶PSst 15:51. ⁷PSst 15:53. ⁸Is 58:5-9 (LXX); Ambrose uses a VL, which is a close translation of the LXX. ⁹PSst 15:75-76. ¹⁰These words are added in the Peshitta version used by Ephrem.

Ahab of Israel," and so on. Now, when Jezebel invited Ahab to come and take hold of the vineyard whose owners had been stoned, Elijah went out to meet him, precisely when he did not expect him, and approached him in order to reveal the shameful action which they thought no one else knew about. He reproached the king openly for stealing the vineyard and killing the righteous Naboth. But one may say: Is not Jezebel the one who prepared the death of Naboth? Ahab simply did not accept that his request was rejected by Naboth; he did not want to treat him badly or take his vineyard by force. However, if he claims the vineyard, since the inheritance is due to the king after the heirs are dead, as the law prescribes, we maintain that if Ahab had not sinned at all, it would have been impossible that the justice that absolves those who are oppressed might have wronged him. Nor would the prophet, who reproved him according to the command of the just Judge and had already condemned him twice, [have wronged him].

And Elijah said to him, "Thus says the Lord: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam." To Jezebel too, the Lord said, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the boundaries of Jezreel." Such are the judgments that Elijah pronounced against the king and the queen: he gives them to the dogs, and the house of Ahab to destruction. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 21.17.¹¹

THE SEVERE AND JUST SENTENCE OF GOD.

AMBROSE: By this his divine justice moved, and it condemns the miser with befitting severity, saying, "You have killed, and you have taken possession of his inheritance. Therefore in this place, where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, in this place the dogs shall lick your blood and harlots shall wash in your blood."¹² How just, how severe a sentence: that he should be prevented from separating from the horror of his own death the same bitterness of death that he had inflicted on the other! God beholds the poor

man unburied and therefore decrees that the rich man also be without burial; hence, even dead, Ahab may atone for the tribulation of his iniquity, who thought that not even the dead should be spared. Thus his corpse, sprinkled with the gore of his wound, after the manner of a violent death, disclosed the cruelty of his life. When the poor man suffered these things, the rich man was blamed; when the rich man experienced them, the poor man was vindicated. But what does it signify that harlots washed in his blood, unless perhaps that a kind of meretricious perfidy or bloody luxury should be proclaimed to have been in the cruelty of the king, who was so fond of luxury that he desired herbs, and so bloodthirsty that, for the sake of his herbs, he killed a man? A fitting penalty destroyed the miser, a fitting penalty for his avarice. Finally, also, the dogs and the birds of heaven devoured Jezebel, so that it should be made manifest that the spoil of spiritual wickedness becomes the grave of the rich. Flee, therefore, a death of this kind, O rich person. But you will flee a death of this kind only if you flee this kind of crime. Do not be an Ahab and covet a neighbor's possession. Let not Jezebel dwell with you, that deadly avarice that persuades you to bloody deeds; that restrains not your desires but urges you on; that makes you sadder even when you gain possession of what you desire and that makes you destitute when you are rich. ON NABOTH II.48-49.¹³

21:27 Ahab Tore His Clothes

AHAB'S SINCERE REPENTANCE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: And the Lord said to Elijah, "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me?" and so on. If the repentance of Ahab had not been sincere, it would not have been praised by the Lord nor would the sentence pronounced against him have been diminished. It is true that

¹¹ESOO 1:508-9. ¹²The text of the LXX adds "and harlots shall wash in your blood." This sentence is also in VL, whereas it is omitted in Vg. ¹³PSt 15:75-76.

Ahab did not receive his punishment in its entirety: the dogs, in fact, did not rip up his corpse or the birds devour it. Therefore what was said by Elijah as the word of the Lord must be interpreted in the sense of the word addressed to Moses: "I will blot out that nation,"¹⁴ but he did not blot it out. But consider three [different] meanings here.

The first is that Ahab repents and prays, and God immediately receives his prayer and reconciles with him, and he reveals to Ahab the pardon of his fault through the mediation of the prophet. The benevolence of the Lord toward this impious man is truly admirable, and the friend of humankind also shows his mercifulness toward sinners on many occasions. God forgives the faults of David in the same way, and after he has confessed his sin, he hears from the prophet, "Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die."¹⁵ And [the same happens] to Manasseh, whom he enables to leave his captivity after only a short time and to come back to his kingdom from Babylon.¹⁶

Second, consider that even though the repentance of Ahab was short, the pardon that he asked for was nonetheless granted immediately. His Lord did not act in this manner with Abraham, to whom he conceded an heir only after a prayer lasting one hundred years. See also how a great fault was forgiven Ahab, while Miriam became a leper for a small error. Recognize, then, that the grace of God, which is incomprehensible, does not allow sinners to waste away in their iniquity, and [God] makes the righteous man thrive by not giving him what he wants immediately and by correcting him without delay. See again how Abraham prayed without receiving anything. He does not make his servants rich, so that they might not grow too proud. In the third place, even though God has freed Ahab, who had been condemned by Elijah, from his sentence, he nonetheless says, "But in his sons' days I will bring the disaster on his house." This means that the merciful judge tried to influence the king to live under his good will, for Ahab was an impul-

sive man who changed his mind quickly and turned from goodness to evil. In addition, [he said these words] so that [Ahab] might invoke mercy for his children and turn from them the sentence pronounced against them. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 21.28.¹⁷

THE RICH ONLY PRETEND TO BE SORRY.

AMBROSE: Rich people grow angry and calumniate so that they may do injury if they do not obtain what they desire. But when by their calumny they do cause injury, they pretend they are sorry; yet sad and grief-stricken, as it were, not in heart but in countenance, they set out for the place of the stolen estate and take possession by their unjust and violent procedure. ON NABOTH 11.47.¹⁸

THE PROPER WAY TO WEAR SACKCLOTH AND TO FAST.

JEROME: A teacher, if he dismisses a child and does not exact obedience from him, hates him; if, on the other hand, he disciplines him and the remedy cures him, his apparent severity turns out to be clemency. Ahab, too, was censured by the Lord when he killed Naboth and took his vineyard and spilled just blood. Elijah, the prophet, was sent to him to say, "You have killed. Moreover, also you have taken possession." Immediately his conscience struck and tormented him; he bowed his head and walked with eyes downcast; and this is an impious king robed in purple. Afterwards, Scripture says, Ahab went about wearing haircloth under his royal attire, and God, seeing him, said, "Because Ahab has humbled himself for my sake, I will not bring evil against him." Just realize the power of haircloth and of fasting, and how much blood is washed away by humble tears! This, then, is the proper way to wear haircloth and the proper way to fast, that no one may observe it. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 51 (Ps 140[141]).¹⁹

¹⁴Deut 9:14 (Peshitta). ¹⁵2 Sam 12:13. ¹⁶See 2 Chron 33:11-13.

¹⁷ESOO 1:511-12. ¹⁸Ps 15:75-76. ¹⁹FC 48:369.

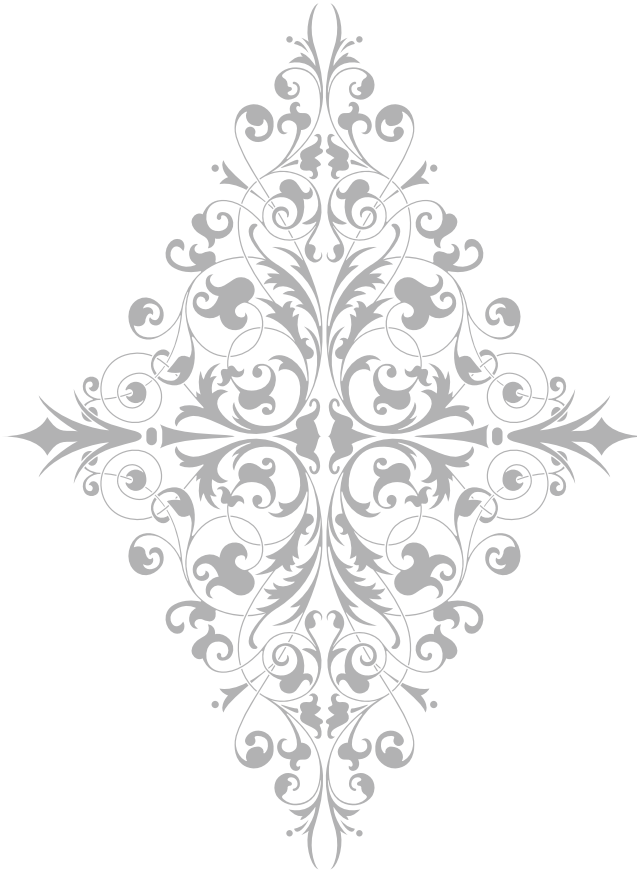
21:29 *Ahab Has Humbled Himself*

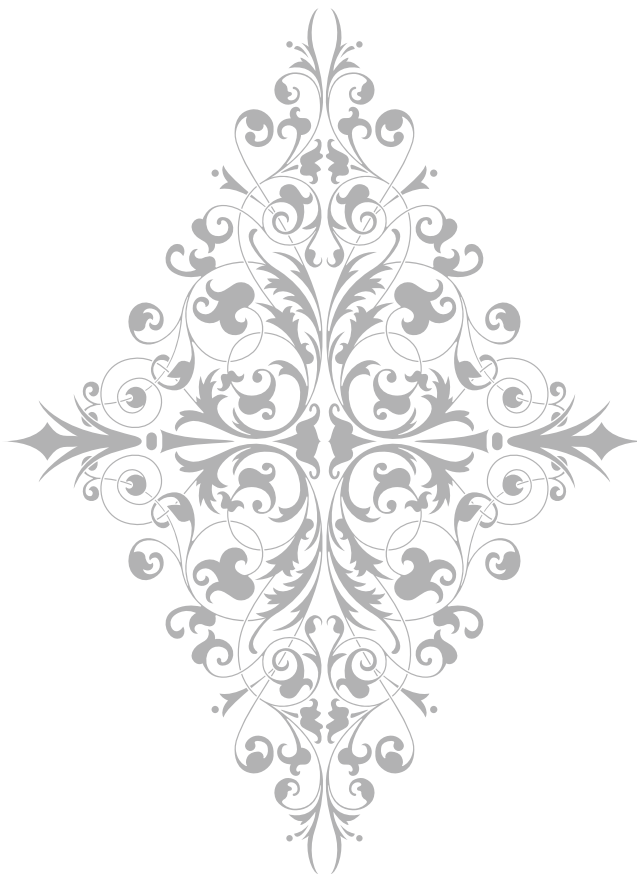
GOD'S UNFAILING JUSTICE. AMBROSE: In this place the question comes up: how do we interpret what the Lord said to Elijah: "Have you seen how Ahab has been moved at my presence? I will not bring evils in his days, but in his sons' days will I bring evils"—or how do we say that repentance avails before God? "Behold, the king was moved before the face of the Lord and went away weeping, and he tore his garments, and covered himself with haircloth and put on sackcloth from that day on which he killed Naboth the JezreHITE,"²⁰ so that mercy moved God, and he changed his decree. Therefore either repentance did not avail and did not turn God to mercy or the prophecy is false, for Ahab was vanquished and killed. But consider that he had a wife, Jezebel, by whose will he was inflamed and who turned his heart and made him execrable by reason of his excessive sacrileges. Accordingly, she checked even this desire of repentance on his part. But the Lord cannot be considered changeable if he did not think that he ought to keep for the one unmindful of his confession what, at his confessing, he had promised him.

But hear another and truer explanation. Even for him in his unworthiness did the Lord keep the tenor of his decree, but Ahab himself did not hold fast to the divine favors conferred on him. The king of Syria²¹ made war.²² He was defeated and kept for pardon. Although a captive, he was even given his liberty and sent back to his kingdom. It was in keeping with the divine decree that Ahab not only escaped harm but even triumphed; it was due to his own stupid want of firmness that he armed against himself the enemy by whom he was to be conquered. And surely he was warned by the prophet, who said, "Know, and see

what you do."²³ He was warned, I say, because the help of divine favor was due against the servants of the king of Syria, since he had said, "The God of the mountains is the God of Israel and not the god Baal. Therefore," he says, "they have conquered us. And therefore," he says, "if we shall not completely overcome them, put satraps in the stead of the king of Syria,"²⁴ so that he might take from them their valor and the power of the king. Hence in the first battle Ahab was victorious, so that he put his enemy to flight; in the second he was also victorious, in which instance he restored the captured king to his power. For this reason there leaped forth a clear prophecy of Ahab's defeat, one of the sons of the prophets saying to his neighbor, "Strike me. But he would not strike him. And he said, Because you would not obey the word of the Lord, behold, you depart from me, and a lion shall kill you. And he departed from him, and a lion found him and killed him."²⁵ And after this another prophet stood before the king of Israel and said to him, "Thus said the Lord: Because you have let go out of your hand a man of destruction, behold, your life shall be for his life and your people for his people."²⁶ It is clear, therefore, from these prophecies that the Lord keeps his promises even to the unworthy but the impious are either destroyed by their own folly or are condemned for a second transgression, though they have escaped the snares of the first. But we should so conduct ourselves that, being worthy through good works, we may deserve to receive the promises of the omnipotent God. ON NABOTH 17.70-73.²⁷

²⁰See 1 Kings 21:27 (VL). ²¹Aram; LXX, VL and Vg call Aram "Syria" and the Arameans "Syrians." ²²See 1 Kings 20:1, 20-29. ²³1 Kings 20:22. ²⁴1 Kings 20:23-24. ²⁵1 Kings 20:35-36. ²⁶1 Kings 20:42. ²⁷Ps 15:99-103*.





THE DEATH OF AHAB

1 KINGS 22:1-53

OVERVIEW: The words of the prophet are an invitation to refrain from fighting, but the king is not able to understand them (WALAFRIDIUS STRABO). The host of heaven indicates the angelic powers, both good and evil, who are all subject to the rule of the Lord (RABANUS MAURUS). No prophet ever saw God's essence in its pure state, because each one saw him in a different way (CHRYSOSTOM). The spirit who came forward and stood before the Lord is Michael, the leader of the people (ISHO'DAD). If any spirit is a lying spirit, all similar spirits would be lying spirits in accordance with their falsehood (ORIGEN). The Spirit who stood before God was an evil spirit, because no liar is without an evil spirit (CAESARIUS). The predictions of Elijah about Ahab's death were not entirely fulfilled, as he died in battle but his corpse was not devoured by wild beasts (EPHREM).

22:17 *Israel Scattered Like Sheep Without a Shepherd*

AN INVITATION TO REFRAIN FROM FIGHTING. WALAFRIDIUS STRABO: "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, 'These have no master; let each one go home in peace.'" Through these words [the prophet] shows that [Ahab's] iniquity is the cause of the slaughter. In fact, if he had been a good and pious shepherd, he would have defeated his enemies with his own forces. Therefore, he shows the way to obtain salvation. "If the Lord is our God," he says to them, "each one

must go home in peace. If you believe in God and want to know from him what you need to do, dismiss the army." GLOSSA ORDINARIA, THIRD BOOK OF KINGS 22.17.¹

22:19 *The Lord with the Host of Heaven*

THE ELECT AND THE EVIL ANGELS. RABANUS MAURUS: How should we interpret the "throne of God" but as the angelic powers over whose minds the Lord presides from on high while he arranges everything below? And what does the "host of heaven" signify but the multitude of the attending angels? And what does the text mean when it asserts that the host of heaven is to the right and to the left of him? Indeed God, who is within everything as he is also outside everything, is not enclosed to the right or the left, and therefore the right of God indicates the elect portion of the angels, whereas the left designates the evil portion of the angels. In fact, not only the good ones who help God serve him, but so do those who are distressed because they do not want to return [to be helpful]. . . . Therefore the host of the angels is to the right and to the left, because the will of the elect spirit agrees with the divine sense of justice. Therefore the mind of the evil ones, who serve their own malice is forced to fulfill the orders [of the Lord]. COMMENTARY ON THE THIRD BOOK OF KINGS 22.²

¹PL 113:610. ²PL 109:219.

NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN GOD'S ESSENCE.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: Tell me, John, what do you mean when you say, "No one has ever seen God"?³ What shall we think about the prophets who say that they saw God? Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne."⁴ And, again, Daniel said, "I saw until the thrones were set, and the ancient of days sat."⁵ And Micah said, "I saw the God of Israel sitting on his throne." And, again, another prophet said, "I saw the Lord standing on the altar, and he said to me, 'strike the mercy seat.'"⁶ And I can gather together many similar passages to show you as witnesses of what I say. How is it, then, that John says, "No one has ever seen God"?⁷ He says this so that you may know that he is speaking of a clear knowledge and perfect comprehension of God. All the cases cited were instances of God's condescension and accommodation. That no one of those prophets saw God's essence in its pure state is clear from the fact that each one saw him in a different way. God is a simple being; he is not composed of parts; he is without form or figure. But all these prophets saw different forms and figures. **AGAINST THE ANOMOEANS 4.18-19.**⁸

22:21-22 I Will Entice Him**INTERVENTION OF THE ANGEL MICHAEL.**

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The "spirit" who "came forward and stood [before the Lord]" is an angel and not an evil spirit, namely, Satan, as certain [authors] suggest.⁹ In fact, why would an evil spirit stand before the Lord? On the contrary, this spirit is Michael, the leader of the people. It is he who says in his zeal, "I will entice him," that is, "Allow me to leave and abandon the prophets of lies, instead of hindering them, as I have done many times, in order to stop and prevent their false prophecies. As a consequence, the destiny of Ahab will be according to what justice requires, because he will obey [his false prophets] with all his heart, if I do not prevent this." **BOOKS OF SESSIONS I KINGS 22.20.**¹⁰

ALL THE WORDS OF EVIL SPIRITS ARE LIES.

ORIGEN: I think every evil and deceitful spirit is a lie, and whenever anyone of these speaks, it speaks from its own resources and by no means from the resources of God. And the father of these [spirits] is the liar, the devil. We will now present what moved us to say that every inferior spirit is false. It is written in the third book of Kings that at the time Micaiah was called by Ahab to prophesy concerning whether he should go to Ramoth-gilead for war or stay, he said, "I saw the God of Israel sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven stood around him on his right and on his left. And he said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, king of Israel, and he will go up and fall in Ramoth-gilead?'" And he spoke in this manner. And a spirit came forth and stood before the Lord and said, "I will deceive him." And the Lord said to him, "By what means?" And he said, "I will go forth and will be a false spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours."

And in the second book of Paralipomenon, the same Micaiah says to Ahab and Jehoshaphat, "Hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and every power of heaven stood at his right and at his left. And the Lord said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, king of Israel, and he will go up and fall in Ramoth-gilead?'" And he spoke in this manner. And a spirit came forth and stood before the Lord and said, "I will deceive him." And the Lord said, "By what means?" And he said, "I will go forth and be a false spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."¹¹

These words show clearly, then, that if any spirit is the lying spirit, all similar spirits would be lying spirits, indebted to their lying father for being lying spirits in accordance with their falsehood and evil, not because this belongs to their essence. **COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 20.257-62.**¹²

³Jn 1:18. ⁴Is 6:1. ⁵Dan 7:9. ⁶Amos 9:1 (LXX). ⁷Jn 1:18. ⁸FC 72:122. ⁹Isho'dad is referring to unknown exegetical sources. ¹⁰CSCO 229:128. ¹¹2 Chron 18:18-21. ¹²FC 89:259-60.

NO SIN IS COMMITTED WITHOUT THE DEVIL'S PROMPTING. CAESARIUS OF ARLES:

Perhaps someone says, "How can it happen that one who sins in his flesh by dissipation possesses the devil in his soul?" What we have said, dearly beloved, we will prove with evidence from sacred Scripture. Listen to the Scriptures saying that the proud person is filled with the devil: "Everyone who exalts his own heart is unclean in the sight of God,"¹³ and "All pride is the beginning of falling off from God."¹⁴ What does it mean to fall from God, except to depart from him? Moreover, if a person is separated from God, he is necessarily united to the devil. Furthermore, Scripture says that the envious person cannot be without a devil: "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world, and they follow him that are of his side."¹⁵ The canonical writings attest no less that the fornicator is also enslaved by the devil, for the prophet says, "You have been deceived by the spirit of fornication."¹⁶ The fact that no liar can be without an evil spirit is evidenced by Scripture, too: "You will destroy all that speak a lie,"¹⁷ and again: "The mouth that belies kills the soul."¹⁸ In the book of Kings we read that the evil spirit said to the Lord, "I will deceive Ahab." And the Lord said to him, "By what means?" And he answered, "I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets." And the Lord said, "You shall

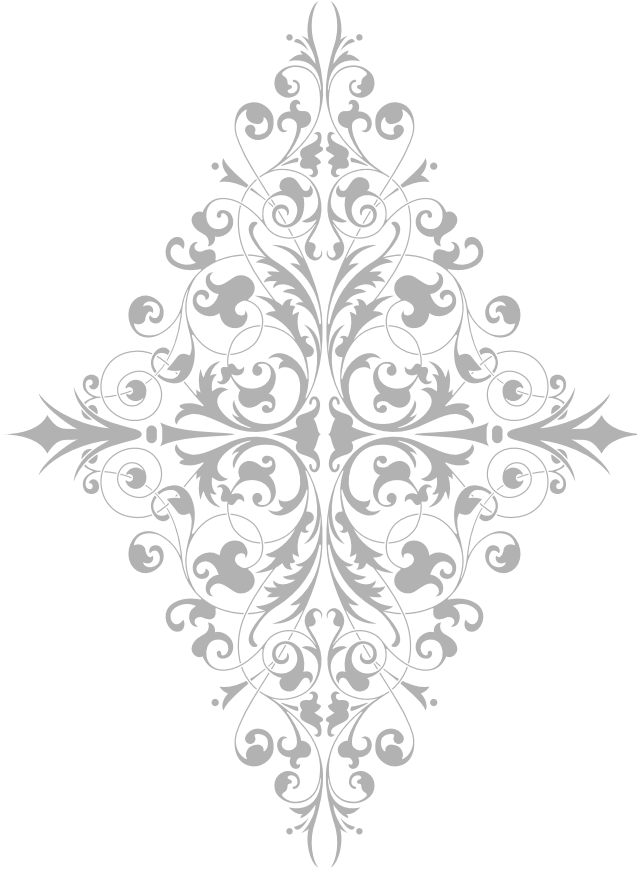
deceive him and shall prevail." We should believe that the case is similar with all the other serious sins and offenses, because no one commits them without the devil's prompting. SERMON 79.2.¹⁹

22:37 Ahab Died and Was Buried in Samaria

ELIJAH'S PREDICTION WAS NOT ENTIRELY FULFILLED. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: You see, not all the humiliations with which Elijah had threatened Ahab were accomplished, thanks to [the king's] profound repentance, nor was Ahab's corpse devoured by birds or wild beasts.²⁰ Instead he was brought to the royal palace in Samaria, and there, after being celebrated with regal magnificence, was solemnly buried. Ahab died in that battle, which Micaiah had predicted to be fatal and deadly to him, even though he did not die on the battlefield but was taken away from there and survived for several hours, before he finally died in the evening. Therefore it seems clear that the dogs were not prevented from licking the blood that flowed on that day and night from his wound. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 22.37.²¹

¹³Prov 16:5. ¹⁴See Prov 16:18. ¹⁵Wis 2:24. ¹⁶Hos 4:12. ¹⁷Ps 5:6 (5:7 LXX, Vg). ¹⁸Wis 1:11. ¹⁹FC 31:364-65*. ²⁰See 1 Kings 21:24. ²¹ESOO 1:514.

2 KINGS



ELIJAH PREDICTS
THE DEATH OF AHAZIAH
2 KINGS 1:1-18

OVERVIEW: Ahaziah follows his father, Ahab, in the practice of idolatry and complies with the impiety of his mother, Jezebel, so that he is punished by God (EPHREM). In the days of the Old Testament, any crimes or offenses committed among the people were ordered to be physically punished. Since the two captains did not give Elijah honor as an old man or reverence him as a prophet, the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the prophet, and they were struck down by a blow sent from heaven (CAESARIUS). The third captain humbly kneels down before Elijah and repeats the order of the king but gives him the option either to obey or not obey the word of the king. Ahaziah was childless, so that his brother Jehoram became the new king, even though the law did not prescribe this kind of succession, which the Jews borrowed from the Gentile nations (EPHREM).

1:2-4 *Inquire of Baal-zebul*

AHAZIAH IS PUNISHED WITH DEATH FOR HIS IDOLATRY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Ahaziah falls from the gallery of his upper chamber in Samaria.” . . . Ahaziah is the son of Ahab, and after Ahab’s death he takes his place and reigns over his people. Now, he falls from the upper chambers of his palace, and his body is seriously

injured. Therefore Ahaziah sends some messengers to the god of the Ekronites in order to question him about his injury. It seems that such a piece of advice was given to him by his mother, Jezebel, who for her entire life made her children, namely, Ahaziah and Joram, her slaves, just like Ahab, her husband, had been a slave to her. Ahaziah’s present action, as well as what his brother did after him—their shameful end and the hardness of their heart in the adoration of their idols until their death—are perfectly in keeping with the abominable actions and wicked will of their mother, Jezebel. So, Elijah, who had learned from a vigilant [i.e., an angel] what Ahaziah was doing, came out to meet his messengers and ordered them, by the word of the Lord, to return to their master and announce to him the news of his departure from this world, because he had rejected the Lord and had taken refuge in the god of Ekron, hoping that he would heal him. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS I.I.¹

1:9-14 *Fire from Heaven*

PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: These

¹ESOO 1:517.

wretched men² are apt to censure the writings of the Old Testament saying, "How was it just for blessed Elijah to burn two captains with their soldiers by means of fire brought down from heaven?" How justly and mercifully this was done, dearly beloved, we want to indicate briefly to your hearts. In the days of the Old Testament, any crimes or offenses committed among the people were ordered to be physically punished. Thus it is written, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth."³ Indeed, some were punished in order that the rest might fear bodily punishment and refrain from sins and offenses. Now, in the time of the prophet, blessed Elijah, all the Jewish people had abandoned God and were sacrificing to idols, not only refusing to honor God's prophets but even very frequently trying to kill them. For this reason blessed Elijah was aroused with zeal for God and caused some to be punished physically, so that those who had neglected the salvation of their souls might be healed in heart by fearing bodily death. We should consider that not so much blessed Elijah as the Holy Spirit did this. We know that the same thing was done through blessed Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, for through him they incurred the destruction of death themselves in order that an example might be given to the rest. Therefore, as it is written, "Great fear seized all who heard of this."⁴ Examples are given to everyone whenever punishments are inflicted on sinners. Because the Jews thought only of their body and refused to be solicitous for the salvation of their soul, with God as judge they suffered punishment in the very body to which they had devoted so much care. SERMON 125.1.⁵

THE SIN OF PRIDE. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Now if you consider well, dearly beloved, you will realize that not only the Jewish people fell through pride, but also those two captains perished from the same weakness. With great pride and arrogance but lacking any humility, the latter came to blessed Elijah and said, "Man of God, the king summons you." Because they did

not give him honor as an old man or reverence as a prophet, the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the prophet, and they were struck down by a blow sent from heaven. The third captain, however, coming with great humility and contrition, as was proper, pleaded in a tearful voice and not only merited to escape punishment but even induced blessed Elijah to condescend to go to the king. All this, dearly beloved, happened for the salvation of all the people, since the good and merciful Lord struck a few people in order that he might heal them all. SERMON 125.2.⁶

HUMBLENESS AFTER THE FIRE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: But the stubborn king did not fear the word of the prophet and said in his heart, "He lies." And so he did not pay attention to his warning, which exhorted him to get rid of the reason of his evils and to repent. He persevered in his stubbornness and, instead of repenting of his pride and being converted, grew more stubborn and sent a captain of fifty with some guards to arrest the prophet of God and lead him to the tribunal. Now, after hearing that the fire had come down and had consumed the captain with his fifty men on the occasion of their effrontery, he sent some others, and again the fire consumed them and made them perish. And [divine] justice decrees this sentence quite rightly, because those who had seen the fire, which had come down at the prayer of Elijah, and had not believed or were converted, were necessarily scorched by the second descent of the fire. And the same punishment was prepared for the third one, who was sent after them, if the terrifying spectacle of the fire had not made him wise. He avoids appearing like his comrades: he arrives after the prophet, humbly kneels down before him and, on the one hand, repeats the order of the king, but on the

²Caesarius is referring to the Manichaeans, who maintained, like Marcion, that the God of the Old Testament was an inferior divine being (a demiurge), or even a cruel deity, who had formed the world with the darkness of evil. ³Exod 21:24. ⁴Acts 5:11. ⁵FC 47:214-15*. ⁶FC 47:215.

other, gives him the option whether to obey the word of the king or not. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 1.1.⁷

1:17-18 *Jehoram Succeeded Ahaziah as King*

THE SUCCESSORS OF AHAZIAH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: After the death of Ahaziah, since he had no children who could inherit the kingdom, his brother Jehoram became king. This did not occur because the Law prescribed anything of the sort, but because this was the custom of their neighbors, which the children of Israel had observed by now for many years. But God gives another rule

for the kingdom of the children of Judah: he binds them to the family of David, and it is in this manner that the kingship was constantly transmitted from the father to the son or the next of kin—but they refused this succession only once, at the time of Jechonias,⁸ who became king after Zedekiah,⁹ brother of his father, because Jechonias was deported to Babel and Zedekiah was forced to take his place and stop the fall of the monarchy. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 1.15.¹⁰

⁷ESOO 1:517-18. ⁸Or Jehoiachin; see 2 Kings 24:8. ⁹See 2 Kings 24:18; 2 Chron 36:11. ¹⁰ESOO 1:518.



THE LORD TAKES ELIJAH TO HEAVEN

2 KINGS 2:1-14

OVERVIEW: In spite of Elijah's invitation to stop and stay in Gilgal, Elisha follows him first to Bethel and then on the way to Jericho (EPHREM). Elijah was better prepared to be taken up to heaven after crossing the Jordan, since in 1 Corinthians 10:2 Paul calls this incredible passage through water a baptism (ORIGEN). God is everywhere wholly present in himself, not in things of which some have a greater capacity for him, others less (AUGUSTINE). Elijah left a double portion of grace and sanctity to Elisha, although he himself had a single spirit of holiness (MAXIMUS). The word of Elijah came as a preparatory discipline to the people prepared by it, that they might be trained for the reception of the perfect Word (ORIGEN). When Elijah was raised up to the heavens, he let the cloak with which he had been clothed fall to Elisha; when our Lord ascended into heaven, he left the mysteries of the humanity he had assumed to his disciples (BEDE). Relieved of bodily weight by continuous fasting, Elijah flew to heaven as victor over death (CHRYSOLOGUS).

2:1-7 Stay Here

ELISHA REFUSES TO OBEY ELIJAH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elijah, who now lived with Elisha, whom he had also consecrated as prophet according to a divine oracle, as has been said already, was with him every day, inseparably sharing with him the same way of life. When he was about to

ascend into the chariots of fire, to leave and be raised to the clouds with that physical mass that drags us to the ground, after he had already crossed Gilgal and was going to reach Bethel, he ordered Elisha to stay in Gilgal. But Elisha did not obey him nor would he separate from him because those words carried him instead of completely imprisoning him. That is why, after all, Elijah took him with him. When both had reached Bethel, where they spent a few days, and Elijah was planning again to visit Jericho by himself, he ordered Elisha not to come along with him for the second time. But just as before, he continued to be disobedient and stubborn, as if he felt torn at the thought of being cut off from his master. Since he did not know what to do, Elijah consented to go again with him. Fifty more followed them. These were the sons of the prophets. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 2.2-5.¹

2:8-9 *Elijah Struck the Water with His Mantle*

ELIJAH AND ELISHA WERE BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN. ORIGEN: We must note in addition that when Elijah was about to be taken up in a whirlwind as into heaven, he took his sheepskin and rolled it up and struck the water, and it was divided on this side and that, and both crossed, that is to say, himself and Elisha. He was better

¹ESOO 1:518-19.

prepared to be taken up after he was baptized in the Jordan, since Paul, as we explained previously, called the more incredible passage through water a baptism.² It is because of this same Jordan that Elisha is capable of receiving the gift that he has desired through Elijah, for he said, “Let a double portion come on me in your spirit.” Perhaps he received the gift in the spirit of Elijah in a double measure on himself because he crossed the Jordan twice, once with Elijah, and a second time when he took the sheepskin of Elijah and struck the water and said, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? And he struck the waters, and they divided on this side and that.” COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.238-39.³

GOD IS EVERYWHERE WHOLLY PRESENT IN HIMSELF. AUGUSTINE: Therefore, he who is everywhere does not dwell in all, and he does not even dwell equally in those in whom he does dwell. Otherwise, what is the meaning of the request made by Elisha that there might be in him double the Spirit of God that was in Elijah? And how is it that among the saints some are more holy than others, except that they have a more abundant indwelling in God? How, then, did we speak the truth when we said above that God is everywhere wholly present if he is more amply present in some, less in others? But it should be noticed with care that we said he is everywhere wholly present in himself, not in things of which some have a greater capacity for him, others less. LETTER 187.17.⁴

2:10 *Asking a Hard Thing*

A DOUBLE PORTION OF GRACE. MAXIMUS OF TURIN: Angels carry Elijah to heaven while angels guard Elisha on earth. Why is it so amazing if the angels who carried the master were also guarding the disciple? And what is noteworthy if the allegiance which they displayed toward the father they also offer to the son? For Elisha is the spiritual son of Elijah and the heir of his holiness. Elisha is therefore rightly called the spiritual son

of Elijah, for when Elijah was ascending to heaven he left behind for Elisha a double spirit of his grace. For when an opportunity was given to Elisha to ask for whatever he wanted before Elijah was taken from him, he asked that a double spirit of Elijah be in him. Then Elijah responded: “You have asked for something difficult, but it will be done for you.” O precious inheritance in which more is left to the heir than was actually possessed, and the ones who receives the inheritance receives more than the giver owned! This is certainly a precious inheritance, which is doubled by some interest derived from merits when it is transferred from the father to the son! So Elijah, although he had a single spirit of holiness, left a double portion to Elisha. In an amazing way, he left more grace on earth for Elisha than he took with himself to heaven. SERMON 84.2.⁵

2:11-14 *Elijah Ascended into Heaven*

ELIJAH PREPARED THE WORLD TO RECEIVE THE DIVINE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST. ORIGEN: But do not marvel in regard to what is said about Elijah, if, just as something strange happened to him different from all the saints who are recorded, in respect of his having been caught up by a whirlwind into heaven, so his spirit had something of choice excellence, so that not only did it rest on Elisha but also descended along with John at his birth; and that John, separately, “was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,” and separately “came before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah.”⁶ For it is possible for several spirits not only worse, but also better, to be in the same person. David accordingly asks to be established by a free spirit⁷ and that a right spirit be renewed in his inward parts.⁸ But if, in order that the Savior may impart to us of the “spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and reverence,”⁹ he

²1 Cor 10:2. ³FC 80:233. ⁴FC 30:233-34. ⁵Cetedoc 0219a, 84.32. ⁶Lk 1:15, 17. ⁷See Ps 51:12 (50:14 LXX). ⁸See Ps 51:10 (50:12 LXX). ⁹Is 11:2.

was filled also with the spirit of the fear of the Lord; it is possible also that these several good spirits may be conceived as being in the person. And this also we have brought forward, because of John having come before Christ “in the spirit and power of Elijah,”¹⁰ in order that the saying “Elijah has already come”¹¹ may be referred to the spirit of Elijah that was in John; as also the three disciples who had gone up with him understood that he spoke to them about John the Baptist.¹² On Elisha, then, only the spirit of Elijah rested, but John came before, not only in the spirit but also in the power of Elijah. Wherefore, also, Elisha could not have been called Elijah, but John was Elijah himself. But if it is necessary to adduce the Scripture from which the scribes said that Elijah must first come, listen to Malachi, who says, “And behold, I will send to you Elijah the Tishbite,” down to the words “Lest I come and strike the earth utterly.”¹³ And it seems to be indicated by these words that Elijah was to prepare for the glorious coming of Christ by certain holy words and dispositions in their souls, those who had been made fittest for this, which those on earth could not have endured, because of the excellence of the glory, unless they had been prepared beforehand by Elijah. And likewise, by Elijah, in this place, I do not understand the soul of that prophet but his spirit and his power; for these it is by which all things shall be restored, so that when they have been restored, and, as a result of that restoration, become capable of receiving the glory of Christ, the Son of God who shall appear in glory may sojourn with them. But if also Elijah is in some sort a word inferior to “the word who was in the beginning with God, God the Word,”¹⁴ this word also might come as a preparatory discipline to the people prepared by it, that they might be trained for the reception of the perfect Word. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 13.2.¹⁵

A GLORIOUS TYPE OF THE ASCENSION OF THE SAVIOR. BEDE: The prophets proclaimed the mystery of the Lord’s ascension not only by their words but also by their actions. Both Enoch, the

seventh [in the line of descent] from Adam,¹⁶ who was transported from the world,¹⁷ and Elijah, who was taken up into heaven, gave evidence that the Lord would ascend above all the heavens. . . .

Elijah presented an image of this festivity of the Lord by a miracle with richer significance. When the time in which he was to be taken away from the world was near, he came to the river Jordan with his disciple Elisha. With his rolled-up cloak he struck the waters, they were divided, and both of them crossed over on dry land. And he said to Elisha, “Ask what you want me to do before I am taken away from you,” and Elisha said, “I entreat you that your spirit may become double in me.” As they went on conversing together, behold, Elijah was suddenly snatched away, and, as the Scripture says, “He ascended as if into heaven.” By this action of his soaring aloft it is meant that [Elijah] was not taken up into heaven itself, as was our Lord, but into the height of the air [above the earth], from where he was borne invisibly to the joys of paradise. Elisha took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him; and, coming to the river Jordan, he struck the water with it, and after calling on God, he divided the water and crossed over.

Let your love take note, my brothers, how the symbolic event agrees point by point with its fulfillment. Elijah came to the river Jordan, and having laid aside his cloak, he struck the waters and divided them. The Lord came to the stream of death, in which the human race ordinarily was immersed, and laying aside from himself for a time the clothing of flesh that he had assumed, struck down death by dying and opened up for us the way to life by rising. The change and decline of our mortal life is properly represented by the river Jordan, since the meaning of Jordan in Latin is “their descent,” and since as the river flows into the Dead Sea, it loses its praiseworthy waters. After [the water of the river] Jordan was divided,

¹⁰Lk 1:17. ¹¹Mt 17:12. ¹²Mt 17:13. ¹³Mal 4:5-6. ¹⁴Jn 1:1. ¹⁵ANF 9:476. ¹⁶See Gen 5:6-18. ¹⁷See Gen 5:24.

Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry land; by his rising from the dead the Savior bestowed on his faithful ones the hope of rising too. After they had crossed over the river Jordan, Elijah gave Elisha the option of asking for what he wanted. The Lord too, after the glory of his resurrection had been fulfilled, implanted in his disciples a fuller comprehension of what he had promised previously, that “whatever you ask in my name, I will do [for you].”¹⁸ Elisha asked that the spirit of Elijah might become double in him. The disciples, thoroughly instructed by the Lord, desired to receive the promised gift of the Spirit, which would make them capable of preaching not only to the single nation of Judah, which he himself taught when he was present in the flesh, but to all countries throughout the globe as well. Did he not pledge the double grace of his Spirit when he said, “A person who believes in me will himself also do the works that I do, and he will do even greater ones than these”? As Elijah and Elisha were conversing together, a chariot with fiery horses suddenly snatched Elijah as if into heaven. By the chariot and fiery horses we are to understand the angelic powers, of whom it is written, “He makes the angels his spirits and his ministers a burning fire”¹⁹ (Elijah, being an ordinary human being, had need of them to be raised up from the earth). The Lord too was suddenly taken up as he was speaking with his apostles and as they were looking on; although he was not assisted by the help of angels, he was served by an angelic band of companions. He was truly assumed into heaven with the angels also bearing witness to it, for they said [to the apostles], “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven.”²⁰ When Elijah was raised up to the heavens, he let the cloak with which he had been clothed fall to Elisha. When our Lord ascended into heaven, he

left the mysteries of the humanity he had assumed to his disciples, to the entire church in fact, so that it could be sanctified by them and warmed by the power of his love. Elisha took up Elijah’s cloak and struck the waters of the river Jordan with it; and when he called on the God of Elijah, [the waters] were divided, and he crossed over. The apostles and the entire church took up the sacraments of their Redeemer that had been instituted through the apostles, so that, spiritually guided by them and cleansed and consecrated by them, they too learned to overcome death’s assaults by calling on the name of God the Father and to cross over to undying life, spurning the obstacles of death. *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS* 2.15.²¹

ELIJAH WAS RELIEVED OF BODILY WEIGHT BY FASTING. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS: A burdened stomach drags down the heart toward vices and depresses the mind to keep it unable to experience heavenly piety. Scripture tells us, “The corruptible body is a load on the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses on many things.”²² Hence, the Lord said, too, “Take heed lest your hearts be overburdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness.”²³ Therefore, the stomach should be relieved by the tempering influence of a fast, so that the mind can be unburdened and attend to higher things, rise to virtues and like a winged bird fly in its entirety to the very Author of piety. The case of Elijah proves this. Relieved of bodily weight by continuing that fast that the Lord arranged, he flew to heaven as victor over death. *SERMON* 2.²⁴

¹⁸Jn 15:16. ¹⁹Ps 104:4 (103:4 LXX, Vg). ²⁰Acts 1:11. ²¹CS 111:144-47. ²²Wis 9:15. ²³Lk 21:34. ²⁴FC 17:30-31.



ELISHA IS ACKNOWLEDGED
TO BE ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR
2 KINGS 2:15-25

OVERVIEW: Not the soul but the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and Elijah and John the Baptist did not have the same soul but the same spirit (ORIGEN). The city, whose water is purified by Elisha, represents the church that, because of the bad condition of the waters before the coming of Christ, was unable to conceive children for God in its sterility (MAXIMUS). The bitter spring signifies Adam, while the new vessel with salt, which was thrown into the bitter waters by Elisha, is the incarnate Word (CAESARIUS). Elisha, even though he was upset by the rudeness of the children, was much more enraged by the craftiness and the iniquities of their parents, and he corrected both by a harsh and terrible sentence (EPHREM). As under Elisha forty-two boys were killed by two bears, so

forty-two years after the passion of our Lord two bears came, Vespasian and Titus, and besieged and destroyed Jerusalem (CAESARIUS).

2:15-18 *The Spirit of Elijah*

THE SPIRIT, NOT THE SOUL, OF ELIJAH RESTS ON ELISHA. ORIGEN: I have thought it necessary to dwell some time on the examination of the doctrine of transmigration, because of the suspicion of some who suppose that the soul under consideration was the same in Elijah and in John, being called in the former case Elijah and in the second case John; and that, not apart from God, had he been called John, as is plain from the saying of the angel who appeared to Zacharias, "Fear

not, Zacharias, for your supplication is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John";¹ and from the fact that Zacharias regained his speech after he had written in the tablet, that he who had been born should be called John."² But if it were the soul of Elijah, then, when he was begotten a second time, he should have been called Elijah; or for the change of name some reason should have been assigned, as in the case of Abram and Abraham, Sarah and Sarai, Jacob and Israel, Simon and Peter. And yet not even thus would their argument in the case be tenable; for . . . the changes of name took place in one and the same life. But someone might ask, if the soul of Elijah was not first in the Tishbite and second in John, what might that be in both which the Savior called Elijah? And I say that Gabriel in his words to Zacharias suggested what the substance was in Elijah and John that was the same; for he says, "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; and he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah."³ For, observe, he did not say in the soul of Elijah, in which case the doctrine might have some ground, but "in the spirit and power of Elijah." For the Scripture well knows the distinction spirit and soul, as, "May God sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ";⁴ and the passage, "Bless the Lord, you spirits and souls of the righteous"⁵ as it stands in the book of Daniel, according to the Septuagint, represents the difference between spirit and soul. Elijah, therefore, was not called John because of the soul but because of the spirit and the power, which in no way conflicts with the teaching of the church, though they were formerly in Elijah and afterwards in John; and "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,"⁶ but the souls of the prophets are not subject to the prophets, and "the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha." COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 13.2.⁷

A FIGURE OF THE CHURCH TO BE CLEANSED BY CHRIST. MAXIMUS OF TURIN: What should we say about the merits of Elisha? His first praiseworthy deed was his wish to surpass his father in grace, expressed when he asked that more grace be given to him than he knew was found in him who possessed such grace. To be sure, he was greedy to make such a request, but worthy to receive merit. Because Elisha demanded more from his father than he had, his father enabled him to excel in his merits more than he would have otherwise been able to do. When this Elisha came to Jericho after the ascension of his master and was asked by the citizens to remain with them in the city, they said to him: "The location of this city is good, but the water is bad, even causing sterility." Then Elisha ordered them to give him a clay vessel, and arriving at the source of the waters, he threw the salt kept in the vessel onto the waters and said: "This is what the Lord says: I have healed the waters. No longer will anyone die from them or become sterile. And the waters remain healed to this very day." Consider then how great the merits of Elisha are! His first stay in the children's city results in great fruitfulness, for when he removes the sterility of the waters, he enables the succession of heirs. By performing this one deed, he did not merely heal a single person or offer medicine to the house of one person, but restored the people of the entire city. If he had performed this act later, the sterility would have taken its course and the city would have remained without inhabitants once the entire population grew old. So when Elisha healed the waters he also healed the people. And when he blessed the source of the waters, he showed favor to the source of souls. For just as by his sanctifying act water issued forth from the hidden courses in the earth, so healthy offspring came forth from the hidden organs of the womb. Elisha not only blessed the streams that were still being held in the bowels of the springs, but also

2:19-22 *Water Made Wholesome*

¹Lk 1:13. ²Lk 1:63. ³Lk 1:16-17. ⁴1 Thess 5:23. ⁵Dan 3:86 (Song of the Three Children 5:64 LXX). ⁶1 Cor 14:32. ⁷ANF 9:475.

those that, though still saturated in the damp soil of the earth, would later flow forth little by little. So the Scripture says that Elisha gave his blessing at the source of the water in order that the prophet's blessing might catch the trickling water before the bosom of the spring encompassed it. Since the holy apostle Paul says that "these things were happening to them as a symbol,"⁸ let us look into how this very symbol contains the truth. In other words, let us investigate what the city that suffers from sterility stands for, and what the clay vessel intends to communicate, and finally what it means that scattered salt brings the restoration of health. We read in the writings of the same apostle what is said about the church: "Rejoice, O barren one who does not give birth, break forth and shout you who do not beget children."⁹ Based on this passage, the church is that sterile city, which prior to the arrival of Christ, was not able to produce sons for God while suffering from sterility because of the corruption of the water, that is, the sacrilege of the pagan nations. But when Christ came, assuming a human body as if a fragile vessel, he healed the vices of the waters, that is, "he cut off the sacrileges of the peoples," and at once, the church, which had been sterile, began to be fruitful. SERMON 84.3-4.¹⁰

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BITTER SPRING, THE BOWL AND THE SALT. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Let us see what these facts mean, dearly beloved. Elisha, as I have frequently suggested, is the type of our Lord and Savior. That bitter spring seems to signify Adam, from whom the human race has sprung. Before the coming of the true Elisha, that is, our Lord and Savior, the human race remained in barrenness and bitterness through the sin of the first man. Although that new vessel in which salt was thrown represents a type of the apostles, still we can fittingly accept in it the mystery of the Lord's incarnation. Now salt is put there as wisdom, for we read, "Let all your speech be seasoned with salt."¹¹ Moreover, since Christ is not only "the power of God" but also "the wisdom of God,"¹² the body of Christ like a new vessel was

filled with the salt of divine wisdom when the Word was made flesh. Furthermore, the new vessel with salt was thrown into the bitter waters by Elisha, and they were changed into sweetness and fruitfulness. Similarly, the new vessel, that is, the incarnate Word, was sent by God the Father to recall the human race like bitter flowing waters to sweetness, to lead it to pure charity from evil habits and sterility of good works and to restore it to the fruitfulness of justice. Truly, brothers, does it not seem to you as though the new vessel full of the salt of divine wisdom was put into the water when Christ the Lord went down into the river to be baptized? Then all the waters were changed into sweetness and were sanctified by that new vessel, that is, the body of Christ. As a result, not only were the waters not sterile, but throughout the world by the grace of baptism they have produced a countless number of Christians like abundant fruit and an exceedingly rich harvest.

Although we believe that this truth is fulfilled in things which are seen, still we know that it also takes place spiritually in all people. That the waters signify the people is mentioned in the Apocalypse: "The waters that you saw are peoples and nations."¹³ Moreover, that the vessel with salt that was put in the water represents the apostles is very clearly indicated by our Lord in the Gospel when he says, "You are the salt of the earth."¹⁴ Therefore, by his grace he made new apostles out of old people and filled them with the salt of his teachings and divine wisdom, sending them to the whole world as to the spring of the entire human race, to remove its barrenness and bitterness. Finally, from the time that the salt of divine wisdom is afforded to human hearts, all bitterness of relations or sterility in good works is known to be removed.

Therefore, dearly beloved, as we mentioned above, understand Christ our Lord in blessed Elisha and the human race in that spring. Recognize clearly the malice of the devil, which served

⁸1 Cor 10:6. ⁹Gal 4:27; Is 54:1. ¹⁰Cetedoc 0219a, 84.51. ¹¹Col 4:6.

¹²1 Cor 1:24. ¹³Rev 17:15. ¹⁴Mt 5:13.

the first man in what was bitter and sterile. In that new vessel that was put in the spring full of salt, devoutly think of Christ's teaching seasoned with the salt of divine wisdom and through the apostles directed to the human race. We, too, dearly beloved, without any preceding good merits have received such great goods from the Lord through his generous graces and have merited to be changed from bitterness to sweetness, summoned from barrenness to the fruitfulness of good works. SERMON 126.2-5.¹⁵

2:22-24 Go Away, Baldhead!

REASONS FOR THE PUNISHMENT INFLICTED BY ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!" After Elisha had settled the matters concerning his disciples in Jericho, he moved to his dwelling place in Bethel, and during his journey the facts, which the Scripture places here, happened to him. It seems that the impudence of the children resulted from the teaching of their parents, because they were iniquitous and hostile to Elijah and all his disciples. And we may also think that they had been sent by their masters to repeat what they had learned. The word proclaimed according to Elisha by the disciples of Elijah, their fellow citizens, with regard to the ascension of their master grieved the people of Bethel a great deal. That is why, I suppose, those children did not only mention his baldness but also found further insults, which they said before him to outrage his fame, so that nobody might believe his word, if he repeated in Bethel what he had told and about which he had convinced many people in Jericho. In fact, they had meditated on this evil thought and said, "This is the reason for his coming." Now, Elisha, even though he was upset by the effrontery of the children, was much more enraged by the craftiness and the iniquities of their parents, and he corrected both by a harsh and terrible sentence: he punished the former, so

that they might not add to their iniquity by growing up to adulthood; the latter, so that they might be corrected and cease from their wickedness. He, who had blessed the children of Jericho and benefited them to the highest degree for their faith, because, after seeing that he had divided the Jordan through his word, they had said that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, decreed this bitter sentence against the people of Bethel. Indeed, the people of Bethel did not believe, when they heard from children of prophets who were in their city, the news of the ascension of Elijah.

"Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys." On the day the Lord sent Elijah to anoint Elisha, he said that he would have taken revenge through him on the children of Israel, who had revolted against him, that is, those who escaped from the sword of Hazael¹⁶ and Jehu,¹⁷ Elisha would have caused to perish. This is, therefore, the beginning of the punishment: the word pronounced against the iniquitous began to be fulfilled. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 2.20.¹⁸

A FIGURE OF THE AMENDMENT OF THE JEWS AFTER CHRIST'S PASSION. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Now according to the letter, dearly beloved, we are to believe, as we mentioned above, that blessed Elisha was aroused with God's zeal to correct the people, rather than moved by unwholesome anger, when he permitted the Jewish children to be torn to pieces. His purpose was not revenge but their amendment, and in this fact, too, the passion of our Lord and Savior was plainly prefigured. Just as those undisciplined children shouted to blessed Elisha, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead," so at the time of the passion the insane Jews with impious words shouted to Christ the true Elisha, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"¹⁹ What does "Go up, you baldhead" mean except: Ascend the cross on the

¹⁵FC 47:217-18*. ¹⁶See 2 Kings 10:32-33; 13:1-22. ¹⁷See 2 Kings 9:1-10:34. ¹⁸ESOO 1:521-22. ¹⁹Lk 23:21.

site of Calvary? Notice further, brothers, that just as under Elisha forty-two boys were killed, so forty-two years after the passion of our Lord two bears came, Vespasian and Titus, and besieged Jerusalem. Also consider, brothers, that the siege of Jerusalem took place on the Paschal solemnity. Thus, by the just judgment of God the Jews who had assembled from all the provinces suffered the punishment they deserved, on the very days on which they had hung the true Elisha, our Lord and Savior, on the cross. Indeed, at that time, that is, in the forty-second year after the passion of our Lord, the Jews as if driven by the hand of God assembled in Jerusalem according to their custom to celebrate the Passover. We read in history that three million Jews were then gathered in Jerusalem; eleven hundred thousand of them are read to have been destroyed by the sword of hun-

ger, and one hundred thousand young men were led to Rome in triumph. For two years that city was besieged, and so great was the number of the dead who were cast out of the city that their bodies equaled the height of the walls. This destruction was prefigured by those two bears that are said to have torn to pieces forty-two boys for deriding blessed Elisha. Then was fulfilled what the prophet had said, "The boar from the forest lays it waste, and the beasts of the field feed on it,"²⁰ for as was indicated, after forty-two years that wicked nation received what it deserved from the two bears, Vespasian and Titus. SERMON 127.2.²¹

²⁰Ps 80:13 (79:14 LXX, Vg). ²¹FC 47:221-22.





ELISHA PROVIDES JEHORAM'S
ARMY WITH WATER
2 KINGS 3:1-20

OVERVIEW: Jehoram marches against Mesha, king of Moab, because he had refused to pay his tribute to the kings of Israel. The musical instrument and the player required by Elisha are means to assert the power of God against idolatry. As in the miracle of Elisha water flowed to fill the wadi, so after Christ's passion the sources were immediately opened and rivers of living water flowed on the nations of the Gentiles (EPHREM).

3:9-14 No Water for the Army

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL, JUDAH AND EDMOM CONSULT ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: After the death of Ahab, his son Ahaziah died too, and since he had no children, his brother Jehoram took his place. Therefore the Scripture reports that he moved with his army against the king of Moab. He went to war because Mesha, king of Moab, had refused to pay his tribute to the kings of Israel and had not paid both Hezekiah and Jehoram, that is, [he had not paid] one hundred thousand fat lambs and one hundred thousand unshorn rams. The

word *noqdo*,¹ which the Scripture mentions here, derives from Hebrew and can be translated as "king of the shepherds of rams," that is, he reared huge herds of them. So Jehoram, who had resolved to assert the rights that his brother had renounced, summoned the kings of the inhabitants of Judea and Edom and marched with them through the territories of the children of Moab. But they found themselves on a barren and arid land, and they had no water for the army. The three kings went to see Elisha, following the advice of righteous Jehoshaphat, and implored him to rescue the suffering people, who were overwhelmed with thirst. The prophet protested and harshly reproached Jehoram but was pleased with Jehoshaphat and gave him hope of salvation. At the same time, he promised that through his mediation, he and his companions would soon obtain the victory through the agency of the Lord. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3.9.²

¹2 Kings 3:4 (Peshitta), literally, "herdsman, sheepmaster." ²ESOO 1:523-24.

3:15 *Get Me a Musician*

AN INSTRUMENT TO ASSERT GOD'S POWER.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The Scripture mentions a musical instrument that produces sounds, or a harp, as the Hebrew says,³ so that, thanks to the sound of its music, all the soldiers might be assembled around it and might understand when they were summoned to destroy their enemies, and there might be evident testimonies of [Elisha's] words. In this way, when the miracle occurred, they could not attribute it to Baal or the idols they worshiped. Indeed, there were numerous idolaters in the army. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3.15.⁴

3:16 *I Will Make This Wadi Full of Pools*

A TYPE OF THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "The harpist played, and the water flowed to the bed of the streams." Through this figure the voice of Christ is conveniently foreshadowed, because he kept the harp of the spirit on the cross. Indeed, our

Lord cried twice and gave up his spirit with a loud voice.⁵ And immediately the pagan centurion gave glory to the Lord,⁶ and in this manner the conversion of the Gentiles was clearly highlighted. After the Christ had brought to perfection on the wood of the cross the new glory of our Savior,⁷ the sources were immediately opened and rivers of living water flowed on the nations of the Gentiles, who are symbolized by the "wadi," as Jesus had said before his passion: "Let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"⁸ In this way the word of the prophet might be fulfilled: He who has played the harp will play for the Gentiles in the name of the Lord.⁹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3.16.¹⁰

³Ephrem is referring to a lost Hebrew version of 2 Kings, which is closer to the translation of LXX. MT reads, "Get me a musician"; LXX, "Get me a harper"; Peshitta, *naqusho*, "musician, player of musical instruments." ⁴ESOO 1:524. ⁵See Mt 27:46-50; Mk 15:34-37. ⁶See Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39. ⁷In this sentence it can be noticed how this text is partly influenced by Nestorianism in its sharp distinction of the two persons of the Christ and the person of the Savior. ⁸Jn 7:37-38. ⁹See Ps 108:3 (107:4 LXX). ¹⁰ESOO 1:524.



THE SACRIFICE OF THE KING OF MOAB

2 KINGS 3:21-27

OVERVIEW: The Moabites erroneously believed that what they saw flowing in the stream was the blood from the carnage of battle. The Moabites came unarmed to plunder the camp of the Israelites but ran away as soon as they saw the army of the enemies appear. The king of Moab offers his firstborn child in sacrifice and wants the Hebrews to see the sacrifice he is making to the God of Abraham according to the teaching of Abraham. God took pity on the king of Moab, since it was in affliction that he made his sacrifice (EPHREM).

3:22-23 *Water Red as Blood*

THE MOABITES' MISLEADING IMPRESSIONS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "The kings fought together and killed one another." After the water had come and the armies of Jehoshaphat and his allied kings had drunk their fill, the Moabites, who had seen that the water was red, said this. But they were wrong, because the color of the water had become red on account of the coming of the sun that oppressed them. When they saw the stream flow, they did not think that water was actually flowing in it, because rain had not fallen in all those days. Consequently they took for granted that no source of water could exist in that dried and scorched region. Therefore they thought that the gods of their homeland had caused the kings and their armies to attack and destroy one another. Indeed, they were easily inclined to religious dissensions. They believed that what they saw flowing in the stream was the blood from the carnage of battle. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3.25.¹

3:24 *The Israelites Attacked the Moabites*

THE MOABITES, COMING UNARMED TO PLUN-

DER ISRAEL, ARE DEFEATED. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: When the Moabites came to plunder the camp, they convinced themselves that its ruins had been abandoned by their guards. Instead, Jehoshaphat and the kings with him suddenly rose up with drawn swords when they realized that their enemies were approaching and almost upon them. But the Moabites did not persist in their attack. They turned around and ran away because they had come unarmed. They had not come to fight, but to plunder. Therefore they² scattered the army of their enemies by simply turning their weapons against them. Then they destroyed and laid waste the land bordering [the Moabites]. And finally, like an overflowing stream, they rushed in to attack Moab, cutting down their trees according to Elisha's order, stopping up the flowing springs, destroying the villages, and demolishing all their houses until they brought down their walls. They surrounded and demolished their fortresses, that is, knocked down the walls and scattered the rubble of the demolition. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3.23.³

3:26-27 *His Firstborn Son as a Burnt Offering*

AN OFFERING TO THE GOD OF ABRAHAM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Therefore Meshah, who had lost all his hope in his armies, made an about-face to ask the gods for help, because he had seen that no human being could help him. Certain wise men of his country said to him that it was necessary to implore the mercy of the God of Israel by means of an extraordinary sacrifice, for exactly the same reason which Abraham, the father of

¹ESOO 1:524-25. ²That is, the army of Israel. ³ESOO 1:525.

the Israelites, had made his offering, which had been quite pleasing to God, according to the tradition that is generally renowned among the Canaanites.⁴ But the power and the strength of God had already been recognized by all with great admiration for what he had done before all the Moabites. Indeed, no one but him had made the water flow on his people in the desert of Edom, and they had never heard of or known another God who granted his worshipers greater benefits. Therefore the king, who could not deny the miracle that he had seen with his own eyes, did not want to be deprived of sufficient aid in the difficulties that encircled him. He was confirmed [in his hope] and abandoned the worship of idols by taking refuge in the powerful God who had created a new sea in the desert. Therefore he was invited by the word of the wise men and nobles of Moab to make a great sacrifice and to offer his firstborn child, the pillar of his house and the hope of his kingdom, on the city walls, before the armies that besieged him. He wanted the Hebrew to see the sacrifice he was about to make to the God of Abraham according to the teaching of Abraham.

And then the wrath against the Israelites increased, because the calamities, which the Scripture accurately relates after these events, happened to them again. They had seen how God protected them, and the abundance of water that he had made miraculously flow for them and the retreat of their enemies before them. Nevertheless, they persisted in their dishonor, and their hearts were still attached to their calf. ON THE

SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 3:25-27.⁵

WHY DID GOD ACCEPT THE OFFERING?

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: People imitate those who do good deeds, therefore, not out of love for these good deeds but because of their usefulness. For Balaam also flattered [God], in that he had seven altars built because he had heard concerning these ancient ones that, with regard to the sacrifices they had offered to him, their prayers were accepted.⁶ The king of Moab took note of Jephthah. But, because it was his firstborn and a human being rather than an animal that he killed, God took pity on him, since it was in affliction that he did it and not through love. In the case of Jephthah, if it had been one of his servants who had been first to encounter him, he would have killed him. But, in order that people would not engage in the sacrifice of their fellow human beings, he caused his own daughter to meet him, so that others would be afraid, lest they offer human beings by vow to God.⁷ COMMENTARY ON TATIAN'S DIATESSARON 10.3.⁸

⁴See Gen 22:1-18. ⁵ESOO 1:525-26. ⁶See Num 22:2-24:25. ⁷See Judg 11:29-40. ⁸ECTD 166. Ephrem discusses how the king of Moab decided to sacrifice his firstborn son. He implies that the king had learned both from Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and from the vow made by Jephthah when Jephthah had promised to kill the first thing which appeared to him when he returned home if he was victorious in battle. Jephthah's daughter ran to meet her father and one assumes he put her to death to fulfill the rash vow he made. Ephrem's interpretation demonstrates the difficulties in struggling to interpret the final verse of 2 Kings 3 where God allows the king of Moab to prevail over Israel because of the supreme sacrifice he made in sacrificing his oldest son.

ELISHA'S MIRACLE OF THE OIL

2 KINGS 4:1-7

OVERVIEW: The woman who asked for the help of Elisha was the widow of Obadiah, treasurer of Ahab and Elijah's secret disciple, who had protected and fed one hundred prophets persecuted by Jezebel (EPHREM). The widow signifies the church, which was a captive because the Redeemer had not yet come; but after Christ our Lord, the true Redeemer, visited the widow, he freed her from all debts (CAESARIUS). The empty vessels symbolize the saints, who have rejected any worldly passion and are filled with the fat of the holy ointment and the oil of happiness (EPHREM). The neighbors are a figure of the Gentiles, who offered empty vessels in order that they might deserve to receive the oil of mercy. The nature of holy love and true charity is such that it increases by being spent, and the more it is paid out to others, the more abundantly it is accumulated in oneself (CAESARIUS).

4:1 The Wife of a Member of the Company of Prophets

OBADIAH'S WIFE CALLS FOR THE HELP OF ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: It is said that this woman was the wife of Obadiah, the treasurer of Ahab and a secret disciple of Elijah, who had taken one hundred prophets away from the rage of Jezebel and had fed them when they were hungry. It seems that in this affair he was entrusted with the gold of the royal house, but after his death his wife was left with a huge debt to be paid to his masters. But since she could not pay, and

the taxmen of the king pressed her and wanted to sell her children, the mother implored Elisha, because she knew he was the father of orphans and the defender of widows,¹ and she thought he would have not drawn back his hands [when asked to help] the sons of a righteous man who had served his companions the prophets. Among other things, the taxmen of the king, who had lent money to Obadiah, in justice, according to the law of the Hebrews, had moved against his children; and this is what our Lord suggested to us in the parable of the creditor king who ordered the children to be sold for the debt of their father, even though he was still alive and only needed some time to pay his debt.² ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.1.³

THE WIDOW TYPIFIED THE CHURCH. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Just as we said concerning blessed Elijah that he typified our Lord and Savior, dearly beloved, so we assert with confidence and assurance that holy Elisha was an image of our Savior. As you heard in the sacred lesson, a certain widow cried to blessed Elisha, beseeching him with tearful voice, "My husband is dead, and behold, the creditors are come and want to take away my sons." Then he asked her what she had in the house. The woman replied, "As the Lord lives, I have nothing but a little oil to anoint me." Then Elisha said, "Borrow vessels of your neighbors, and pour out of that oil into all the vessels,

¹See Ps 68:5 (67:6 LXX). ²See Mt 18:25. ³ESOO 1:526.

and when the vessels are full, sell, and pay your creditors.” This widow typified the church, beloved brothers, just like the one who merited to receive blessed Elijah. This widow, that is, the church, had contracted a heavy debt of sins, not of material substance. She had a debt, and she endured a most cruel creditor, because she had made herself subject to the devil by many sins. Thus, indeed, the prophet foretold, “It was for your sins that you were sold, for your crimes that your mother was dismissed.”⁴ For this reason the widow was held captive for such a heavy debt. She was a captive because the Redeemer had not yet come, but after Christ our Lord the true Redeemer visited the widow, he freed her from all debts. Now let us see how that widow was freed—how, except by an increase of oil? In the oil we understand mercy. Notice, brothers: the oil failed, and the debt increased; the oil was increased, and the debt disappeared. Avarice had grown, and charity was lost; charity returned, and iniquity perished. Thus, at the coming of the true Elisha, Christ our Lord, the widow or the church was freed from the debt of sin by an increase of oil, that is, by the gift of grace and mercy or the richness of charity. SERMON 128.1.⁵

4:2-7 *Sell the Oil and Pay Your Debts*

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE MIRACLE OF THE OIL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Here the Scripture relates the other miracle that Elisha performed in order to help the widow. He made flow into the vessels an amount of oil sufficient to pay the debt of her husband and abundantly multiplied it for the nourishment of her children.

From the symbolic point of view three aspects must be observed here: first of all it is said that the widow filled the vessels of her neighbors with an oil that gushed out in her house thanks to a gift of God, because the holy church resembles the widow. In fact, she was not abandoned when her husband ascended to heaven, but she filled the hearts of the Gentiles with the oil of the knowledge of salvation which has multiplied and

become abundant in her house thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Gentiles, who were separated before, after being filled with that fat oil, glorified with their lips of cheerfulness that God whom they had ignored before.

In the second place, the widow asked for empty vessels and filled with oil those that her children brought to her, both small and large vessels. This signifies the saints who have rejected any worldly passion and are filled with the fat of the holy ointment and the oil of happiness. So their mother, that is, the grace of God gives oil to each of them, both to the great and the little. For God gives his gifts as he likes, so that everything may be ours,⁶ as the apostle says: “We must grow up in Christ according to his gift.”⁷ But those who are weighed down by their intemperance, drunkenness and worldly interests, those who, as the apostle says, walk in the vanity of their spirit and are obscured in their intelligence, those who have lost their hope and have given themselves to the practice of every sort of paganism and covetousness⁸ are deprived of this grace. In fact, they do not desire this oil, and if they desire it, they prepare no vessel to be filled with it. In the third place, the rest of the oil, which the dead husband had left to his widow, signifies the mercy that [Christ] had shown to the saints while he lived on earth. Solomon says that he who associates himself with the Lord has mercy for the poor, and [the Lord] will reward him according to his works.⁹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.3.¹⁰

THE NEIGHBORS REPRESENT THE GENTILES. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Let us now consider what blessed Elisha said to her: “Borrow many vessels of your neighbors and your friends, shut your door, and pour out of that oil into the vessels of your neighbors.” Who were those neighbors, except the Gentiles? Although that widow typified the church, she was still a widow, and so

⁴Is 50:1. ⁵FC 47:223-24*. ⁶See 1 Cor 3:21-22. ⁷Eph 4:15. ⁸See Eph 4:17-19; Rom 1:21-24. ⁹See Prov 19:17. ¹⁰ESOO 1:526-27.

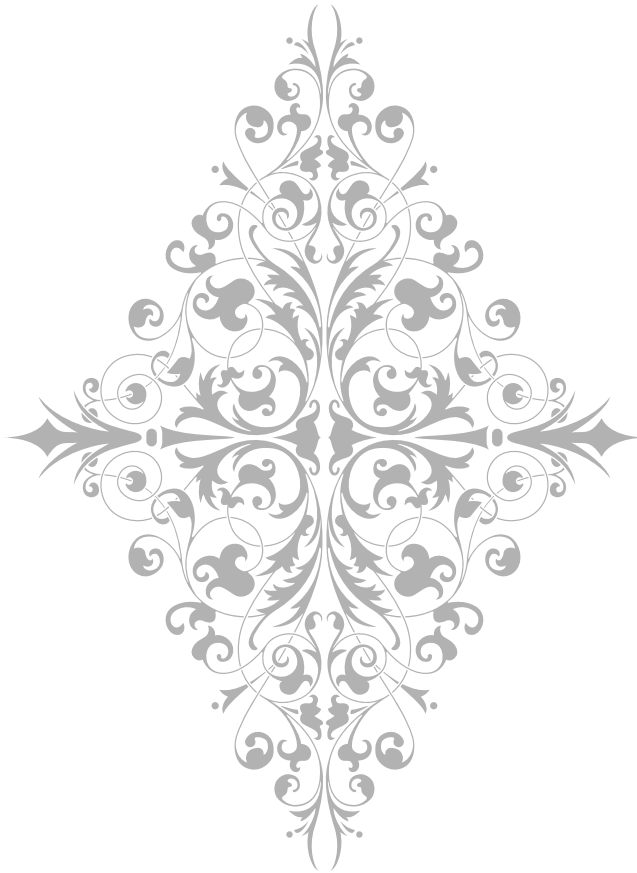
those neighbors from whom she borrowed vessels prefigured the Gentiles. They offered empty vessels in order that they might merit to receive the oil of mercy, because before obtaining the gift of grace all the Gentiles are known to have been without faith, charity and all good works. Finally, all who are offered to the church to receive salutary baptism receive the chrism and oil of benediction, so that they may no longer merit to be empty vessels but full of God as his temples. SERMON 128.2.¹¹

THE NATURE OF HOLY LOVE AND TRUE CHARITY. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Notice, dearly beloved: as long as that widow had oil in her own vessel, it was not enough for her, and she could not pay her debt. It is true, brothers. If a person loves only himself, he does not suffice for himself, and he does not pay the debt of his sins; but when he begins to pour out the oil of charity on all his friends and neighbors and in fact on all people, then he is able to suffice for himself and can free himself from all debts. Truly brothers, such is the nature of holy love and true charity that it increases by being spent, and the more it is paid out to others, the more abundantly it is accumulated in oneself. If you want to give bodily food to

the needy, at present you cannot keep what you have given him; but if you offer the bread of charity to one hundred people, it still remains whole. Even if you give it to a thousand, it stays undiminished for you. In fact, if you want to lavish it on the whole world, you will still lose nothing of it; or rather, not only does it not increase, but also the gain of all those on whom you bestowed it increases manifold for you. For example, you had a single loaf of charity; if you had given it to no one you would have it alone, but if you gave it to a thousand you would have acquired a thousand loaves. So great is the possession of charity that it remains entire for each individual and still can be undiminished for them all. Therefore, if you have given to others, you have lost nothing at all; or rather, not only did you not lose anything but also, as I already said, whatever you have conferred on others you have acquired a hundredfold. For this reason, beloved brothers, realize that the widow was freed from her creditors by nothing else than oil; know also that the Catholic church has been freed from its offenses by no other means than the oil of God's mercy. SERMON 128.3.¹²

¹¹FC 47:224. ¹²FC 47:224-25.





THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN
AND HER DEAD CHILD
2 KINGS 4:8-37

OVERVIEW: The Shunammite woman, after hearing the words of her fellow citizens about Elisha and seeing him in her house, understands the advantages of his stay at her place and has a room built for him. Elisha promises the Shunammite woman the blessing of an heir, even though she had not asked for it (EPHREM). Just as the Shunammite woman bore a son at the prayer of Elisha, so the church bore the Christian people when Christ came to it (CAESARIUS). Elisha was profoundly touched by the words of the woman, because he did not suffer so much for the death of the child as for the mockeries he would have been obliged to bear on the part of the prophets of Baal (EPHREM). Elisha, who later came in person to revive the child, was a type of our Lord who had sent his servant ahead of him with a staff that represents the Law (AUGUSTINE). The servant typified Moses, whom God sent into Egypt with a staff: without Christ, Moses could scourge the people with the staff, but he could not free or revive them from original or actual sin (CAESARIUS). Elisha did not raise the child by the mere imposition of the staff but raised him one hour later by adding certain ceremonies to the imposition of the staff, and in that manner he accomplished the type of the Providence of the Word of God (EPHREM). Elisha drew himself together, so that he might fit the little child who lay dead, and what Elisha prefigured in the case of the boy, Christ fulfilled in the entire human race (CAESARIUS, GREGORY THE GREAT). If instead of contracting, Elisha had expanded himself, the widow's son would not have been restored to life; and in the same manner, Christ made himself less in order to give life (JEROME). The prophet did not cause the boy to come back to life by giving him a soul; rather, because he loved him, he got God to do this miracle for him (AUGUSTINE).

4:8-10 A Small Chamber for Elisha

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN HAS A ROOM BUILT FOR ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: It happened, in the next days, that Elisha arrived at

Shunem and passed it. After the ascension of Elijah, Elisha took his place and was appointed as the chief and prefect of the children of the prophets. Duty to his calling obligated him to visit their lodgings in Bethel and Jericho, as well as those along the Jordan. In fact, since the straight line of his route compelled him to pass through the village of Shunem, now and then he made a detour to the house of the Shunammite, because she was an admirable woman. And she, after hearing the words of her fellow citizens about him and seeing him in her house, understood the advantages of his stay at her place. Therefore she asked her husband to build a high room, solitary and separated from the rest of the people of the house. Indeed, she said that it was not proper for a holy prophet to live in an impure place. She called him holy because of his virginity. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.8.¹

4:16 You Shall Embrace a Son

ELISHA'S GRATITUDE. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elisha said to the Shunammite woman, "At this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son." He wanted to pay his debt for her service and pious assistance to him. Since she was blessed with the goods of the Law but was deprived of children, even though the Law also promised children to those who observed it, she ardently desired to have an heir for those goods. So Elisha promised the Shunammite woman this blessing, even though she had not asked for it. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.16.²

PREFIGURING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: We have heard that after this blessed Elisha passed by Shunem, where a certain woman received him and said to her husband, "I perceive that this is a man of God: let us make him a chamber and put a bed in it for him, and a table, and a stool and a candlestick, that when he comes, he may abide there." Now, that

¹ESOO 1:527-28. ²ESOO 1:528.

woman was sterile, but at the prayer of Elisha she bore a son. So, too, the church was sterile before the coming of Christ; but just as that other bore a son at the prayer of Elisha, so the church bore the Christian people when Christ came to it. However, the son of that woman died during the absence of Elisha; thus also, the church's son, that is, the Gentiles, died through sin before Christ's advent. When Elisha came down from the mountain, the widow's son was revived; and when Christ came down from heaven, the church's son or the Gentiles were restored to life. SERMON 128.6.³

4:17-29 *The Shunammite's Son Dies*

REPROACHES OF THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "The woman conceived and bore a son at that season, in due time, as Elisha had declared to her," but after a few years, the child died. His mother placed the corpse on the bed of the prophet in the high room of her house and then rushed to meet him, blessed him and knelt down at his feet, not in order to make a request but to rebuke him. She said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not mislead your servant?'" ["Why did you take me and throw me into the pangs of Eve, when I was free of them, and why did you make death, against which I had risen and for which I had no consideration, reign over me? Indeed, thanks to my unlucky sterility I had been away from those two evils.⁴ Because of my fear of death I had not asked you for children, and because of the mockeries of the pagans, among whom I live, I did not desire them. So I have said to you: Do not ask that children be given to me."] ⁵

From her lips she gave reproaches, while with her hands she implored him and, catching hold of his feet, besieged him. She swore she would not leave him until he had given her his grace and had brought back to life her son, which death had grasped. So Elisha was profoundly touched by the words of the woman. [Because he did not suffer so much for the death of the child as for the

mockeries he would have been obliged to bear on the part of the prophets of Baal.]⁶

When he saw her suffering and anguish, he immediately sent his disciple, entrusting him with his staff, and told him to lay it on the dead child and to inform him about the results of his ministry. He wanted the resurrection of the dead to happen by means of the staff of the master and the hands of the disciple, if his servant was sufficient for the miracle. If that were not sufficient, he would blame himself, because he had outraged with his laziness the coat of arms of the house of MOSES. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.17.⁷

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE STAFF AND THE SERVANT. AUGUSTINE: There is another representation of the same truth: Elisha's action in first dispatching his servant with his staff to raise the dead child. The son of the woman who had given Elisha hospitality had died; the news was brought to Elisha, and he sent his servant with the staff. "Go," he told him, "lay the staff on the dead child." Was the prophet unsure what to do? The servant went on ahead and placed the staff on the corpse; but the dead child did not revive. "If a law capable of giving life had been granted to us, then of course righteousness would have been obtainable through the law."⁸ The law sent through a servant did not bring life. But Elisha, who had sent his staff with his servant, was to follow later himself and bring the child to life. After hearing that the child had not revived, Elisha came in person; he was a type of our Lord, who had sent his servant ahead of him with a staff that represents the Law. He came to the dead child lying there and placed his body over him. But the dead person was an infant and Elisha a grown man, so he contracted

³FC 47:226-27. ⁴The pangs of birth and death. ⁵The section in brackets has been translated from the Armenian version of Ephrem's commentary on 1-2 Kings. In the Armenian text (published in Venice in 1836 by the Mekitariste Fathers) we often find passages that perfectly integrate the Syriac text with extremely interesting details: Ephraem Syrus, *Srboyn Ep'remi Matenagrowth'iwunk'*, vol. I, Venezia 1836, p. 453. ⁶Ephraem Syrus, *Srboyn Ep'remi Matenagrowth'iwunk'*, vol. I, Venezia 1836, p. 453. ⁷ESOO 1:528. ⁸Gal 3:21.

his adult stature and somehow curtailed it, making himself like a child so that he matched the corpse in size. The dead child arose when the living man had fitted himself to him; the Lord accomplished what the staff had failed to do; grace achieved what the Law could not. EXPOSITION ON PSALM 70 (EXPOSITION 1).19.⁹

A CROSS WITHOUT CHRIST HAS NO POWER.

CAESARIUS OF ARLES: After the death of her son, that woman went out and prostrated herself at the feet of holy Elisha, but the blessed man gave his staff to his servant and said to him, "Go, and lay my staff on the face of the child. If anyone salutes you, do not return the greeting." At this point, brothers, see to it that no wicked thought overtake anyone by saying that blessed Elisha wanted to practice fortune telling and that for this reason he commanded the boy not to return the greeting if anyone should salute him on the way. We read this frequently in Scripture, but it is said for the sake of speed and is not a command of something superfluous or a wicked practice. It means, in effect: Walk so quickly that you may not presume to busy yourself on the way or slow yourself with gossip. Therefore, the servant departed and laid the staff on the face of the child, but the boy did not rise at all. That servant typified blessed Moses, whom God sent into Egypt with a staff; without Christ, Moses could scourge the people with the staff, but he could not free or revive them from original or actual sin. As the apostle says, "For the law brought nothing to perfection."¹⁰ It was necessary that he who had sent the staff should himself come down. The staff without Elisha availed nothing, because the cross without Christ had no power. EXPOSITION 1 OF PSALM 70.19.¹¹

4:30-37 Take Your Son

ELISHA RAISES THE DEAD CHILD. EPHREM

THE SYRIAN: "Then the mother of the child said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave without you.'" Now, since Elisha had

stayed at home and had sent his disciple, the mother of the [dead] child pressed him to aid her personally. Elisha had mercy on her grief, which was great, and set out to accompany her to the village of Shunem. Gehazi, his disciple, had laid the staff on the child at the time fixed by his master but had not raised him; that is, the resurrection of the dead child had not followed the application of the staff, because Gehazi was a covetous man and was not worthy of being mentioned. Elisha did not raise the child by the mere imposition of the staff either but raised him one hour later by adding certain ceremonies to the imposition of the staff. And in that manner he accomplished the type of the Providence of the Word of God, who came to raise Adam after he had been condemned to death. For he knew that the staff of the prophet represented the wood of the cross. In fact, the salvation of the world was not in the Law, which is only the shadow and the figure of the goods to come,¹² and the dead child was not raised by the application of the staff. Therefore, when the prophet set out to accomplish the resurrection, he diminished his size, lowered his height and adjusted himself to the dimension of the child.

Immediately [the child's] dead flesh became warm. In this figure the incarnation of the only One was represented, as well as the beginning of our salvation, because it was necessary that the Son of God "was made a little lower than the angels"¹³ in order to be included in a womb of flesh and to be incarnated, so that he might give life to the flesh through the Spirit. With regard to the fact that the prophet walked back and forth in the house of the dead child, it prefigures the times in which Jesus Christ entered and went out of the houses of humankind and lived with them. Finally the prophet came back and adjusted himself again to the size of the child, and his body covered his body; at that time the dead child was resurrected.

⁹WSA 3 17:433-34. ¹⁰Heb 7:19. ¹¹FC 47:227*. Caesarius here makes an allusion to Christ and his cross, symbolized by the staff. ¹²See Heb 10:1. ¹³Heb 2:9.

Our Lord accomplished this figure and brought it to perfection, when, still alive, he adjusted his holy limbs to the cross. And after his death he again adjusted his dead body in the tomb to the size of the dead Adam. And so God, through his great love for us, after we had died for our sins, brought us back to life with Christ. By his grace he saved us and raised us from the dead with him and made us sit with him in heaven through Jesus Christ, as the divine Paul says.¹⁴ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.30-35.¹⁵

CHRIST HUMBLED HIMSELF TO LIFT THE WORLD. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Thus, blessed Elisha came and went up to the chamber, because Christ was to come and ascend the gibbet of the cross. Elisha bent down to revive the child; Christ humbled himself to lift up the world that lay in sin. Elisha further put his eyes on [the child's] eyes, his mouth on his mouth and his hands on his hands. Consider, brothers, how much that man of full age drew himself together, so that he might fit the little child who lay dead; for what Elisha prefigured in the case of the boy, Christ fulfilled in the entire human race. Listen to the apostle say, "He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death."¹⁶ Because we were little children, he made himself small; since we lay dead, the kind physician bent down, for, truly, brothers, no one can lift up one who is lying down if he refuses to bend. In the fact that the boy gasped seven times is shown the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit that was bestowed on the human race at Christ's advent in order to restore it to life. Concerning the Spirit the apostle says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."¹⁷ Our Lord gave the same Spirit to his disciples when he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Truly, in a way he put his mouth on their mouths when he breathed on them and gave them the Spirit. SERMON 128.8.¹⁹

BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE BY THE SPIRIT OF LOVE. GREGORY THE GREAT: Fear had no power to raise us from the death of sin, but the infused

grace of meekness erected us to the seat of life. This is well denoted by Elisha when he raised the child of the Shunammite. He, when he sent his servant with a staff, never restored life to the dead child at all. But, on coming in his own person, spreading himself on the dead body and contracting himself to its limbs, and walking to and fro and breathing seven times into the mouth of the dead body, he forthwith quickened it to the light of new life through the ministering of compassion. For God, the Creator of humankind, as it were grieved for his dead Son, when he beheld us with compassion, killed by the sting of iniquity. And having put forth the terror of the Law by Moses, he, as it were, sent the rod by the servant. But the servant could not raise the dead body with the staff, because, as Paul bears witness, "The law made nothing perfect."²⁰ But when he came in his own person and spread himself in humility on the body, he contracted himself to match the limbs of the dead body to himself. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of humankind; and found in fashion as a man."²¹ . . . He breathes on the dead body seven times, in that by the publishing of the divine gift, he bestows the Spirit of sevenfold grace on those who lie prostrate in the death of sin. And afterwards it is raised up alive, in that the child, whom the rod of terror could not raise up, has been brought back to life by the Spirit of love. MORALS ON THE BOOK OF JOB 9.40.63.²²

A COMPARISON BETWEEN JESUS AND ELISHA. JEROME: "Sing to the Lord." Why? What has he done? Why is there a new song due him? "For he has done wondrous deeds." He performed miracles among the Jews: he cured paralytics; he cleansed lepers; he raised the dead to life. But other prophets had done that too. He changed a few loaves

¹⁴See Eph 2:1-6. ¹⁵ESOO 1:529-30. ¹⁶Phil 2:8. ¹⁷Rom 8:9. ¹⁸Jn 20:22. ¹⁹FC 47:227-28. ²⁰Heb 7:19. ²¹Phil 2:6-7. ²²LF 18:542-43*.

into many and fed a countless multitude. But Elisha did that.²³ What new thing, then, did he do to merit a new song? Would you know what he did that was new? God died as man that humankind might live; the Son of God was crucified that he might lift us up to heaven. "For he has done wondrous deeds." Would you know what wondrous deeds he has done? The son of a widow²⁴ was lying dead in an upper chamber; Elisha came and drew himself together over the child, and he put his mouth on the mouth of the boy, and his hands on his hands and his feet on his feet. If, instead of contracting and decreasing himself, Elisha had expanded and increased himself, the widow's son would not have been restored to life; and so it was, in order to give life, that [Christ] made himself less. Although he was in the form of God, he received the form of humanity; thus did he decrease that through him we might increase. *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 25 (Ps 97[98]).*²⁵

HOW DID ELISHA REVIVE THE DEAD CHILD?

AUGUSTINE: What is the point of the addition you thought you should make to this comparison drawn from the example of blessed Elisha, namely, that he raised a dead boy by breathing into his face?²⁶ Do you really think that the breath of Elisha became the soul of the boy? I would not have thought that you had wandered so far from the truth. If the very same soul, then, that had been taken from the living boy so that he died, was restored to him so that he came back to life, what was the point of your saying that nothing was taken away from Elisha? You imply that we believed that something passed from him into the boy as a result of which the boy was once again alive. But if you said this because he exhaled and still remained whole, what need was there to say this with regard to Elisha raising the dead boy, since you could, in any case, say this of anyone who exhales without raising anyone from the dead? Heaven forbid that you should believe that the breath of Elisha became the soul of the boy when he came back to life! And so, you have certainly spoken without sufficient reflection

when you wanted the only difference between what God first did and what Elisha did to be that God breathed once, while Elisha breathed three times. You did, in fact, say that Elisha breathed into the face of the dead son of that Shunammite woman, just as happened at the first beginnings of our race. "And when the divine power," you said, "had by the breath of the prophet warmed the dead members and restored them to life in their former strength, nothing was taken away from Elisha, though by his breath the dead body received its soul and mind restored to life. The only difference is that the Lord breathed into the man's face and he was alive, while Elisha blew into the face of the dead boy three times."²⁷ Your words make it sound as if it is only the number of breaths that keep you from believing that the prophet did the same thing as God did. This point too must be corrected. There was a great difference between that action of God and this action of Elisha. God breathed the breath of life by which the man became a living soul; Elisha breathed a breath that was neither sentient nor living but symbolic and intended to signify something else. Moreover, the prophet did not cause the boy to come back to life by giving him a soul; rather, because he loved him, he got God to do this. As for your saying that Elisha breathed three times, either your memory—as often happens—or a faulty manuscript has led you astray. What else can I say? You should not look for examples and arguments to bolster your case; you should, rather, correct and change your position. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe, do not say, do not teach that God made the soul, not from nothing but from his own nature. *THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE SOUL 3.5.7.*²⁸

²³See below 2 Kings 4:42-44. ²⁴This detail is not confirmed by the biblical account; it seems that Jerome is confusing the character of the Shunammite woman with the widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7. ²⁵FC 48:197-98. ²⁶Augustine is addressing a young disciple, Vincent Victor, whom he wants to instruct on the nature of the soul by correcting his erroneous beliefs. ²⁷Augustine is quoting from a lost work by Vincent Victor. ²⁸WSA 1 23:519-20.



ELISHA PURIFIES THE FOOD
AND NOURISHES ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE
2 KINGS 4:38-44

OVERVIEW: The steward of the prophets gathered either wild colocynths or squirting cucumbers. Adam gathered bitter fruits as a consequence of his sin, and the Lord changed them into salvation according to divine economy. When Elisha nourished one hundred prophets with a little bit of bread, he prefigured Jesus' miracle of the loaves and the fish (EPHREM).

4:38-40 Gathering Wild Gourds¹

POISONOUS HERBS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: This was the starving steward of the prophets who was forced by the lack of food to go through the fields in order to gather some herbs. And since he could not find the herbs he knew, he gathered those that he did not know and were not edible. And since it is written that he gathered wild colocynths, some² say that he gathered colocynths, others those [herbs] that are called the source of bitterness: with their inside parts, physicians make an effective and purifying medicine. Others

say that perhaps their name comes from the term used by farmers: squirting cucumbers, which have a very bitter taste and resemble a vine. In fact, the Scripture calls a *vine* that plant that the steward found and from which he gathered colocynths. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4:39.³

4:40-41 Bring Some Flour

A TYPE OF CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elisha corrects the nature of the cooked foods with some flour and gives them a new taste. Our Lord did the same according to the [divine] economy, so that he might be imitated, as he said for our exhortation, with the result that we might walk the path of the righteous and the pious, and might rejoice because of the great reward he promised us and might heal the diseases and the anguish and the tribulations that constantly sur-

¹In the Peshitta used by Ephrem, "colocynths." ²Ephrem is referring here to unknown exegetical sources. ³ESOO 1:530.

round us from the beginning of our life. The father of our race, Adam, gathered those [bitter] fruits as a consequence of his sin and proposed and offered them to us in the hour in which he heard [these words] from his Creator: “The ground is cursed because of you; it will bring forth thorns and thistles for you. You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”⁴ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.41.⁵

4:42-44 *Let the People Eat*

THE LOAVES AND THE FISH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Here two miracles are proposed, which

Elisha performed while he was among his disciples. He accomplished the first when he caused death to leave the pot, where, as they said, it had hidden. He performed the second when he nourished one hundred prophets with a little bit of bread. In both miracles he prefigures him who multiplies twice some barley loaves⁶ and nourishes with them “about five thousand men, besides women and children.”⁷ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 4.38.⁸

⁴Gen 3:17-19. ⁵ESOO 1:530-31. ⁶See Mt 14:13-21. ⁷Mt 14:21. ⁸ESOO 1:530.





ELISHA CURES NAAMAN OF HIS LEPROSY 2 KINGS 5:1-19

OVERVIEW: Naaman was in favor with the king of Aram and with God, because he had been able to defeat and kill Ahab and to restrain Jezebel's cruelty against the prophets. Naaman was sent to the Jordan, that is, to the remedy capable of healing the whole of humankind, as sin is the leprosy of the soul, which is healed by the power of Christ through baptism (EPHREM). Naaman becomes angry because he does not perceive that it is our Jordan, namely, baptism, and not the prophet, that removes the uncleanness of those who are unclean because of leprosy and heals them (ORIGEN). Naaman's healing clearly prefigures the mystery of the healing, which is freely granted to all nations of the earth by our Lord through the intercession of the apostles (EPHREM). Just as Naaman, although he was an old man, became like a boy by washing seven times in the Jordan, so the Gentiles, although old by reason of their former sins, are renewed by the grace of baptism (CAESARIUS). Naaman asked for some dust of the promised land in order that the Hebrews might be ashamed that a stranger believed that even the dust of their land was filled

with God, while they did not even believe that God dwelled in the prophets (EPHREM).

5:1 Naaman Powerful and in High Favor

IN HIGH FAVOR WITH HIS MASTER AND WITH THE LORD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram." Some rely on these words to say that he was the one who had killed Ahab by striking him with an arrow shot by his own hand, when there was war between [Israel] and Aram. This favor was granted him by the Lord as a reward for killing the persecutor of the prophets and for enfeebling the power of Jezebel, [Ahab's] wife, and for restraining her cruelty. And thanks to him the disciples of Elijah had relief too, those whom the fear of Ahab and Jezebel had forced to flee into the desert and take refuge in some caves. And they had returned to their abodes, as the Scripture mentions below. But all these theories are groundless, except for what they say about the

persecution of the prophets, which is undoubtedly correct. It is true, nevertheless, what Obadiah says to Elijah: "Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets fifty to a cave and provided them with bread and water?"¹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5:1.²

5:8-12 *Washing in the Jordan*

ELISHA'S ORDER TO WASH IN THE JORDAN PREFIGURES BAPTISM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Naaman was suffering from leprosy, and when he heard that a prophet who lived under the command of Jehoram, king of Israel, could cure him, he left and proceeded to the country of the healer and went to the house of Elisha, because he had learned that he was the prophet who could aid him in his distress and that he had to ask him to be healed. But Elisha did not go out to meet him or speak to him. He informed him through a messenger: If he wanted to be healed, he had to wash his body in the Jordan seven times. Now a question rises: Why did Elisha prevent Naaman from seeing him and did not allow him to come into his house? In the first place, because he had served Ben-hadad³ in his wars. In fact, the prophet knew that the king of Aram had killed many children of Israel, and how Naaman had destroyed their lands and how his hands were stained with innocent blood, for he was the commander of the army and had received full authority over the Arameans. In the second place, because he was stopped by the corruption of leprosy. Elisha knew that the Law prescribed that no leper could be approached or touched.

Naaman, as a consequence, was enraged. Blaming and accusing Elisha, he left [saying] that he would have never thought to come to a prophet just in order to see him act mysteriously and that he certainly did not expect such words. He believed that his healing would be accomplished through a simple imposition of the hands. So he blamed Elisha and said, "Why did he not come out to meet a man of power who had come

to his house? And why did he prevent me from seeing him, and why did he not judge me worthy of speaking to him? And why did he not heal me with the remedy he uses and which is easy and effortless for me? On the contrary, he sends me to the Jordan, as though that river may really purify me; but are not the rivers of my land, the Amanah⁴ and the Pharpar, sufficient for such purification?"

It is not surprising that he had such thoughts and rebelled, the man who had heard with his own ears and compared the words of the prophet. A man who had made his career in the army could not have access to the mystery hidden in that unusual healing.

Therefore Naaman was sent to the Jordan as to the remedy capable to heal a human being. Indeed, sin is the leprosy of the soul, which is not perceived by the senses, but intelligence has the proof of it, and human nature must be delivered from this disease by Christ's power which is hidden in baptism. It was necessary that Naaman, in order to be purified from two diseases, that of the soul and that of the body, might represent in his own person the purification of all the nations through the bath of regeneration, whose beginning was in the river Jordan, the mother and originator of baptism. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5:10-11.⁵

NAAMAN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE GREAT MYSTERY OF THE JORDAN. ORIGIN:

But in addition, that we may accept the interpretation of the Jordan, that river that is so fresh and grants so much grace, it is useful to present both Naaman the Syrian,⁶ who was cleansed from leprosy, and the comments made about the rivers by the enemies of religion. It is written of Naaman, therefore: "He came with his horse and chariot and stood at the doors of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go

¹1 Kings 18:13. ²ESOO 1:531. ³See 1 Kings 20:1-43. ⁴Or Abana. ⁵ESOO 1:531-32. ⁶In the Greek and Latin biblical tradition the Arameans are usually called Syrians, according to the more recent name of this nation.

and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will return to you, and you will be cleansed.’” Then Naaman becomes angry because he does not perceive that it is our Jordan, and not the prophet, that removes the uncleanness of those who are unclean because of leprosy and heals them. For the work of a prophet is to send one to that which heals.

Since, therefore, Naaman does not understand the great mystery of the Jordan, he says, “Behold, I said that he will assuredly come out to me and will stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and will place his hand on the place and the leprosy will recover,” for placing the hand on leprosy and cleansing it was the work of my Lord Jesus alone. To the man who asked with faith, “If you will, you can make me clean, he not only said “I will, be made clean,” but in addition to the word that he spoke, he also touched him, and he was cleansed from leprosy.⁷

Naaman, who is still in error and does not see how inferior the other rivers are to the Jordan for healing the suffering, praises the rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar, saying, “Are not the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Shall I not go and wash in them and be cleansed?” *COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.242-45.*⁸

5:14-16 *Naaman's Flesh Restored*

A TYPE OF THE HEALING GRANTED BY THE LORD TO ALL NATIONS. *EPHREM THE SYRIAN:* After Naaman had been persuaded by the prophet and had washed seven times in the Jordan, he eventually acknowledged his error. He was astonished, and a deep bewilderment took him when he realized that he had been delivered from his filthiness. And he thanked God for his healing and testified that the Lord of the universe, in his profound care for him, had conceded him that extraordinary power by simply using water. He also proclaimed that his healing could not have derived from the water of the river but had been caused by Elisha's command. That is

why he offered royal presents, but the prophet did not accept them and was not persuaded by the donor, even though he had pressed him many times. For that magnificently and very clearly prefigured the mystery of the healing, which is freely granted to all nations of the earth by our Lord through the intercession of the apostles. And this had been promised in advance to those masters by the prophet Isaiah, when he said, “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”⁹

Since all diseases are a sort of bondage, the prophet necessarily fixed the healing at the seventh bath, in parallel with the fact that the Law, too, orders and promises freedom for the slave at the seventh year.¹⁰ *ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5.15.*¹¹

THE REGENERATION OF THE GENTILES THROUGH THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

CAESARIUS OF ARLES: Let us further see what blessed Elisha commanded Naaman the Syrian. “Go,” he says, “and wash seven times in the Jordan.” When Naaman heard that he was to wash seven times in the Jordan, he was indignant and did not want to comply, but accepting the advice of his friends, he consented to be washed and was cleansed. This signified that before Christ was crucified, the Gentiles did not believe in Christ when he spoke in his own person, but afterwards they devoutly came to the sacrament of baptism after the preaching of the apostles. For this reason Elisha told Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan. See, brothers: Elisha sent Naaman to the river Jordan because Christ was to send the Gentiles to baptism. Moreover, the fact that Elisha did not touch Naaman himself or baptize him showed that Christ did not come to the Gentiles himself but through his apostles to whom he said, “Go, and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹² Notice further that Naaman, who prefigured the Gen-

⁷See Mt 8:2-3. ⁸FC 80:234-35. ⁹Is 52:3. ¹⁰See Exod 21:1-2; Deut 15:12. ¹¹ESOO 1:532-33. ¹²Mt 28:19.

tiles, recovered his health in the same river that later Christ consecrated by his baptism. However, when Naaman heard that he was to wash seven times in the Jordan, he became angry and said, "Are not the waters of my region better, the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, that I may wash in them and be made clean?" When he had said this, his servants advised him to agree to the counsel of the prophet. Carefully notice what this means, brothers.

Holy Elisha, as we said, typified our Lord and Savior, while Naaman prefigured the Gentiles. The fact that Naaman believed he would recover his health as the result of his own rivers indicates that the human race presumed on its free will and its own merits; but without the grace of Christ their own merits cannot possess health, although they can have leprosy. For this reason if the human race had not followed the example of Naaman and listened to the advice of Elisha, with humility receiving the gift of baptism through the grace of Christ, they could not be freed from the leprosy of the original and actual sins. "Wash seven times," he said, because of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, which reposed in Christ our Lord. Moreover, when our Lord was baptized in this river, the Holy Spirit came on him in the form of a dove. When Naaman descended into the river as a figure of baptism, "his flesh became like the flesh of a little child." Notice, beloved brothers, that this likeness was perfected in the Christian people, for you know that all who are baptized are still called infants, whether they are

old or young. Those who are born old through Adam and Eve are reborn as young people to death, the second one to life. The former produces children of wrath; the latter generates them again as vessels of mercy. The apostle says, "In Adam all die; in Christ all will be made to live."¹³ Therefore, just as Naaman, although he was an old man, became like a boy by washing seven times, so the Gentiles, although old by reason of their former sins and covered with the many spots of iniquity as with leprosy, are renewed by the grace of baptism in such a way that no leprosy of either original or actual sin remains in them. Thus, following the example of Naaman, they are renewed like little children by salutary baptism, although they have always been bent down under the weight of sins. SERMON 129.4-5.¹⁴

5:17 Naaman Asks for Dust from Israel

FOR THE SHAME OF ISRAEL. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Naaman the Aramean asked for some dust from the promised land in order to cause the shame of Israel, as I think, so that they might be ashamed that a stranger believed that even the dust of their land was filled with God, while the Hebrews did not even believe that God dwells in the prophets. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5.17.¹⁵

¹³1 Cor 15:22. ¹⁴FC 47:230-31*. ¹⁵ESOO 1:533.

PUNISHMENT OF GEHAZI'S
COVETOUSNESS
2 KINGS 5:20-27

OVERVIEW: Gehazi was a covetous man who tried to hide his earthly passions. Elisha gives Gehazi a chance to repent, but he does not take it and denies his fault (EPHREM).

5:21-22 *Silver and Fine Clothing*

THE COVETOUSNESS OF GEHAZI. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Gehazi was a covetous man to the bottom of his heart. He had pretended to reject his hidden greed but saw, through the betrayal of his mouth, what his soul was trying to hide. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5:21.¹

5:25-27 *Leprosy Shall Cling to You*

ELISHA GIVES GEHAZI A CHANCE TO REPENT.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: After Gehazi had come back from his meeting with Naaman, he entered Elisha's house, and [the prophet] asked him, according to custom, why he had moved away from him. "Where do you come from?" he said to Gehazi. He said this on purpose, so that the justice of the judgment passed on his sin might be evident. If Gehazi repented and swore, he would have been forgiven; but if he denied that he had secretly received money, the leprosy of Naaman would cover him conspicuously. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 5:27.²

¹ESOO 1:533. ²ESOO 1:533.



THE MIRACULOUS RECOVERY
OF THE AX HEAD
2 KINGS 6:1-7

OVERVIEW: The house of the sacrifices of the Law is too small for the greatness of the gospel of Christ (EPHREM). The ax lay in the water, because the human race had fallen into the abyss of all vices in miserable ruin, but the piece of wood thrown into the water by Elisha signifies that Christ will ascend the gibbet of the cross to lift up the human race from the depth of hell (CAESARIUS, TERTULLIAN, JUSTIN MARTYR, EPHREM).

6:1-3 A Place Too Small

A TYPE OF THE CHURCH BUILT BY THE APOSTLES. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: These words were fulfilled by the apostles: the house of the sacrifices of the Law was too small for them, and when they realized that the meeting place of the Jews was not sufficient for the greatness of the gospel, they set out to build a holy church where they gathered the children of God, who are righteous. This is what Isaiah had pointed out to them in advance by the word of the Lord when he said, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."¹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 6.1.²

6:4-7 The Ax Head Fell into the Water

TRUTHS FULFILLED THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM. CAESARIUS OF ARLES: When the divine lesson was read now, dearly beloved, we heard that as blessed Elisha was going to the river Jordan with the sons of the prophets to cut some wood, an ax fell into the water, and the man from whose hand it slipped cried out to

blessed Elisha, "Alas, my lord, for this was borrowed." After this blessed Elisha threw a piece of wood into the place where the ax had fallen, and the iron swam. Elisha typified our Lord and Savior, dearly beloved, as we have frequently mentioned to your charity. Moreover, in the boy who was from the sons of the prophets and from whose hand the ax slipped, we not unfittingly understand Christ our Lord. That ax that fell seems to signify Adam or the whole human race. Therefore, the son of the prophets held the ax in his hand, because our Lord and Savior had in the hand of his power the human race, which he had created. Just as the ax fell out of the prophet's hand into the water, so the human race through pride shook off itself free from the hand of almighty God, fell and plunged itself into the river of dissipation and the waters of every sin. So the ax lay in the water, because the human race had fallen into the abyss of all vices in miserable ruin. As it is written: "I am sunk in the abysmal swamp," and again: "I have reached the watery depths; the flood overwhelms me."³ That river where the ax fell signifies the pleasure or dissipation of this world, which is passing, fleeting and descending into the abyss. A river derives its name from the idea of flowing; since all sinners are said to flow along clinging to transitory pleasures, for this reason that ax lay sunk in the river and mud.

At his coming Elisha threw in a piece of wood, and the iron swam. What does it mean to cast the piece of wood and bring the iron to light, except to ascend the gibbet of the cross, to lift up the human race from the depth of hell and to free it from the mud of all sins by the mystery of the

¹Is 49:6. ²ESOO 1:533-34. ³Ps 69:2 (68:3 LXX, Vg).

cross? After the iron floated, the prophet put in his hand to recover it, and it returned to the useful service of its master. Thus it also happened to us, dearly beloved brothers. We who had fallen from the Lord's hand through pride merited to return again to his hand and power through the wood of the cross. Therefore, with his help, let us strive as much as we can not to fall again from his hand through pride. Without any preceding good merits of ours we have been brought from darkness to light, recalled from death to life and brought back to the right path from many errors. For this reason let us run while we still possess the light of life and not neglect the passing times of salvation. Let not the unwholesomely sweet and exceedingly dangerous joy of this world delight us, lest we again fall away from good works and the path of justice as from the hand of the Lord and hasten to the wicked river of this world. Let us not be submerged again in the mud of all sins in unhappy destruction, but let us listen to the apostle say, "If you have risen with Christ, mind the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Seek the things that are above."⁴ Why does he say "if you have risen," unless because we had fallen? Elsewhere the same apostle says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten you."⁵ Does it not seem to you as though he is shouting to the ax, which is lying in the mud? Awake, he says, you who sleep in the deep waters, and Christ will enlighten you through the mystery of the cross. All these truths have already been fulfilled in us, beloved brothers, through the sacrament of baptism. SERMON 130.1-3.⁶

FREEDOM THROUGH BAPTISM. TERTULLIAN: And accordingly Elisha, having taken "wood" and cast it into that place where the iron had been submerged, forthwith it rose and swam on the surface, and the "wood" sank, which the sons of the prophets recovered. Thus they understood

that the spirit of Elijah was presently conferred on him. What is more manifest than the mystery of this wood: that the obduracy of this world had been sunk in the profundity of error and is freed in baptism by the wood of Christ, that is, of his passion, in order that what had formerly perished through the tree in Adam should be restored through the tree in Christ? AN ANSWER TO THE JEWS 13.⁷

RAISED BY CHRIST FROM THE MIRE OF SIN. JUSTIN MARTYR: Elisha, by throwing a piece of wood into the river Jordan, brought up to the surface the iron head of the ax with which the sons of the prophets had begun to cut wood for the construction of a building in which they proposed to read and study the precepts of God; just as our Christ, by being crucified on the wood of the cross and by sanctifying us by water raised up us who had been immersed in the mire of our mortal sins and made us a house of prayer and worship. DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO 86.⁸

A SYMBOL OF THE SALVATION IN CHRIST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: This is a symbol signifying the fall of Adam. For water represents the type of sin. Indeed, through water, sin was redeemed by the deluge at the time of Noah⁹ and at the fulfillment of times. It was washed in the water of holy baptism by our Lord when he was baptized in the Jordan by John, when he was received and ate with sinners and in his passion was counted among the reprobates. The wood descended, the iron has emerged, because Emmanuel died, was buried and went down to the infernal regions of earth, and from there he has come back, and in his ascension he has lifted up Adam from the deep towards the heights. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 6.5.¹⁰

⁴Col 3:1-2. ⁵Eph 5:14. ⁶FC 47:233-34*. ⁷ANF 3:170*. ⁸FC 6:286*. ⁹See Gen 6:17. ¹⁰ESOO 1:534.



A NEW WAR AGAINST THE ARAMEANS
[See commentary on 1 Kings 20:1-43; 22:1-40]
2 KINGS 6:8-23

OVERVIEW: Elisha did the most glorious thing: he brought the battle to an end without using the force of the soldiers but with the help of God thanks to his merits before him. Faith and justice should be observed even in war, and it could not

but be a disgraceful thing if faith were violated (AMBROSE). Adversaries are conquered more by merits than by strength and are overcome not so much by power as by holiness, just as holy Elisha overcame his foes not by arms but by prayer

(Maximus). Where there is perfidy there is blindness, so rightly the army of the unbelievers was blind; but where there is faith there is an army of angels (AMBROSE).

6:16-23 *Strike This People with Blindness*

ELISHA BROUGHT A BATTLE TO AN END.

AMBROSE: But, as many delight in warfare, which is the most glorious, to bring a battle to an end by the strength of a great army or by merits before God alone? Elisha rested in one place while the king of Syria waged a great war against the people of our ancestors, and was adding to its terrors by various treacherous plans and was endeavoring to catch them in an ambush. But the prophet found out all their preparations, and being by the grace of God present everywhere in mental vigor, he told the thoughts of their enemies to his countrymen and warned them of what places to beware. And when this was known to the king of Syria, he sent an army and shut in the prophet. Elisha prayed and caused all of them to be struck with blindness and made those who had come to besiege him enter Samaria as captives. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 3.1.5.¹

FAITH AND JUSTICE. AMBROSE: If, then, justice is binding, even in war, how much more ought we to observe it in time of peace. Such favor the prophet showed to those who came to seize him. We read that the king of Syria had sent his army to lie in wait for him, for he had learned that it was Elisha who had made known to all his plans and consultations. And Gehazi, the prophet's servant, seeing the army, began to fear that his life was in danger. But the prophet said to him, "Do not fear, for they who are with us are more than they who are with them." And when the prophet asked that the eyes of his servant might be opened, they were opened. Then Gehazi saw the whole mountain full of horse and chariots round about Elisha. As they came down to him the prophet says, "Strike, O God, the army of Syria with blindness." And this prayer being granted,

he says to the Syrians, "Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." Then they saw Elisha, whom they were endeavoring to lay hold of, and seeing him they could not hold him fast. It is clear from this that faith and justice should be observed even in war; and that it could not but be a disgraceful thing if faith were violated. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 1.29.140.²

THE DIVINE PROTECTION MERITED BY HOLINESS.

MAXIMUS OF TURIN: When the king of Syria wanted to capture the holy prophet Elisha and make him subject to his own authority and surrounded him with many divisions of armed men, Elisha was not terrified or distraught, but said to the servant who served as messenger: "Do not be afraid for there are more with us than there are with them." O the faith of the holy prophet! He does not fear the enemies whom he sees, since he knows that there are angels with him whom he trusts. He does not dread earthly ambushes, because he knows that heavenly auxiliary troops are there for him. "There are more with us," he says, "than there are with them." This is an amazing thing. Holiness merits more defenders from heaven than the foes that immorality leads onto the field. "There are more with us than there are with them." Behold the merit of blessedness! The prophet makes his announcement about the multitude while the servant is still uncertain of his own salvation. How much more do spiritual eyes perceive than those of the flesh! One sees the number of the armed men, while the other perceives the sign of their protection. How great is the divine mercy! A blessing is delivered to people, but it is not seen. They receive help while they are in danger, but they do not know it. For this is the mercy of the Savior, that he intervenes for salvation and in doing so he does not allow himself to be seen. He is sensed by the benefits that he bestows, but not with the eyes.

So they are in error who think that when a

¹NPWF 2 10:68. ²NPWF 2 10:24*.

battle is waged successfully, they have overcome through their own strength. For they should know that adversaries are conquered by merits rather than by strength, and they are overcome not so much by power as by holiness, as holy Elisha was overcoming his enemies by prayer and not by arms. For when he was telling his servant to banish his fear, that those defending them were more than those opposing them, not even then was the servant's fear able to be dispelled. Then Elisha prayed to the Lord, saying: "Lord, open his eyes so that he can see!" And his eyes were opened and he saw, and there was a whole mountain filled with horsemen." So the prophet's prayer opened the servant's eyes. It is no surprise that a prayer opened his eyes to see an army, since prayer opened heaven so that an army came. It is no surprise, I say, if the God who was promising new auxiliaries implanted new eyes. Or why could he not bring forth an army of seers who furnished an army of angels for battle? Why, I say, could not he, who through his merits penetrated the darkness of the clouds, have wiped away the dullness from the servant's eyes? Certainly then holy Elisha granted safety by this act to the fearful servant to whom he had restored the brightness of sight. SERMON 83.2-3.³

WHERE THERE IS FAITH. AMBROSE: Elsewhere, also, that is, in the books of Kings we read that Elisha was in Samaria, and suddenly an army of Syrians surrounded and set on him. Gehazi saw them and said to his master, "O master, what shall we do?" And Elisha the prophet said, "Do not fear, for there are more with us than with them." And he prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of Gehazi. And his eyes were opened, and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots around Elisha. And Elisha prayed that God would strike them with blindness. And they were struck, and they entered into the city whither they were going, seeing not at all. Surely, you soldiers who have been surrounded have heard that where there is perfidy, there is blindness. Rightly, therefore, was the

army of the unbeliever blind. But where there is faith, there is an army of angels. Good, then, is faith, which often exercises its power among the dead.⁴ Hence our adversary [the devil] and his legions are daily hurled back by the virtue of the martyrs. ON THE DEATH OF THEODOSIUS 10.⁵

THE JEWS CONVERTED BY CHRIST WILL LOSE THEIR BLINDNESS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN:

Elisha prayed before the Lord and said, "strike this people with blindness." And he struck them with blindness according to the words of Elisha. Ben-hadad, king of the Arameans, sent a large army to surround the city of Dothan and ordered them to arrest Elisha, who lived there at that time. Now his servant saw the army of the Arameans and was horrified. But Elisha opened the eyes of the young man and showed him the ranks of fire that the Lord had erected around him against the Arameans, and his fear disappeared. At the same time [the enemies] were struck in their eyes and did not know the route of their march. They asked Elisha to be their guide; he led them to Samaria, and they were imprisoned inside walls. Then their eyes opened and they realized the danger into which they had voluntarily thrown themselves. But Elisha ordered that nobody should hurt them, and by his command, king Jehoram warmly received them. After offering them a banquet, he sent them back to their land in peace.

This is the symbolic meaning [of this passage]: God had predicted through the prophet Isaiah, "The heart of these people was hardened; they have stopped their ears and have shut their eyes, so that they cannot see with their eyes."⁶ The people of Abraham had been blinded by a just sentence of God, because of their perverse will. They asked that the Savior of the world be killed and tried to delete any memory of him completely, but Christ has converted them from their perversity to good behavior. He has delivered his

³Cetedoc 0219a, 83.23.. ⁴See Col 2:12; Acts 17:31. ⁵FC 22:311. ⁶Is 6:10 (Peshitta).

persecutors from their blindness and has given them the bread of heaven. Then he has scattered them through the earth to announce his wonders. Such were those who came back from the mount of Golgotha, beating their own chest.⁷ They said to Simon and the other apostles with contrite hearts, “Brothers, what should we do?”⁸ And such was Saul, the persecutor of the church whose eyes were open without seeing⁹ and whose

eyes God wondrously closed but opened again very soon,¹⁰ and to whom he ordered to bring his name before the nations, the kings and the children of Israel.¹¹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 6.18.¹²

⁷See Lk 23:48. ⁸Acts 2:37. ⁹See Acts 9:8. ¹⁰See Acts 9:18. ¹¹See Acts 9:15. ¹²ESOO 1:534-35.



ATROCIOUS ACTS COMMITTED
DURING THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA
2 KINGS 6:24–7:1

OVERVIEW: The famine, which forced the Samaritans to practice cannibalism, symbolizes the

lack of heavenly nourishment, which affected in those days all the nations of the earth. The don-

key's head signifies the teaching coming from the philosophers and scientists of the world, and it was an abominable and rotting food but was very precious until the famine reigned over the earth (EPHREM). When famine prevails over a land, not only does it not prevail over the just, but rather through them, a remedy is brought to the threatened destruction (ORIGEN).

6:24-32 *Gruesome Effects of the Famine*

A FAMINE OF HEAVENLY FOOD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Some time later King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army; he marched against Samaria and laid siege to it." This is that Ben-hadad who had been condemned to death by God; and Ahab had received the order to execute him.¹ But he spared his life and sent him back in peace. Therefore the Arameans besieged the city and prolonged the siege for many days, because their army occupied the whole surrounding area, so that bread began to be more and more scarce, and famine ruled. And when [the citizens] did not find the usual sustenance and food, they fell on the corpses of the dead. For the Scripture relates that there were certain mothers who decided to kill their children to assuage their hunger. And after one of them had put her son to death, when her companion in crime hid her own son (in order to save him) and broke the contract, an argument rose between them, and they both went before the judge. And they began to expound their reasons before the king, that is, Jehoram, the son of Ahab. The king, seeing that that was a harsh trial for him, was taken over by a violent rage against Elisha. For he thought [the prophet] was the cause of his disaster. Therefore he said, "Yesterday he gave abundant goods to Aramean robbers, and today has given sufficient bread to his disciples, and they are not lacking food, but he has no care for the people of his city and abandons them in their need." And he swore that on that day itself he would take revenge on Elisha for the blood of his people. But Jehoram had no right to accuse the prophet, but rather Ahab, his father, who had

scorned the prophets. In fact, if he had been persuaded by their words and had killed Ben-hadad, that [king] would have never besieged Samaria and would have never thrown him into such calamities.

From the symbolic point of view the atrocious famine which tortured the Samaritans for so many days and forced them to eat in such an abominable manner shows the lack of heavenly nourishment, which affected in those days all the nations of the earth. So the city of Samaria signifies the whole of humankind, and its famine represents the famine of all. But Elisha made it disappear through his prayer, as well as through the grace of Christ. The sick were fortified by his strength, and "those who were full hired themselves out for bread."² This means that the apostles, announcers [of the gospel], have transmitted to the Gentiles the knowledge of salvation, and it has flowed, as Isaiah predicted, like "the waters covering the sea."³ In the same manner it had been decreed before God that the hungry should eat the crop of the foolish and that the thirsty should absorb his goods, as the friend of the righteous Job said.⁴ Indeed, as the Samaritans plundered the food that they had collected for the Arameans and the needs of their army and brought it into their army, so the church of the Gentiles took the holy books which were preserved in the Hebrew synagogues, and gave them for the benefit of their descendants. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 6.24.⁵

PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS AND THE LAW OF MOSES. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Famine in Samaria became so great that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver." The donkey's head, which the Scripture reports here to be so expensive, signifies the teaching coming from the ravings of the philosophers and the scientists of the world. And it was an abominable and rotting food but was very precious when the famine reigned over the earth, and there was no one to break and give the bread to those children who

¹See 1 Kings 20 (21):28-34. ²1 Sam 2:5. ³Is 11:9. ⁴See Job 5:5.

⁵ESOO 1:535-36.

asked for it, that is, until the advent of Christ.

“And one-fourth of a kab of dove’s dung [was sold] for five shekels of silver.” Even though the symbol is contrary—in fact, it does not fit in with the Word—but because the righteous are likened to a dove, we say that the kab of dove’s dung represents the teaching of the law of Moses, if we compare it with the gospel of Christ. So it can be said that it was mud, a mud precious to the Jews at that time, with which they covered their eyes, which were to be opened soon by the spiritual bath and the gospel of Christ. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 6.25.⁶

7:1 Choice Meal Shall Be Sold for a Shekel

FAMINE DOES NOT PREVAIL OVER THE JUST.

ORIGEN: You will also find similar things in the times of Elisha, when the son of Jader, king of Syria, came up against Samaria and besieged it.

“And there was a great famine in Samaria for so long,” Scripture says, “that a donkey’s head became worth fifty shekels of silver and a quarter of pigeon dung five pieces of silver.” But suddenly an amazing change occurs through the word of the prophet, who says, “Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord: ‘Tomorrow, at this hour a measure of the finest wheat flour shall be one shekel and two measure of barley shall be one shekel, in the gates of Samaria.’”

Notice, therefore, what is inferred from all these texts: when famine prevails over a land, not only does it not prevail over the just, but rather through them, a remedy is brought to the threatened destruction. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 16.3.⁷

⁶ESOO 1:536. ⁷FC 71:219.





END OF THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA 2 KINGS 7:2-20

OVERVIEW: The officer prefigures the fall of the people of Abraham, those who could see “the bread” of life “descended from heaven,” but without profit. By announcing goods for the inhabitants of their city, the four leprous men fittingly represent the four holy Evangelists (EPHREM). The Lord knows how to bring to naught the counsels of the nations, as he did when he made the Arameans flee, so that they left a great abundance of food in Samaria (BASIL).

7:2 *You Shall See but Not Eat*

THE FALL OF THE PEOPLE OF ABRAHAM.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Elisha said, “Tomorrow there will be relief from the siege and the famine in the city of Samaria.” But an officer of the house of king Jehoram mocked these words and derided the word [of the prophet]. Elisha answered him what the Scripture relates here. Some say that this man was the one whose story is reported by the biblical text above.¹ He had sent to Elisha a

¹See 2 Kings 6:32-33. The story of this officer resumes at 2 Kings 7:17-20.

messenger or a captain of the guard [of the king] to arrest him or to kill him but later had repented of his evil scheme and had run after him, preventing him from executing his command. This poor man, therefore, had seen the delivery of the town and the consequent abundance of which he had not profited, because on that same day the inhabitants of the city, who were coming out to plunder, had trampled him, and he had died. In his miserable fate he prefigures the fall of the people of Abraham, those who could see “the bread” of life “descended from heaven”² to them but in large number were not worthy of enjoying that vivifying abundance, even though, at the same time, it was abundantly given to all those who asked for it through the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 7.1.³

7:3-15 *Four Leprous Men*

THE FOUR EVANGELISTS PREFIGURED.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Even though the four lepers are loathsome, if we symbolically recognize in them the fact that they announced goods for the inhabitants of their city, they do no wrong to the symbol but correctly represent the four holy Evangelists. Indeed, we must bear in mind that through their books the grace of our Savior and source of life Jesus Christ was known, and freedom was given to all people according to his divine plan. And so those whose flesh was leprous shone in their interior look with the splendor of their righteousness. In addition, they symbolically represent the first attitude of the apostles in the fact that leprosy had corrupted their skin. But they also represent them in the fact that their interior was adorned with right-

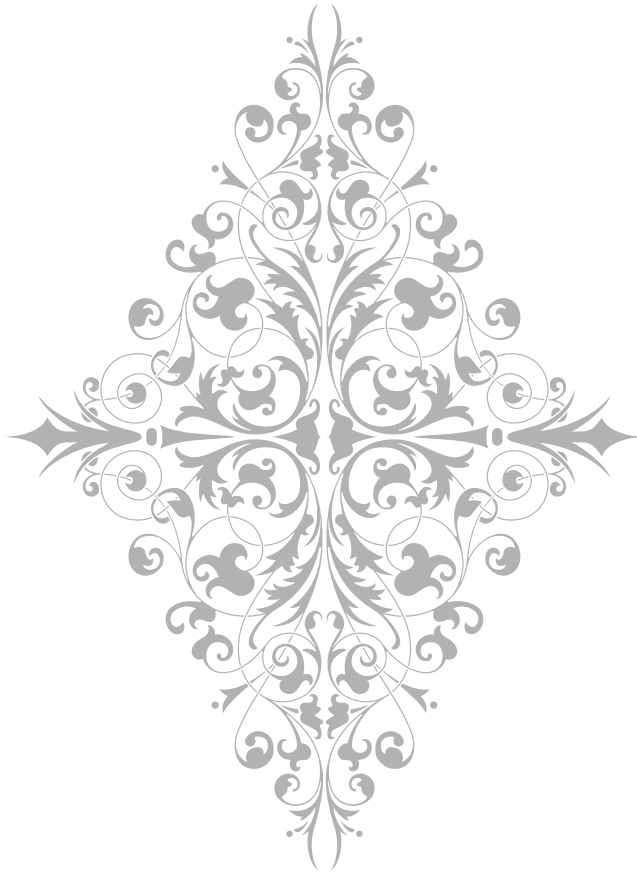
eous behavior because the old man has been transformed by the coming of the Holy Spirit and renewed. Therefore they have clothed themselves with the garment shining with the colors of heaven and have been sent to show the work of the hands of God. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 7.3.⁴

7:16 *Measures and Prices*

THE LORD OVERTURNS THE COUNSELS OF

THE NATIONS. BASIL THE GREAT: “The Lord brings to nothing the counsels of nations, and he rejects the devices of people.”⁵ . . . If you will read the things in each history that God did to the faithless nations, you will find that the statement has much force even according to our corporal intelligence. When Joram, son of Ahab, was king in Israel, then his son Ader, king of Syria, carrying on a war with a great force and a heavy hand, besieged Samaria, so that even the necessities of life were wanting to them, and the head of a donkey was sold for fifty shekels of silver and the fourth part of a cab⁶ of pigeon dung for five shekels of silver.⁷ At that time, therefore, in order that the promise of Elisha might be fulfilled, the counsels of Syria were brought to nothing, and abandoning their tents and all their supplies, they fled, leaving such a great abundance in Samaria that a measure of fine flour and two measures of barley were sold for one shekel. Thus, then, the Lord knew how to bring to nothing the counsels of the nations. HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 15.6 (Ps 32).⁸

²Jn 6:58. ³ESOO 1:537-38. ⁴ESOO 1:538. ⁵Ps 33:10 (32:10 LXX). ⁶A cab was about four pints. ⁷See 2 Kings 6:25. ⁸FC 46:239-40*.





THE NEW PROPHECIES
OF ELISHA
2 KINGS 8:1-29

OVERVIEW: Palestine, where the Shunammite woman moves, symbolizes the world that hates the saints and constantly persecutes them. Ben-hadad's illness derived from his unhappiness, because he had been deeply afflicted by the fact that his armies had been defeated and his people had been driven out of the city. Ben-hadad was misled by Hazael, his ambassador, who spread the bed cover on his master, killed him and reigned in his place, as Elisha had predicted (EPHREM).

8:1-6 *The Shunammite Woman Settled in the Land of the Philistines*

THE WORLD HATES THE SAINTS AND CONSTANTLY PERSECUTES THEM. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, 'Get up and go with your household.'" This is the Shunammite woman who had received Elisha in her home. And [the prophet] had taken care of her son too, who had died, by reviving him. Elisha predicted to her that a seven-year famine would occur and

invited her to find a new home by emigrating. He chose for her Palestine, a close and fertile region, whose inhabitants were rich thanks to their maritime commerce. For the land of the Philistines is entirely situated along the coast, and it had, at that time, some renowned harbors which were full of countless vessels, as is testified by the Scripture in many passages. That is why the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac had looked there for their refuge.¹

From the allegorical point of view, Palestine, which received the righteous who were in exile and symbolically far from the Lord,² was a figure of the world. And the people of Palestine detested the people of God and ill-treated the children of Israel who feared God. Later they were defeated by David and gave up their weapons of war, but they took them up again now and then. The world hates the saints and constantly persecutes them. And even after our Lord has defeated it and its prince [the devil] has been thrown out,

¹See Gen 12:1. ²See 2 Cor 5:6.

these two never cease from fighting against his servants, grabbing and destroying the idle and the ignorant. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 8.1.³

8:7-15 *Ben-hadad Will Certainly Die*

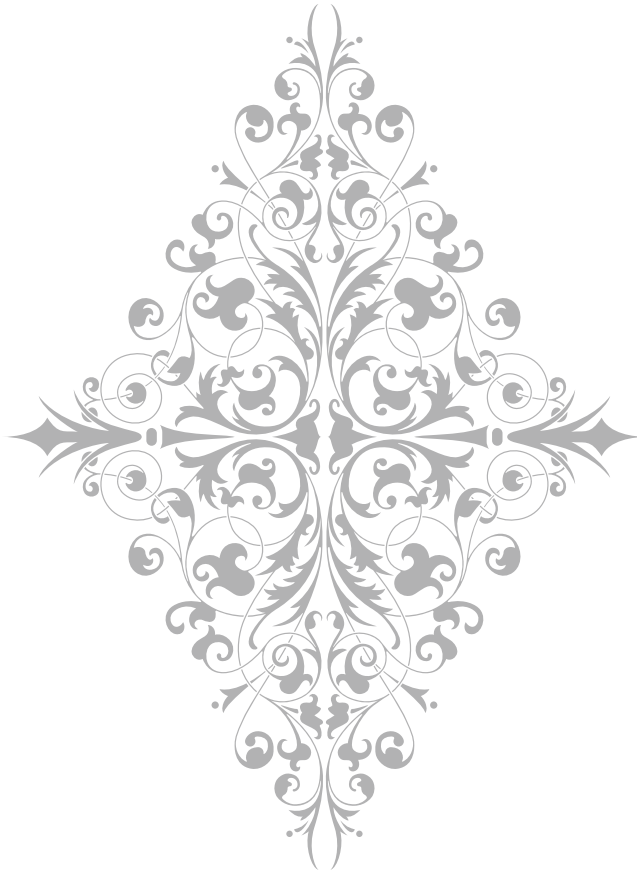
BEN-HADAD WAS UPSET BY HIS FAILURE IN THE WAR. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Elisha went to Damascus while King Ben-hadad was ill." His illness had derived from his unhappiness. For he had been deeply afflicted by the fact that, in the war of Samaria, his armies had been defeated and that, at the same time, his people had been chased from the city when he had hoped that his victory would occur immediately. His entire army had fled and sunk into shame and dishonor, and he was troubled in his mind because of this. In addition, the anguish of his thoughts was due to something that was not responsible for his fall: he had been deceived in believing that a countless and powerful army would march against him, whereas it was later shown that there was no army at all to oppress him.

Therefore the king, when he heard of the coming of Elisha, sent Hazael, one of his noble men, to meet him. He ordered him to persuade the prophet to take care of his healing, and since he thought that this request must be accompanied with gifts and offerings, according to secular customs, he sent him, through his ambassador, all sorts of goods from Damascus and forty camels. But certainly the prophets refused, just as Elisha had refused and had not accepted the offerings of Naaman, the Aramean. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 8.7.⁴

THE WORDS OF ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover;' but the Lord has shown me that he shall certainly die." These were the words of Elisha to the king, who asked him, "Will I live after this illness?" But it seems that they do not agree with the truth of the events, and not even with each other. However, after the words reported above in the story of the prophet Micah,⁵ it is evident that they do not cancel each other out or contradict each other. In fact, both prophets answer in the same manner, and the words of their reply pursue the same aim in the fact that they announce to their interlocutor good and death at the same time. But in the reply of Micah a particular aspect must be considered, that is, the fact that Ahab could not escape from death, because he so ardently and savagely wanted to go to the war, which was the real cause of his fall.

But the case of Ben-hadad is quite different: it would have been easy for him to get rid of his illness, because it was not serious or fatal. He would have recovered from his illness, as Elisha had said to him and as Ben-Hadad had asked him by saying, "Will I live after my illness?" However, he died in a natural course but by a hostile means: he was misled by Hazael, his ambassador, the one who spread the bed cover⁶ on his master, killed him and reigned in his place, as Elisha had predicted. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 8.10.⁷

³ESOO 1:538. ⁴ESOO 1:538-39. ⁵See 1 Kings 22:15. ⁶The Syriac text reads "hand," but it seems that Ephrem refers to the entire action of spreading the wet bed cover. ⁷ESOO 1:539.





JEHU TAKES REVENGE
AGAINST JEZEBEL
2 KINGS 9:1-37

OVERVIEW: Elisha's servant is sent to the city of Ramoth-gilead, where he anoints Jehu and orders him to take revenge against the house of Ahab. When Jezebel heard that Jehu had come to her city, she painted her eyes and adorned her head with a miter, thinking that she might still seduce him with her look. Jezebel, who had terrified prophets and enslaved kings, was thrown by

slaves into shame and dishonor, and her body was lacerated by the teeth of dogs (EPHREM).

9:1-26 Jehu Anointed King of Israel

JEHU IS ANOINTED TO TAKE REVENGE AGAINST THE HOUSE OF AHAB. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Then the prophet Elisha called a

member of the company of prophets and said to him, 'Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.' Here the Scripture reports the just sentence that befalls the house of Ahab. Immediately it speaks about the choice of the judge and executor of the judgment. And this was Jehu, the son of Nimshi, who, on the word of the Lord, anointed one of the prophets for the royalty. And this was the disciple of Elisha who was sent by his master to the city of Ramoth-gilead, which was under the siege of the Israelites. He entered their camp and went to the tent where the commanders of the army gathered and standing before them, he naively said, "I have a message for you, commander." Jehu said in reply, "For which one of us?" The servant realized that he was the one indicated by Elisha. In fact, he did not know his name, but even though the son of the prophet did not know him nor had ever seen him, he saw the importance of this situation, and his mind was troubled, so that he said, "For you, commander." He showed that through the revelation of God he had realized that he was the one chosen by God. And immediately he took him into an inner chamber, according to the order of his master. And two things were also hidden: Jehu understood that that affair had to remain secret and that the news [of the anointing] should not be divulged at that time among the people. Therefore he anointed him and ordered him to take revenge against the house of Ahab. Then the prophet fled at once from the camp, and shortly later the entire assembly was in an admirable unanimity before king Jehu against Israel.

So he went out with a group of select men. But he met Joram, king of Israel, in the course of his journey, and little later Ahaziah, king of Judah. He was able to defeat them after the first attack and killed them both. Jehu said to Bidkar, "Lift him out, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite,' because last night I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his children." He is thinking here about what had been said to him at night, or maybe he believes that this vengeance and the fact that he would kill

Joram had been predicted to him at night through a vision. Jehu had also indicated to Bidkar another reason for killing Joram in his place and for ordering him to throw him on the plot of Naboth, saying, "When you and I rode side by side behind his father Ahab how the Lord uttered this oracle against him: 'For the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his children that I saw yesterday, says the Lord, I swear I will repay you on this very plot of ground,'" that is, outside the walls of Jezreel where the goods of Naboth were. After this action accomplished outside the gates of Jezreel, he entered the city to complete what he had successfully begun. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 9:1-24.¹

9:30-31 Jezebel Adorns Herself

JEZEBEL TRIES TO SEDUCE JEHU. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: They thought that she would have wept over her dead son, but in the very hour in which she heard that the king had come, she painted her eyes, a raving old woman, adorned her head with a miter and looked from her window so that she might be looked at. She thought that maybe [Jehu] would be seduced by her look and would take her among his wives. Maybe she had heard of the story of Adonijah,² who at the time of Solomon was aided by Abishag the Shunammite and demanded that she became his wife, so that, through the queen, he might be elevated to the throne of the kingdom. So she believed that Jehu too, in order to confirm and pacify his troubled and agitated new reign, would walk the path of Adonijah. These were the thoughts of Jezebel until she was still able to control herself.

But after seeing Jehu, who was entering the gate, she remembered the horrible murder of her son and could not stand the sight of his murderer any longer nor could she restrain her fury but insulted him angrily and abused him before the crowd by saying, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?" Indeed, nothing could break the

¹ESOO 1:539-40. ²See 1 Kings 2:17.

violence of that insolent woman, neither the hope of marriage, nor the fear of an imminent death, nor the fear of her adversary who brandished his sword while threatening her. She, who tortured the others, was not able to save herself, but she provoked the king like a madwoman, addressing him with insulting words, so that she kindled his rage even more and greater resentment rose against her. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 9:30.³

9:32-37 *The Dogs Shall Eat the Flesh of Jezebel*

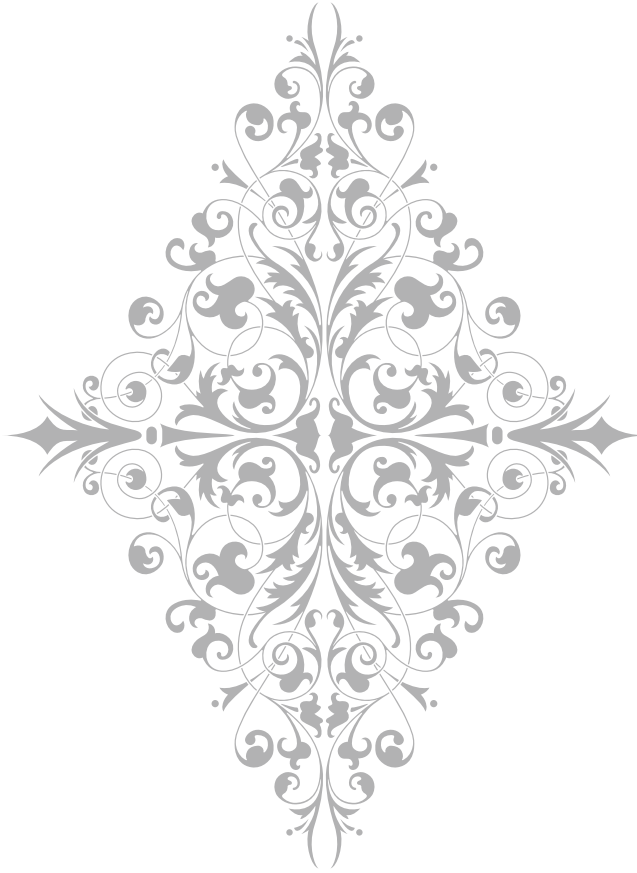
THE HARSH PUNISHMENT OF UNREPENTANT WICKEDNESS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Jehu, who had seen the woman who had spoken to him and had recognized her to be Jezebel, ordered the eunuchs who were beside her to throw her out of the window, and they immediately threw her with force and splattered the wall with her blood. Horses passed there and trampled her corpse, and, a little later, dogs lacerated her flesh, so that nobody could say, This was Jezebel.

[Let us see] the symbolic meaning [of this passage]. Ahab was struck in battle and fell, and after his fall, his servants came to mourn and weep over him, and they placed him into the tomb of the kings with honor.⁴ But the same thing did

not happen to Jezebel. After the eunuchs had thrown her to the ground and her bones were broken in the fall, horses trampled her and dogs lacerated her. The reason for this difference is that Ahab, even though he committed many crimes, showed repentance now and then.⁵ Jezebel, by contrast, did not only violate justice and cause rage with her abominable behavior but also drove her husband to crime and exhorted him to commit iniquities. And later, she never repented in the times of her prosperity or in those of calamity, nor [did she turn] away from her path of perversity. Even in the very time of her condemnation to death, she became furious like a madwoman. Therefore there were many reasons why justice should be particularly harsh against her.

In addition, observe and understand how Jezebel, who had terrified prophets and enslaved kings, was thrown by slaves into shame and dishonor and was lacerated by the teeth of dogs. That happened so that the mouth of liars might be stopped, and they might not say, "Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?"⁶ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 9:32.⁷

³ESOO 1:540-41. ⁴See 1 Kings 22:34-37. ⁵See 1 Kings 20 (21):27. ⁶Jer 12:1. ⁷ESOO 1:540-41.





DESTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE OF AHAB
AND THE PRIESTS OF BAAL
2 KINGS 10:1-36

OVERVIEW: From the case of Jehonadab it clearly appears that also among the ten tribes there were people endowed with piety, and thanks to them God tolerated all the others (THEODORET). Jehu, who by an impious lie and a sacrilegious sacrifice sought to kill the impious and the sacrilegious, is not a model that Christians should imitate (AUGUSTINE). Since Jehu did not want anybody to escape his revenge, he lied, so that all the priests of Baal might come confidently to the temple and be killed there (THEODORET).

10:15-17 Jehu Took Jehonadab into His Chariot

JEHONADAB WAS A PIOUS MAN. THEODORET OF CYR: This was also a pious man, and a relative of his. Indeed, his family constantly lived in tents and kept away from drunkenness. The prophet Jeremiah mentions them with praise, and history shows their piety. Therefore king Jehu, as soon as he saw him, blessed him, that is, greeted him. Then he asked, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?" When he had answered, "It is," Jehu said to him, "If it is, give me your hand." Then, while he was taking him into his chariot, he said, "'Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.' So he had him ride in his chariot." From this it clearly appears that also among the ten

tribes there were people endowed with piety, and thanks to them, God, who rules everything with wisdom, tolerated all the others. QUESTION 33, ON 2 KINGS.¹

10:18-24 *Worshippers of Baal Summoned*

JEHU CANNOT BE A MODEL OF BEHAVIOR FOR CHRISTIANS. AUGUSTINE: This opinion dishonors the holy martyrs; no, altogether removes the possibility of holy martyrdom. For, according to the Priscillianists,² the martyrs would act more justly and wisely if they did not confess to their persecutors that they were Christians and by their confession make homicides of their persecutors, but rather, if by lying and by denying what they were, they preserved the advantage of the flesh and the intention of the heart and did not allow their persecutors to perform the wicked deed they had in mind. For these persecutors were enemies of the truth itself, not neighbors of theirs in the Christian faith to whom they were obliged to speak the truth with their tongue that they spoke in their heart. For if Jehu (whom as an example of lying they look on with greater show of prudence than on the others) falsely declared that he was a servant of Baal in order to kill the servants of Baal, how much more justly, according to the perversity of the Priscillianists, would the servants of Christ in time of persecution declare falsely that they are servants of demons in order that the servants of demons not kill the servant of Christ! And if Jehu sacrificed to Baal in order to kill people, how much more justly would they sacrifice to idols in order that people not be killed! Why, according to the remarkable doctrine of these liars, should it be prejudicial to them to profess falsely the worship of the devil in the open, provided they preserved the worship of God in their heart? But not in this manner have the true martyrs, the holy martyrs, understood the apostle. They have seen and kept what has been said, “With the heart a person believes unto justice, and with the mouth profession of faith is made unto salvation,”³ and, “In their mouth was

found no lie.”⁴ So, they have departed irreprehensibly where they will no longer have to be on guard against being tempted by liars, because they will have no more liars, whether strangers or neighbors, in their celestial gatherings. As for Jehu, who by an impious lie and a sacrilegious sacrifice sought to kill the impious and the sacrilegious—him they would not imitate, not even if the same Scripture had said nothing about what kind of man he was. But, since it has been written that he did not have a righteous heart in the sight of God, what did it profit him to receive some transitory reward of temporal rule for some obedience that he displayed in utterly destroying the house of Ahab in accordance with his lust for Ahab’s dominion? I exhort you, brother, rather to defend the true opinion of the martyrs, that you may be against liars; not a teacher of falsehood, but an advocate of truth. Pay close attention, I beseech you, to what I say, in order that you may find out, despite your laudable zeal to apprehend and correct or else to shun the impious, how much you must be on guard against a doctrine that you are rather injudicious in thinking should be taught. AGAINST LYING 2.3.⁵

JEHU’S LIES WERE JUSTIFIED. THEODORET OF CYR: “Then Jehu assembled all the people and said to them, ‘Ahab offered Baal small service; but Jehu will offer much more.’” We need to examine

¹PG 80:769. ²This is a heretical sect founded by the Spanish priest Priscillian at the end of fourth century. Augustine also wrote a short work against them (*Ad Orosium Contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*), after his disciple Orosius had written a pamphlet on this heretical sect (*Commonitorium de Errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum*). According to the extant historical sources, the Priscillianists were in general accused of being loose in their behavior and too indulgent in their doctrine. However, the documents written by Priscillian or by members of his sect, discovered only at the end of nineteenth century and published by Schepss (CSEL 18 [1889]), reveal a sort of ascetic Christian sect with a certain inclination for esotericism but give no evidence of any loose or indulgent or particularly heretical behavior. This is even more surprising if we consider that Priscillian was the first heretic to be formally condemned to death by a tribunal and to be executed. However, a certain number of scholars believe that Priscillian or his disciples tried not to reveal their real doctrines in their writings, especially in order not to give ground to the accusations made against them. ³Rom 10:10. ⁴Rev 14:5. ⁵FC 16:128-29.

the purpose of words and actions. And this must be done here too. In fact, since he did not want anyone to escape his revenge, Jehu used these words, so that all the priests of Baal might come confidently. In addition, in order that no priest of God might share with them the same punishment, he ordered that they be driven away as though they were not worthy of that celebration, and so he killed only [the idolatrous priests]. He

also burned the statue of Baal, cut down its sacred groves and freed the whole land of Israel from other idols. However, he continued to worship the two golden calves⁶ and gave the name of Baalim to the sanctuary of Baal. QUESTION 34, ON 2 KINGS.⁷

⁶See 1 Kings 12:28-33. ⁷PG 80:769-72.





THE REIGN OF ATHALIAH 2 KINGS 11:1-21

OVERVIEW: Athaliah's scheme against the house of David resembles that of the devil against humankind (ISHO'DAD). After Athaliah had been executed and the kingdom had been pacified, Jehoiada devoted himself to restoring the religion of God, which had been destroyed by Joram and his successors (EPHREM).

11:1-3 Athaliah Destroys the Royal Family

THE DEVILISH WICKEDNESS OF ATHALIAH. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Athaliah exterminated all the royal children. In fact, after her son had been killed by Jehu, she had conceived an extremely perfidious and vicious scheme, saying to herself with anger, "I will reign just the same against the will of God by fighting God's promises, and I will make the posterity of David's house perish, as the descendants of my father's house have perished and have been exterminated." That scheme resembled the treachery that Satan plotted at the

beginning against the chief of our race. However, her scheme was not accomplished, but after seven years the kingdom returned to the family of David, thanks to a righteous man, Jehoiada, the husband of Jehosheba, Joram's daughter, who had brought up Joash, son of Ahaziah. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 11.1.¹

11:13-18 Jehoiada Makes a Covenant

JEHOIADA RESTORES THE TRUE RELIGION OF GOD. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: While these things were happening in the temple, Athaliah, being alarmed by the shouts of the gathering people and by the noise of the crowds, ran to the temple. But while she was trying to restrain the riot with her presence and voice, she was arrested by the guards of the king and was brought outside the walls of the temple, where she was killed by order

¹CSCO 229:139-40.

of the high priest, lest her blood might pollute the house of God. So the prophetic predictions about the annihilation of the family of Ahab were gradually accomplished through different deaths.

After the kingdom had been pacified and its problems settled down, Jehoiada devoted himself to restore the religion of God, which had been destroyed by Joram and his successors. Therefore, in the first place, he persuaded the king and the entire people to renew the covenant made with God by their ancestors according to the words used in the traditional rite and to take an oath of reciprocal trust with one another. After that he turned to erase all the new cults and found that

the people consented with him in an admirable manner. And so, after gathering a corps of soldiers, he immediately entered the sanctuary of Baal and destroyed its altars, smashed its statues and killed Mattan, the priest of that impious cult. Therefore, thanks to the authority of Jehoiada and his pious observation of the Law, the order of the sacred ministry, the sacrifices and the ceremonies were nearly brought back to the same honor that they had during the reign of David. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 11.13.²

²ESOO 1:545.





JEHOASH REIGNED FOR FORTY YEARS 2 KINGS 12:1-21

OVERVIEW: The money for the assessment, which derives from a form of contribution introduced by Moses, is given to the priests to repair the house of the Lord (ISHO'DAD). Joash wanted to restore the temple after the damages caused by Athaliah and her predecessors, who had forced the priests to abandon the house of the Lord and to worship Baal and other idols. Joash, being persuaded by the advice of some of his princes, abandons the true religion, which he had piously served when Jehoiada was alive. However, his apostasy is punished later, when he is killed in a plot (EPHREM).

12:4 *Money from Assessments*

A TRADITION DATING FROM THE TIME OF MOSES. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "The money for the assessment." [The Scripture] uses [this term] for the money which is voluntarily given by the people for the "assessment" of their own person and whose payment has survived from the time of

Moses who, after the [Israelites] were counted in the census, prescribed that four *zouzē*¹ should be deducted from each of them.² This form of contribution was perpetuated up to the days of our Lord as a memory of the kindness of God toward them. But at the time of our Lord they only gave two *zouzē*, because they had become poor.³
BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 12.4.⁴

12:6-8 *Repairing the Lord's House*

JOASH WANTS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGES CAUSED BY ATHALIAH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Therefore King Joash summoned the priest Jehoiada with the other priests and said to them, 'Why are you not repairing the house?'" The reason why king Joash and the high priest Jehoiada called a meeting to discuss the repairing of the house of God is revealed in the second book of

¹Equivalent to the drachma or denarius. ²See Exod 30:13. ³See Mt 17:23. ⁴CSCO 229:140.

the Annals⁵ with these words: "Athaliah instructed the children of iniquity, and undermined the house of the Lord and drove all the priests who were in the house of the Lord to the worship of the idols."⁶ And it is not surprising that Athaliah, a woman endowed with audacity and shrewdness, made that attempt in order to aspire to power and take hold of the kingdom. Therefore, when everything was under her control and the king Ahaziah himself obeyed her blindly, nothing was neglected by her in order to draw the Jews away from the divine worship and to drive them to the ancient religion of the Sidonians. For this reason, while the temple of the true God remained abandoned after the introduction of the foreign cult, it had begun to be in ruin in many spots and was in danger of collapsing because of that. So the king, in order to remedy this serious situation, together with the authority of the high priest, gathered a large sum of money freely offered by the people and entrusted with it some priests elected to accomplish that task. But later on, when he realized that they were not making the progress he had hoped for in the task they had received, he transferred the care of the temple to other men of certain integrity who could work on that assignment with the highest perseverance and dedication. From the allegorical point of view you can recognize here a type of the saints who, after receiving from God the gift of knowledge, set out to repair that same house shaken by vain cults and various crimes. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 12.7.⁷

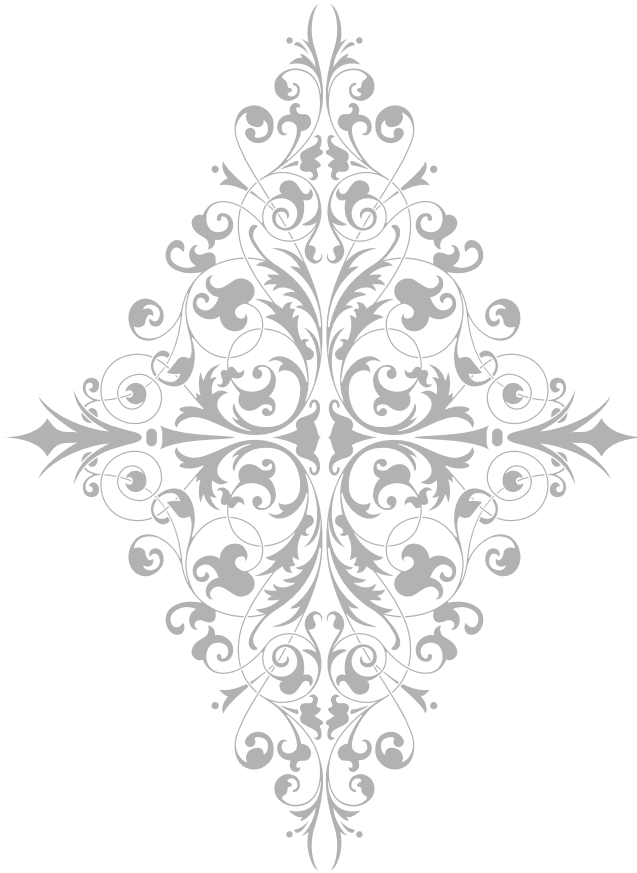
12:19-21 *Joash Killed by His Servants*

JOASH LOSES HIS FAITH AND IS PUNISHED.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "His servants arose, devised a conspiracy and killed Joash in the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla." When he reached the age of 130 years, the priest

Jehoiada died. Joash, being persuaded by the advice of some of his princes, abandoned the true religion which he had piously served when Jehoiada was alive, and restored the idolatry introduced by the women of Sidon, which he had gloriously banished with the help of the high priest himself. And while Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, attempted to prevent [that impiety] with all his might, and being inflamed with the divine spirit and standing between the temple and the altar, reproached the king and his princes, he was stoned to death in the hall itself of the house of God. And that was an act of extreme cruelty on the part of Joash, and every person's mind was disturbed because he, being oblivious of the benefits received from Jehoiada, allowed that the son of that very holy man was treated with such brutality before him and even incited [the crowd to stone him]. And [Zechariah], calling God as the witness of his innocence and his avenger, said, "May the Lord see and avenge."⁸ The holy man foresaw the calamities that would shortly befall the king and his kingdom. One year later the Syrians⁹ invaded Judah and plundered the land so that Joash, in order to save his life, was forced to deprive himself of the goods of the royal house and of the temple but was, nevertheless, shamefully ill treated by his enemies; and eventually he fell ill and lay in bed. While Joash was ill in his own bed, he was the victim of a plot of his servants, who stabbed him to death.¹⁰ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 12.20.¹¹

⁵This is the Syriac name of the books of Chronicles, which is directly taken from the Hebrew (see 1 Kings 14:19; 14:29; etc.). However, the passage quoted by Ephrem is not attested in the Peshitta and probably derives from a lost Syriac version of 2 Chronicles. ⁶See 2 Chron 22. This passage quoted by Ephrem is not found in the Hebrew text or in the Syriac Peshitta and probably belongs to a lost Syriac version of Chronicles. ⁷ESOO 1:545-46. ⁸2 Chron 24:22. ⁹Or Arameans. ¹⁰See 2 Chron 24:17-25. ¹¹ESOO 1:546-47.



THE DEATH OF ELISHA

2 KINGS 13:1-25

OVERVIEW: The apostasy of Joash and the people and their rebellious will in the worship of idols is the cause that hindered the gift of grace signified in the sign of Elisha. From the spiritual point of view, “the Lord’s arrow of victory” in Elisha’s sign signifies our Savior hanging from the wood and giving up his spirit, while the fact that the arrow is shot from the window placed eastwards means that the accomplishment of our salvation has been obtained through the ascension of our Lord, as he rides higher than the heavens of the eastern heavens. It seems that the prophet Hosea took Elisha’s place and ruled the sons of the prophets after him, because Hosea says at the beginning of his oracles that he prophesied at the time of Jeroboam, son of Joash. The power that the Lord gives to the bones of Elisha is symbolic of the seed of resurrection. Temporal death is a mercy for the righteous, since it is subjugated to them like a slave. This is demonstrated by Elisha, who resurrected a man after he was already dead (EPHREM). The bodies of the saints are holy and filled with grace, so that they can still perform miracles from the sepulcher (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS, CHRYSOSTOM). The case of Elisha demonstrates once more that the prescriptions of the law concerning dead bodies and the pollution deriving from them are meaningless (ORIGEN).

13:10-19 *Striking Aram Three Times*

THE SYMBOLISM OF ELISHA’S LAST PROPH-

ECY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: “Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness from which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And Jehu, king of Israel, died, and Jehoahaz, his son, took his place for seventeen years¹ and died. And his son Joash reigned; he reestablished the kingdom which had been troubled by his father, and fought impiety. Elisha helped him with words and actions. And when the prophet was struck with a fatal disease, the king came to him and, seeing that his death was imminent, began to weep like a son deprived of his father and said, “My father, my father,” and so on. This is also the word that Elisha said at the moment of Elijah’s ascension to heaven. And the meaning of both words is one, and we have explained it above.²

Then he calls the prophet “chariots and horsemen of Israel,” because the peace of the kingdom and the victories of Israel depended on his prayer and rule. The prophet, on his part, rewarded the love of his tears and “said to him, ‘Take a bow and arrows.’ Elisha laid his hands on the king’s hands” and ordered him to open the window turned eastwards and to shoot the arrow. And he shot the arrow. And Elisha said, “The Lord’s arrow of vic-

¹2 Kings 10:35. ²See ESOO 1:520. Ephrem asserts that this word pronounced by Joash at the departure of Elisha from the world and pronounced by Elisha at the departure of Elijah (2 Kings 2:12) clearly shows that with the disappearance of the two prophets, a great protection for the children of Israel vanishes.

tory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Indeed, the window was turned towards Aram. "You shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them."

This passage suggests two spiritual meanings. The first is that God has bound the victory of the children of Israel to that sign, which is not a new thing: it existed for many centuries, [as was demonstrated] a few centuries before when the Lord made the plagues of Egypt and the liberation of the people depend on the lifting of the rod of Moses,³ and the destruction of Amalek on the lifting of his hands during the prayer⁴ and the destruction of the city of Ai on the lifting of the javelin of Joshua.⁵ It was appropriate that that situation was carried out in that manner, so that the people might clearly recognize with certainty the aid that God had given them and, at the moment of receiving such grace, the memory of grace might penetrate into their hearts. But only Elisha clearly knew the mystery, whereas it was hidden to the king; otherwise, he would have not struck the ground three times but ten. And since he was hesitant and drew back, Elisha blamed him—not because he had committed any fault but because his mistake deprived the children of his people of the victory and the great profit that would have derived from the extermination of the Arameans and the overthrowing of their kingdom that Elisha strongly desired. He is sad for being frustrated in his hope by the king who had stopped and had not multiplied the prescribed strokes. But the real motive which prevented the grace was the apostasy of the king and the people and their rebellious will in the worship of idols. That was again the cause that hindered the gift of the grace that was signified in that sign.

The fact that Elisha laid his hands on the hands of the king shows that the weak hands of the king would be strengthened by the power that dwelled in the hands of the prophet, who stood here in the place of his master, so that those hands might be capable of destroying Aram and to exterminate it after it had destroyed and exterminated Israel. It is clear that the children of

Israel, at the time of Joram, had diminished a great deal because in the royal city only 5 horses, and at the time of his son, only 10 chariots were available in their entire land and 50 horsemen, and only 10,000 foot soldiers, as the Scripture says, because the king of Aram had made them perish and had made them like the dust at threshing. Now the Hebrews, at the time of Solomon, had 52,000 horses in the stables of the king, and Jeroboam sent to war 800,000 men, and Abijah lined up against them 400,000 brave men whom he had gathered from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

The second spiritual meaning is the following: this sign is divided into two figures, and each of them possesses its own meaning: "The Lord's arrow of victory" clearly signifies our Lord and Savior hanging from the wood and giving up his spirit. In his spirit he descends into the fortresses and the castle of Sheol and delivers the righteous, who were imprisoned there, and after his resurrection, he subdues the entire universe through the holy apostles and gives new life to those who believe in his name.

On the other hand, the fact that the arrow was shot from the window placed eastwards means that the accomplishment of our salvation has been obtained through the ascension of our Lord, as he rides higher than the heavens of the eastern heavens,⁶ and through his ascension he raises the eternal gates and makes us ascend as a host of the captives of heaven.⁷ Again the arrow stuck into the ground and then pulled out or departing from the ground signifies the burial of our Lord and his resurrection after he had descended and remained in the heart of the Sheol and in the land of the dead. Observe also, with discernment, that the land of Israel has been struck with three arrows, but the kingdom of Aram has been defeated in three battles, in the likeness of the adorable body of our Lord, which was tried with the thorns, the nails and the sword but was not

³See Exod 4:17. ⁴See Exod 17:9-13. ⁵See Josh 8:18-19. ⁶See Ps 68:34 (67:35 LXX). ⁷See Eph 4:8.

corrupted. The power of death, of Satan, has been crushed three times. Indeed, [the Lord] annihilated Satan and banished sin and death. Again the arrow is shot three times and stays on the ground, but the Lord raises up the people of the Lord who had been thrown onto the ground, as also Christ was placed in the tomb and gave the hope of resurrection to the saints. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 13.14-19.⁸

13:20 *Elisha Died and Was Buried*

HOSEA TAKES THE PLACE OF ELISHA. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: His disciples, the sons of the prophets, buried him. It seems that Joash accompanied him to his grave, because he had stayed beside him at the time of his illness and had showed a deep love for him, weeping before him and composing lamentations for his death. It also seems that the prophet Hosea took his place and ruled the sons of the prophets, because Hosea says at the beginning of his oracles that he prophesied at the time of Jeroboam, son of Joash.⁹ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 13.20.¹⁰

13:21 *A Dead Man Comes to Life*

THE SYMBOL AND SEED OF RESURRECTION. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Now also Elijah raised somebody from the dead, and Elisha, too, performed that miracle during his lifetime. But none of the prophets, after dying, ever resurrected anyone. Therefore see how the spirit of Elijah doubly rests on Elisha. In fact, the power that the Lord gives to the bones of Elisha is the symbol and seed of resurrection. And the honor devoted to them shows the glory with which the bodies of the saints will be clothed on the day of the resurrection of all the dead. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 13.21.¹¹

DEATH IS SUBJUGATED TO THE POWER OF SAINTS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: And because temporal death is a mercy for the righteous, death they therefore despise, since it is subjugated to

them like a slave. In what manner did death harm [Elisha] who descended into Hades? For whilst he was in the pit of death, he snatched a dead man from its mouth. Because they entrust both body and spirit unto God, they do not become downcast in the face of bodily afflictions. HOMILY ON THE SOLITARIES 253-64.¹²

THOSE WHO LIVE WITH GOD. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: Wherefore, of those that live with God, even their very relics are not without honor. For even Elisha the prophet, after he was fallen asleep, raised up a dead man who was slain by the pirates of Syria. For his body touched the bones of Elisha, and he arose and revived. Now this would not have happened unless the body of Elisha were holy. CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 6.30.¹³

SPIRITUAL GRACE FILLS THE SEPULCHERS OF SAINTS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: For not the bodies only but also the very sepulchers of the saints have been filled with spiritual grace. For if in the case of Elisha this happened, and a corpse, when it touched the sepulcher, burst the bands of death and returned to life again, much rather now, when grace is more abundant, when the energy of the spirit is greater, is it possible that one touching a sepulcher, with faith, should win great power. On this account God allowed us the remains of the saints, wishing to lead us by them to the same emulation and to afford us a kind of haven and a secure consolation for the evils that are ever overtaking us. Therefore I beseech you all, if any is in despondency, if in disease, if under insult, if in any other circumstance of this life, if in the depth of sins, let him come here with faith, and he will lay aside all those things and will return with much joy, having procured a lighter conscience from the sight alone. But more, it is not only necessary that those who are in affliction should come here, but if any one be in cheerful-

⁸ESOO 1:547-49. ⁹See Hos 1:1. ¹⁰ESOO 1:549-50. ¹¹ESOO 1:549.

¹²AHSIS 475. ¹³ANF 7:464.

ness, in glory, in power, in much assurance toward God, let not this person despise the benefit. For coming here and beholding this saint, he will keep these noble possessions unmoved, persuading his own soul to be moderate by the recollection of this person's mighty deeds and not suffering his conscience by the mighty deeds to be lifted up to any self-conceit. *HOMILIES ON ST. IGNATIUS AND ST. BABYLAS* 5.¹⁴

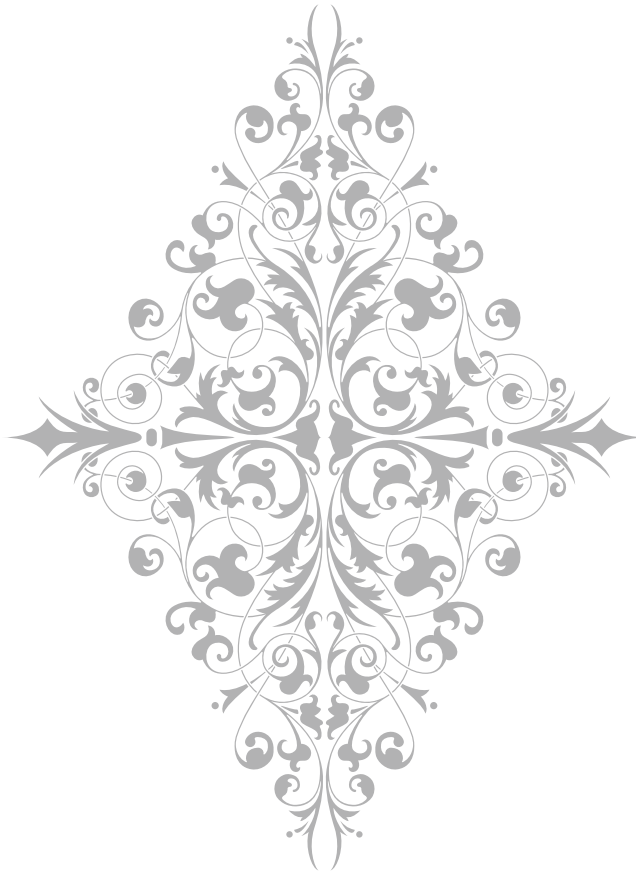
USELESSNESS OF THE LAW'S PRESCRIPTIONS.

ORIGEN: After this, another law is published. It says, "Whatever soul touches anything unclean, or the carcass of unclean beasts, and conceals it and is defiled, or if he touches the uncleanness of [a person] or anything unclean by which he is defiled,"¹⁵ and so forth. These, to be sure, are

observed by the Jews indecently and uselessly enough. And why should one who, for example, touches a dead animal or the body of a dead person be held to be impure? What if it is the body of a prophet? What if it is the body of a patriarch or even the body of Abraham himself? What if he touches the bones, will he be unclean? What if he should touch the bones of Elisha, which raise a dead person? Will that one be unclean who touches the bones of the prophets and likewise do they make that one himself unclean whom they raise from the dead? See how unsuitable the Jewish interpretation is. *HOMILIES ON LEVITICUS* 3.3.1.¹⁶

¹⁴NPNF 1 9:140. ¹⁵Lev 5:2-3. ¹⁶FC 83:55-56.





THE REIGNS OF AMAZIAH IN JUDAH
AND JEROBOAM IN ISRAEL
2 KINGS 14:1-29

OVERVIEW: When his reign began to be very prosperous, Amaziah rejected his fear of God, which he had conceived after witnessing his father's punishment, and embraced foreign cults

(EPHREM). Jehoash compares Amaziah with a thorn bush, which is a puny plant, because he wants to suggest that his power is weak and ineffective (ISHO'DAD). God, wishing to punish Ama-

ziah's sin of idolatry, influenced his heart so that he would not heed salutary advice but would engage in battle, there to perish together with his army (AUGUSTINE). Jeroboam honors the prophet Jonah in the course of his reign and restores the power of Israel in Samaria (EPHREM).

14:1-7 Amaziah Reigned Twenty-nine Years

AMAZIAH TURNED TO IDOLATRY. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "In the second year of King Joash son of Ahaziah of Israel, King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah began to reign," who avenged the death of his father, but with moderation, so that he spared the life of the relatives of the conspirators according to the prescriptions of the Law and was careful that the punishment might not be too excessive for the authors of the crime. Therefore Amaziah was pious, as long as he had before his eyes his father's unhappy end, whose cause he could not ignore: offense against the true religion [of God]. However, when his reign began to be very prosperous, [Amaziah] rejected his fear of God which he had conceived after witnessing his father's punishment, and embraced foreign cults. In the second book of the Annals, the Scripture relating his victory against the Edomites confirms that this was the reason of his apostasy: "But Amaziah took courage, and led out his people, and went to the Valley of Salt and smote ten thousand men of Seir. The men of Judah captured another ten thousand alive and took them to the top of a rock, and all were enchained."¹ And the text adds, "After Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir, and set them up as his gods and worshiped them, making offerings to them."² ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 16.1.³

14:8-9 A Thorn Bush Sent to a Cedar

MEANING OF JEHOASH'S WORDS TO AMAZIAH. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The thorn bush [mentioned here] is a tiny plant and herb and is not the blackberry bush, [whose fruits] we eat.

"Since, if ever," he says, "the thorn bush were sent to a cedar, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife,' it would be an insult and an act of derision, since the thorn bush is much smaller than the cedar, so you, Amaziah, do not differ at all from the thorn bush, if compared with my power." By the cedar and the wild beast Jehoash signifies himself. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 12.4.⁴

14:10-14 Judah Defeated by Israel

GOD WORKS IN HUMAN HEARTS. AUGUSTINE: The Almighty, who cannot possibly will anything unjust, is able to set in motion even the inclinations of their will in people's hearts in order to accomplish through these people whatever he wishes to achieve through their agency. What meaning can these words have that the man of God addressed to King Amaziah: "Do not allow the army of Israel to go out with you, for the Lord is not with Israel and all the children of Ephraim. And if you think to prevail over them, God will put you to flight before your enemies; for it belongs to God both to help and to put to flight":⁵

How does the power of God help some in war by giving them confidence and turns others to flight by instilling them with fear, except for this reason, that he who has made all things as he willed in heaven and on earth, also works in the human hearts? We also read of what Joash, king of Israel, said when he dispatched a messenger to King Amaziah, who had a mind to go to war with him. Having mentioned certain things, he went on to say, "Sit at home. Why do you provoke evil that you should fall and Judah with you?" The Scripture then went on to add, "And Amaziah would not listen to him because it was the Lord's will that he should be delivered into the hands of enemies because he sought after the gods of Edom."⁶

¹2 Chron 25:11 (Peshitta). ²2 Chron 25:14. ³ESOO 1:550. ⁴CSCO 229:140. ⁵2 Chron 25:7-8. ⁶2 Chron 25:20.

There you see how God, wishing to punish the sin of idolatry, influenced the heart of this man with whom he was justly angry, that he would not heed salutary advice but, in his contempt for it, would engage in battle, there to perish together with his army. ON GRACE AND FREE WILL 21.42.⁷

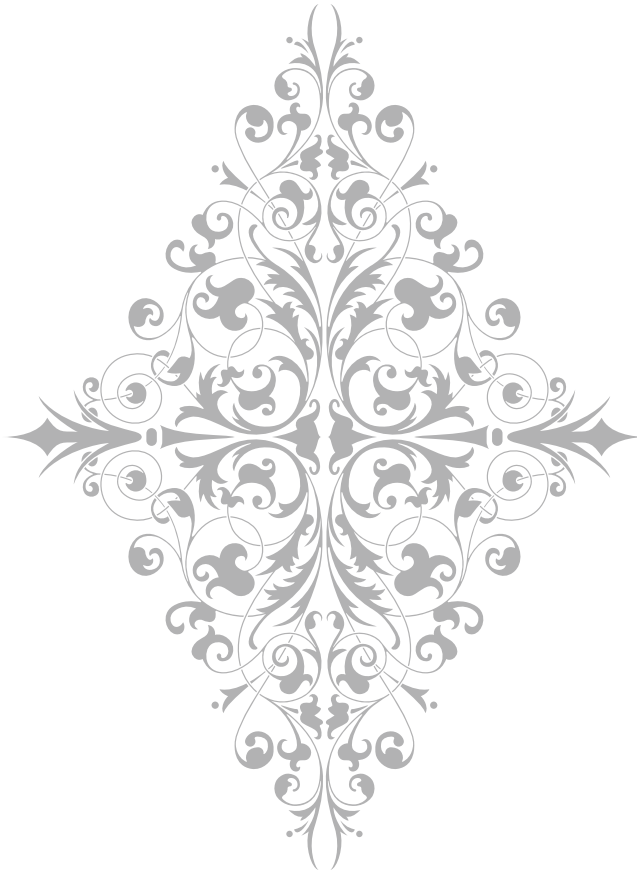
14:23-26 Jeroboam Restored the Border of Israel

JEROBOAM HONORED THE PROPHET JONAH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of

the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet." This is the same Jonah who preached the repentance of Nineveh. And the Sea of Arabah⁸ is the same that the Scripture calls elsewhere the "salt sea,"⁹ situated on the border with Canaan, of which the city of Hamath, beside the Mount Lebanon, is the other northern border. Jeroboam honored the prophet Jonah as his father had honored Elisha and recurred to his useful work, so that, being encouraged by his predictions and advice, was able to conquer back the cities occupied by the Syrians.¹⁰ ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 14.23.¹¹

⁷FC 59:301-2. ⁸In Syriac, "sea of loneliness." ⁹I.e., the Dead Sea. ¹⁰Or Arameans. See 2 Kings 13. ¹¹ESOO 1:550-51.





DIFFERENT KINGS ON THE THRONES
OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL
2 KINGS 15:1-38

OVERVIEW: King Azariah (Uzziah) was struck with leprosy because, besides kingship, he dared arrogate priesthood, without remembering what had happened to the people of Dathan and Korah and what had happened to Jeroboam (ISHO'DAD). Jothan restores the power in Judah and builds new fortifications in the city of Jerusalem (EPHREM).

15:1-7 Azariah Was Sixteen

THE REIGN OF AZARIAH (UZZIAH)¹ IN JUDAH. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: In the book of Chronicles [it is written]: Uzziah "did what was right in the sight of the Lord, just as his father David,² and God made him prosper."³ "He built" fortresses "and palaces and high towers which were reinforced with iron bolts."⁴ "But when he had become strong, he grew proud; he became an infidel to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to make the censer-bearers of perfumes smoke. But the priest Azariah went in after him and said to him, 'It is not for you, king, [to make offerings].' And the king was angered with the priests and ordered them to be driven out of the sanctuary. But at the same time a leprous disease broke out of the holy place on his forehead."⁵ And when he died, "they did not bury him in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, 'He is leprous.'"⁶

He was struck with leprosy because, besides

kingship, he dared arrogate priesthood, without remembering what had happened to the people of Dathan and Korah⁷ and what had happened to Jeroboam.⁸ That is why he received a punishment on a part of his body that was conspicuous.⁹ And since no prophet had reproached him, except for the priest Azariah, the gift of prophecy was withheld from [all prophets] until the death of Uzziah. And the bronze bull which they worshiped bellowed and produced a tremendous noise, while blood, ravaging and plagues reigned among the people. And the prophet Zechariah referred to these events when he said, "And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah."¹⁰ BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 15.3.¹¹

15:32-36 Jotham Worshiped the Lord

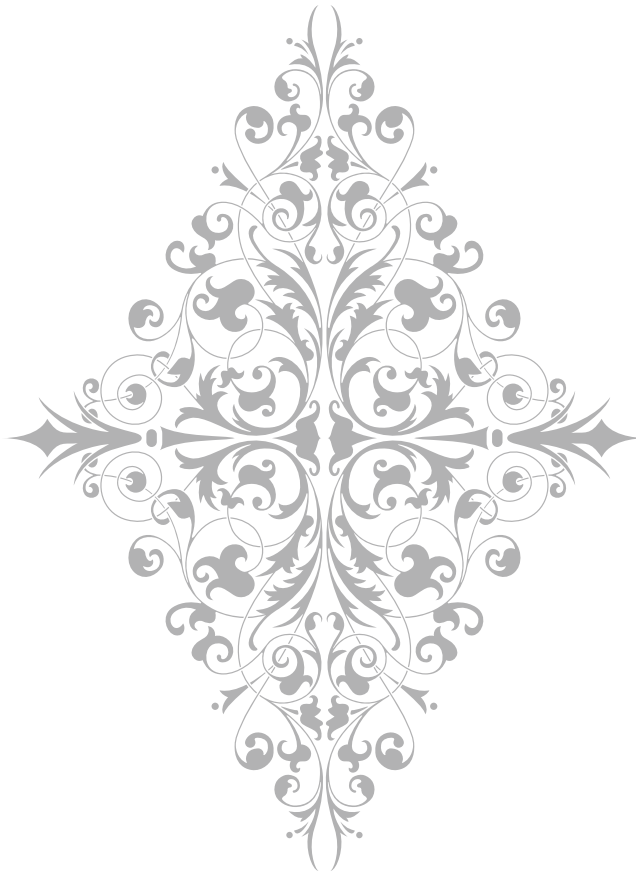
RENAISSANCE OF JUDAH. EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "In the second year of King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel, King Jotham son of Uzziah of Judah began to reign." After rising to power in that year, Jotham administered the government [of Judah] for sixteen years, earning great praise. While the second book of the Annals has shown all the feats

¹See textual note to 2 Kings 15:1-38. ²This is the reading of the Peshitta. Hebrew reads "Amaziah." ³2 Chron 26:4-5. ⁴2 Chron 26:9 (Peshitta). ⁵2 Chron 26:16-19 (Peshitta). ⁶2 Chron 26:23 (Peshitta). ⁷See Num 16:1-50. ⁸See 1 Kings 12:22-13:6; 14:1-18. ⁹On his forehead. ¹⁰Zech 14:5. ¹¹CSCO 229:141-42.

illustriously accomplished by him, the Scripture never reproaches him in this passage¹² for any error, except for his toleration of the high places,¹³ which was a fault common to all the most praised kings of Judah. In the first place, he strengthened Jerusalem with new fortifications and built towers and castles in desert places. He

conquered the Ammonites, who were perpetual enemies of the Jews, and ordered them for the future to pay the kings of Judah an annual tribute. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 15.32.¹⁴

¹²See 2 Chron 27:1-9. ¹³See 1 Kings 12:31-32; 2 Kings 12:3; etc.
¹⁴ESOO 1:553.





THE IMPIETY AND CRUELTY OF AHAZ 2 KINGS 16:1-20

OVERVIEW: King Ahaz embraces all the worst practices of idolatry and does not hesitate to offer his own son as a human sacrifice (CHRYSOSTOM). The people of Israel, instead of serving the true God, worshiped foreign idols from different nations (ORIGEN). The words “the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by,” that is, to consult God, were pronounced by Ahaz in a purely formal manner, and not seriously (ISHO’DAD). Ahaz’s impiety was such that he removed the genuine altar of bronze, which Solomon had built, and put in its place another one made according to the model of the Assyrian altar he had seen in Damascus (THEODORET).

16:1-4 Ahaz Made His Son Pass Through Fire

THE ABOMINATION OF MAKING SACRIFICES TO DEMONS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: Do you see that demons dwell in their souls and that these demons are more dangerous than the ones of old? And this is very reasonable. In the old days the Jews acted impiously toward the prophets; now they outrage the Master of the prophets.¹ Tell me this. Do you not shudder to come into the same place with people possessed, who have so many unclean spirits, who have been reared amid

slaughter and bloodshed? Must you share a greeting with them and exchange a bare word? Must you not turn away from them since they are the common disgrace and infection of the whole world? Have they not come to every form of wickedness? Have not all the prophets spent themselves making many and long speeches of accusation against them?² What tragedy, what manner of lawlessness have they not eclipsed by their blood guilt? They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons. They refused to recognize nature, they forgot the pangs of birth, they trod underfoot the rearing of their children, they overturned from their foundations the laws of kinship, they became more savage than any wild beast. DISCOURSES AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS I.6.7.³

16:10-14 Ahaz Offered His Burnt Offering

THEY SERVED IDOLS. ORIGEN: “And when you

¹Chrysostom uses this historical testimony in the second book of Kings to explain the cruelty of the Jews in condemning Christ. His position revealing an extreme form of anti-Semitism must be interpreted in the context of rhetorical amplification and exaggerated emotionality, which alter the actual historical testimony. In its unpleasantness and incorrectness, this is an existing component of ancient biblical exegesis. ²See Is 1:1-31; 2:6-4:6; 9:8-10:4; 28:1-29:16; Jer 2:1-6:30; Ezek 4:1-24:27. ³FC 68:24-25.

say, 'Why did the Lord God do all of these bad things to us?' And you will say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served other gods in your land, so you shall serve in a land not your own.'"⁴ Let one consider the literal sense, and it will suffice at the present to refresh the memory from the literal sense for those who can understand. Surely then, the people of Israel possessed the holy land, the temple, the house of prayer. They ought to have served God, but when they transgressed the divine commandments they served idols, both the idols acquired from Damascus, as it is written in Kings, and the other idols brought from other pagan nations into the holy land. Due to the fact that they received these pagan idols, they made themselves worthy to be rejected to the land of the idols, to dwell there where they worship the idols. HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 7.3.1.⁵

16:15-16 *The Bronze Altar*

A PURELY FORMAL ASSERTION. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The words "the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by," that is, in order to consult [God]: [the king] says these words in a purely formal manner, and not seriously. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 16.15.⁶

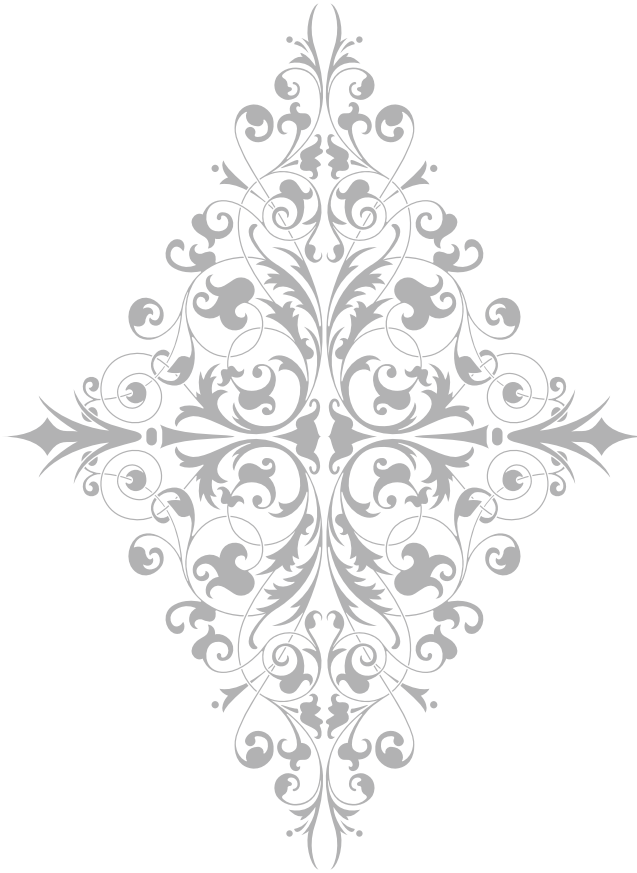
16:17-20 *Ahaz Changes the Temple*

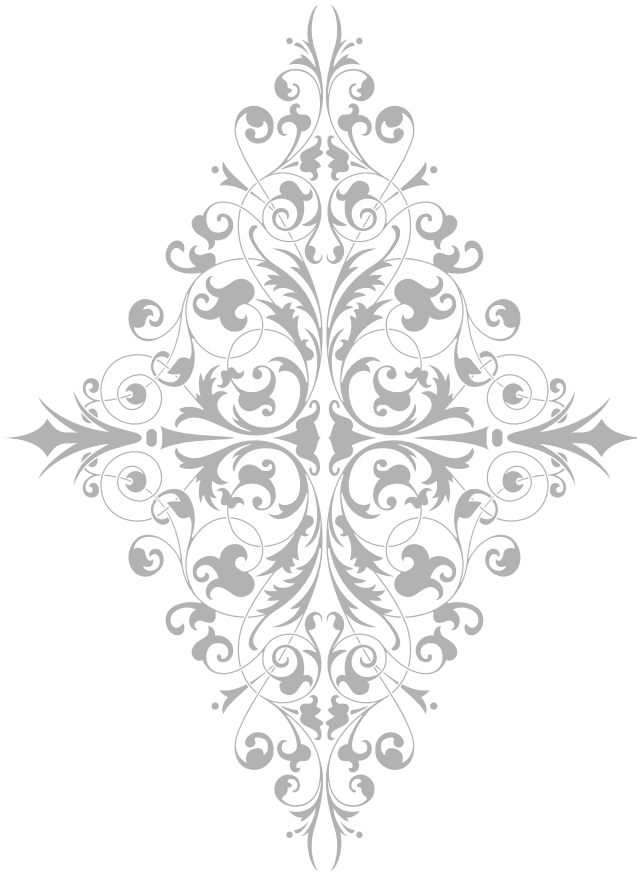
AHAZ'S PROFANATIONS OF THE TEMPLE. THEODORET OF CYR: I certainly do not think that he built [the altar] for the God of all things but just for certain of those who are falsely called gods.

This is what the book of Chronicles points out. It reads, "In the time of his distress this king Ahaz became yet more faithless to the Lord. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel."⁷ And this is also signified by the next verse: "Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God and cut in pieces the utensils of the house of God. He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem."⁸ He did these and other similar things, as is also confirmed in the book of Chronicles:⁹ "When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details." He removed the genuine altar of bronze, which Solomon had built, and put in its place another one recently made. And what happened to the stands is revealed by what follows: "King Ahaz cut off the frames of the stands," the text says, "and removed the laver from them." And he even dared to commit another act of impiety: he moved the entrance of the royal house into the divine temple, transforming the sacred enclosure into a thoroughfare. QUESTION 48, ON 2 KINGS.¹⁰

⁴Jer 5:19. ⁵FC 97:71*. ⁶CSCO 229:142. ⁷2 Chron 28:22-23.

⁸2 Chron 28:24. ⁹See 2 Chron 28:22-25. ¹⁰PG 80:780-81.





THE FALL OF SAMARIA 2 KINGS 17:1-41

OVERVIEW: Samaria takes its name from the mountain Seme; its inhabitants, however, were not originally from that region but were Babylonians who had been transferred there by their king Shalmaneser (CHRYSOSTOM). The Samaritans take their name from the Hebrew word

somer, which means “guard,” because they were the guards sent by Shalmaneser to control the territory of Israel (ORIGEN). Idolatry and every form of impiety were amply widespread in all Israel (ISHO‘DAD). The Lord was offended with the Israelites and gave them over to perdition because

they had been dispersed from unity (CYPRIAN). Both Israel and Judah sinned so much that they were sentenced by providence to become captives to the Assyrians and Babylonians. The first lion is the antagonistic devil; the second lion, at the completion of the age, is “the man of sin, the son of perdition” (ORIGEN). The Samaritans thought that God was confined to a place and divisible and worshiped him in that way (CHRYSOSTOM).

17:1-6 *The King of Assyria Captured Samaria*

WHERE DID THE SAMARITANS ORIGINATE?

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: At this point it is also appropriate to tell where the Samaritans originated. I say this because the entire region is called Samaria. From what source, then, did they derive this name? The mountain is called Semer from the man who had taken possession of it,¹ as Isaiah also said: “And the head of Samaria, Ephraim.”² The inhabitants, however, were called not Samaritans but Israelites. But as time went on, they transgressed against God, and during the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser went up and seized many cities.³ After attacking and killing Elah, he gave the kingdom over to Hoshea. Later, Shalmaneser came and captured other cities and made them subject and tributary. However, though Hoshea at first yielded, he revolted afterwards from subjection and took refuge in the aid of the Ethiopians.⁴ The Assyrian learned this and, having made an expedition and taken them captive, forbade the nation to remain there any longer, because he suspected the possibility of another such revolt. These inhabitants, moreover, he transported to Babylon and Medea and, having brought from various regions the people dwelling in that vicinity, he caused them to dwell in Samaria so that his power might be safeguarded for the future, with loyal inhabitants in possession of the place.

When these things had taken place, God, wishing to show his power and that he had given over the Jews not because of any lack of power on his part but because of the sins of those whom he had

surrendered to their enemies, sent lions on the barbarians, and these preyed on the entire nation. This was reported to the king, and he sent a certain priest to give to them the laws of God. Nevertheless, not even then were they freed entirely from their impiety, but only partly. However, as time went on they turned away from idols and worshiped God. When things had reached this point, the Jews, finally returning, showed a contentious spirit toward them as foreigners and enemies and named them “Samaritans” after the mountain. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 31.2.⁵

A DIFFERENT ETYMOLOGY. ORIGEN: The Hebrews, however, call a guard *somer*, and thus they also hand on in their tradition that the Samaritans first received this name because the king of the Assyrians sent them to be guards of the land of Israel after the captivity, that is, that other Israel besides Judah, which was taken captive into Assyria because of their many sins. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 20.321.⁶

17:7-12 *They Built High Places*

A WIDESPREAD PRACTICE OF IDOLATRY.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: With the words “from watchtower to fortified city” [the Scripture] denounces the large number of their idols, that is, [there were] idols from border to border. The text refers to the “fortified city” as Jerusalem, but other [interpreters] say Antioch. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 16.15.⁷

17:20-28 *The Lord Punished Israel*

THE ESSENTIAL SACRAMENT OF UNITY. CYPRIAN: Finally, how inseparable is the sacrament of unity and how hopeless are they and what greatest perdition they seek for themselves from the indignation of God—they who make a schism and, after having abandoned their bishop, ap-

¹See 1 Kings 16:24. ²Is 7:9. ³See 2 Kings 15:29. ⁴The Egyptians (2 Kings 17:4). ⁵FC 33:301-2. ⁶FC 89:272. ⁷CSCO 229:142.

point for themselves another false bishop from without—the divine Scripture declares in the book of Kings, when from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin ten tribes were separated and, abandoning their king, appointed themselves another from without. “And the Lord was offended,” it says, “at all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them and delivered them up to plunder till he cast them away from his face because Israel was torn from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam son of Nabath their king.”⁸ It said that the Lord was offended and gave them over to perdition because they had been dispersed from unity and had appointed another king for themselves.

And so great indignation of the Lord remained against those who had made the schism that even when the man of God had been sent to Jeroboam to upbraid him for his sins and to foretell future vengeance, he was forbidden also to eat bread and to drink water among them. Since he had not heeded this and had dined contrary to the precept of God, he was immediately stricken by the majesty of divine censure; on his return, he was killed on the journey by the attack and bite of a lion. And does anyone of you dare to say that the life-giving water of baptism and heavenly grace can be common with schismatics with whom neither earthly food nor worldly drink ought to be common?

Moreover, the Lord satisfies us in his gospel and reveals a greater light of understanding that the same people who then had separated themselves from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin and, after having abandoned Jerusalem, had withdrawn to Samaria should be reputed among the profane and the Gentiles. For when he first sent his disciples upon the ministry of salvation, he commanded and said, “Do not go in the direction of the Gentiles or enter the town of the Samaritans.”¹⁰ Sending first to the Jews, he orders the Gentiles to be passed over as yet; but, adding that the city of the Samaritans, where there were schismatics, ought to be omitted, he shows that the schismatics were in the same category as the Gentiles. LETTER 69.6.¹⁰

THE WICKEDNESS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

ORIGEN: “Faithless Israel has shown itself less guilty than false Judah.”¹¹ The letter of the text just read has something unclear that we need to understand first. Then, after this, if God wills, we shall know his mystical plan. He wants us then to know in these words, just as it is written in Kings, that the people were divided in those times into the kingdom of ten tribes under Jeroboam and the kingdom of two tribes under Roboam.¹² And those under Jeroboam were called Israel, and those under Roboam Judah. And the division of the people persisted, according to the history, until today. For we know of nothing in the history that united Israel and Judah “into the same nation.”¹³ Then Israel first, under Jeroboam and under his successors, sinned excessively, and Israel sinned so much beyond Judah that they were sentenced by providence to become captives “to the Assyrians until the sign,”¹⁴ as the Scripture says. After this, the people of Judah also sinned, and as captives they were sentenced to Babylon, not until a sign, as Israel, but for “seventy years,”¹⁵ as Jeremiah prophesied and Daniel also mentioned.¹⁶ HOMILIES ON JEREMIAH 4.1.1-2.¹⁷

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE LIONS. ORIGEN:

[The Lord] takes hold of two principal lions, the Assyrians and the Babylonians. According to the history in the fourth book of Kings, there are two. For Assyria removed the sons of Israel to Assyria “until today,” but Babylon removed the sons of Judah “to Babylon.”¹⁸ Except he did not say here first and second, but first and last. For the first lion is the antagonistic devil; he is a murderer.¹⁹ The very last lion at the completion of the age is “the man of sin, the son of perdition, who exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.”²⁰ FRAGMENTS FROM THE CATENA ON JEREMIAH 28.2.²¹

⁸2 Kings 17:20-21 (VL). ⁹Mt 10:5. ¹⁰FC 51:248-49*. ¹¹Jer 3:11.

¹²I.e., Rehoboam. ¹³Jer 3:18. ¹⁴2 Kings 17:23 (LXX). ¹⁵Jer 25:11.

¹⁶See Dan 9:2. ¹⁷FC 97:30. ¹⁸2 Kings 25:7, 11. ¹⁹See Jn 8:44.

²⁰2 Thess 2:3-4. ²¹FC 97:296.

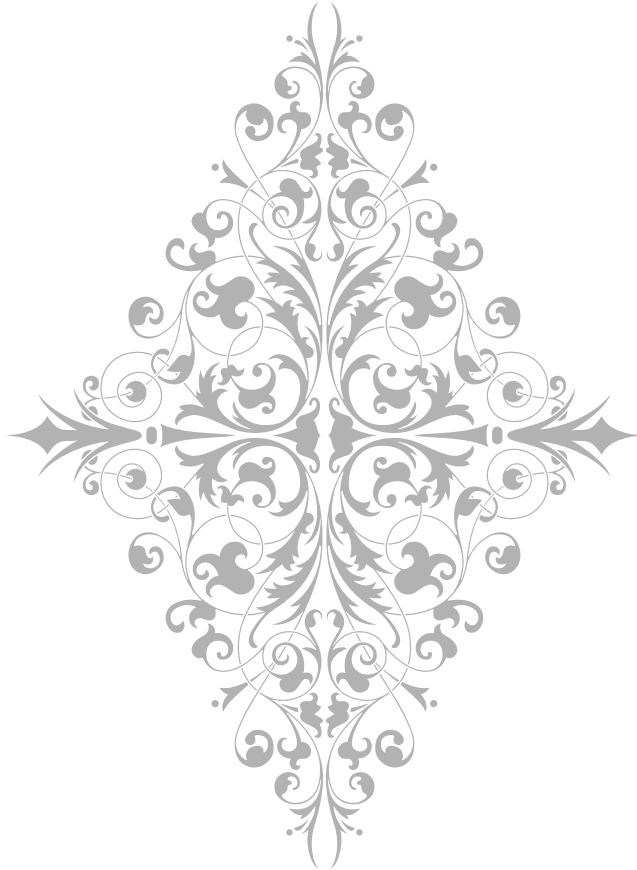
17:29-34 *They Worshiped the Lord and Their Own Gods*

ERRORS OF THE SAMARITANS IN WORSHIPING GOD. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: How, then, did the Samaritans not know what they worshiped? Because they thought that God was confined to a place and divisible; at least it was in that way that they worshiped him. And it was in this spirit that they sent to the Persians and announced that the God of this place was displeased with them.²²

According to this, their idea of him was no greater than their conception of their idols. Therefore, they continued to worship both evil spirit and him, combining things that were altogether incompatible. But the Jews for the most part were free of this taint and knew that he is God of the universe, even though not all of them [were faithful]. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 33.I.²³

²²2 Kings 17:26 (LXX). ²³FC 33:323.





THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HEZEKIAH

2 KINGS 18:1-37

OVERVIEW: Hezekiah served God by destroying the groves and temples of idols. He was the first king who completely destroyed the high places. The bronze serpent was preserved intact in memory of Moses' miracle but afterwards was worshiped as an idol by the unfaithful people until Hezekiah destroyed it (AUGUSTINE). Hezekiah did not hesitate, in the face of stern necessity, to give the Assyrian king all that he had consecrated to the Lord (JEROME). Sennacherib is a type of the devil, and this is confirmed by the words that the Rabshakeh boastfully speaks against God (EPHREM).

18:1-7 Hezekiah Removed the High Places

HEZEKIAH SERVED GOD. AUGUSTINE: A sovereign serves God one way as man, another way as king; he serves him as man by living according to faith, he serves him as king by exerting the necessary strength to sanction laws that command goodness and prohibit its opposite. It was thus that Hezekiah served him by destroying the groves and temples of idols and the high places that had been set up contrary to the commandments of God. LETTER 185.19.¹

THE FIRST KING TO DESTROY THE HIGH PLACES. AUGUSTINE: But because he goes on to add "of this man's seed God, according to his promise, has raised up to Israel a Savior, Jesus,"² he indicates that that testimony must have a deeper meaning in the Lord Jesus, who truly does all the will of God the Father, rather than in the great King David, who, even though according to

the previous discussion his sins had been remitted and not imputed and also because of the holy penitence mentioned, could not unjustly be said to have been found according to the heart of God. Yet, how did he do all the will of God? Even if he was exceptionally praised when Scripture relates his times and his deeds, he is marked because he did not destroy the high places where the people of God used to sacrifice contrary to the command of God, who had ordered that sacrifices be offered to him only in the tabernacle of the testament, although in these same high places sacrifice is offered to the same God. The king Hezekiah, himself sprung from the seed of David, afterwards destroyed these places, accompanied by the testimony of his great praise. EIGHT QUESTIONS OF DULCITIUS 5.³

THE BRONZE SERPENT. AUGUSTINE: Then there were the miracles . . . of the deadly bites of serpents, inflicted as just punishment for sin, and healed when a brazen serpent was raised on a wooden pole in sight of all,⁴ so that not only did relief come to an afflicted people but also the destruction of death by death was symbolized by this image of the crucifixion. This serpent was preserved intact in memory of the miracle but afterwards was worshiped as an idol by the unfaithful people until King Hezekiah, religiously using his power in the service of God, destroyed it and thus gained great renown for his piety. CITY OF GOD 10.8.⁵

¹FC 30:160. ²Acts 13:23. ³FC 16:465-66. ⁴See Num 21:8-9. ⁵FC 14:131*.

18:13-16 Hezekiah Gave Sennacherib All the Silver from the Temple

HEZEKIAH'S NOBLE DEEDS. JEROME: Of Hezekiah it is written, "And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He destroyed the high places, and broke the statues in pieces, and burned the groves and broke the brazen serpent that Moses had made." And again, "He trusted in the Lord the God of Israel, and after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah who were before him. He stuck to the Lord, and departed not from him and kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses, and the Lord was with him, and in all things to which he went forth, he behaved himself wisely." And, when Sennacherib, the king of the Assyrians, had taken all the cities of Judah, "Hezekiah sent messengers to him, to Lachish, saying, 'I have sinned, depart from me, and all that you shall command of me, I will give.' And the king of the Assyrians put a tax on Hezekiah, king of Judah, of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the money that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasure houses of the king. At that time, he broke the doors of the temple of the Lord and the plates of gold and gave them all to the king of the Assyrians." Although such great demands were placed on him, Hezekiah did not hesitate, in the

face of stern necessity, to give the Assyrian king all that he had consecrated to the Lord, and it is said to him, "I will protect this city for my own sake and for David my servant's sake."⁶ Not for your sake, for you had already performed a noble deed when 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian army were laid low and slaughtered by an angel.⁷

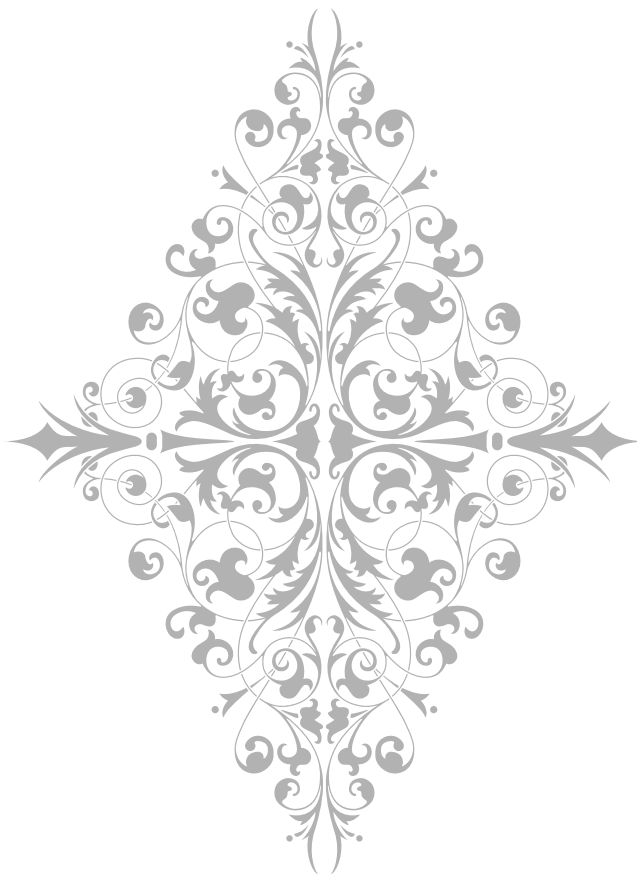
AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.21.⁸

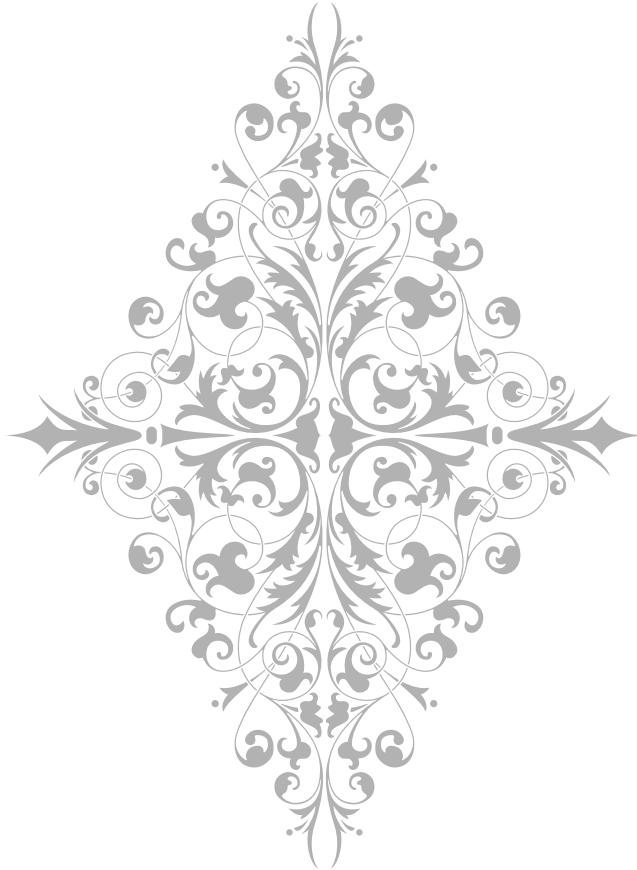
18:19-37 Make Your Peace with Me

SENNACHERIB AS A TYPE OF THE DEVIL.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: As I have already said, Sennacherib is a type of the devil, and this hypothesis is perfectly confirmed by the words that in this passage the Rabshakeh boastfully speaks against God when he makes false promises to the people, trying to take away from [God] the praise of his supreme power and giving assurance of a land of fertile soil and abundant crops in order to persuade them to abandon the region given to them by God and to move to the new dwelling places promised by the Assyrian. With a very similar artifice the accomplices and envoys of the devil endeavor to seduce a simple soul. And for this reason, in the first place, they try to uproot all the opinions that are inspired by divine providence. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 18.19.⁹

⁶2 Kings 20:6. ⁷See 2 Kings 18:17–19:37. ⁸FC 53:330. ⁹ESOO 1:557.





THE DEFEAT OF SENNACHERIB 2 KINGS 19:1-37

OVERVIEW: Sennacherib fled from Hezekiah through the agency of the prophet Isaiah, even though he was far removed in another district, because at that time Isaiah was the mediator for Hezekiah before God (PAULINUS). Through prayer Hezekiah added to the days of his life as king and routed the mighty army of the Assyrians (SARDONA). When an ear is ascribed to God, it is implied that he hears all things (NOVATIAN). The Lord's goodness is so great that he often finds his way to grant the salvation of the majority on account of a few just people. When Hezekiah was about to run the greatest possible risk, although he was a righteous man, God said that he would aid him for the sake of David (CHRYSOSTOM). The true angel sent by the Lord against the Assyrians had no need of crowds or apparitions or loud noises, like demons have, but he used his power quietly and destroyed 185,000 at one time (ATHANASIUS). Because God was gracious to the Jews, without battle or war the barbarian king left 185,000 of his slain soldiers among them and fled (CHRYSOSTOM).

19:1-7 God Will Cause Him to Fall

ISAIAH WAS THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HEZEKIAH. PAULINUS OF NOLA: Faith unguarded is armed by God. Hezekiah, through the power of faith, proved stronger with his puny force than Sennacherib, king of Babylon and rich Nineveh, with his thousands. Sennacherib had enlisted the forces of Assyria and the realm of the

Medes. Laying waste with his huge legions all the neighbouring kingdoms, he proceeded towards the city sacred to the Lord and against it alone concentrated his whole massive war machine. But as he made preparations for this, God hindered him, for warfare delayed his unholy designs. He sent to Jerusalem a letter brusque in its arrogant threats. Hezekiah received it with grief and bore it to the Lord before the altar. There in prostrate prayer accompanied by his people in mourning black, he read out those harsh words and bedewed the letter with abundant tears, and so he prevailed on God. By prayer alone, though absent from the scene, he won a shattering victory over the Assyrians, who suffered a grievous death when God warred on them. This favour he won was so considerable that he did not even clap eyes on the enemy he conquered. Once his tears of complaint had passed above the constellations, once his lament from a humble heart had risen beyond the stars and his devoted words had assailed the ears of highest Father, the lofty doors of heaven swung open and a winged angel glided down, breathing the fragrant air on his smooth descent. Armed with the sword of the Word, he smote that wicked army, and glorying in the silent slaughter of the sleeping foe, he brought simultaneous death to one hundred and eighty thousand men. A single night was the accomplice engagement on that scale. Next morning the king arose still threatening but then took flight with his depleted column, wretched because his army was

thus stripped of its slaughtered soldiers. He fled from Hezekiah, though the prophet was far removed in another district, and though he had only recently in his presence threatened to clap his fetters on him. At that time Isaias was mediator for Hezekiah. POEMS 26.166-95.¹

19:15-18 *Hezekiah Prayed to the Lord*

THE POWER OF PRAYER. SAHDONA: Prayer sometimes brings the dead back to life, but sometimes it may slay the living, as happened with the godly Peter: he brought Tabitha back to life² by prayer, but he effected the death of Ananias and Sapphira.³ Elisha, that spiritual man, brought to life the young son of the Shunammite woman,⁴ but he brought to their end the wicked children, through the bears that he brought out against them with the course.⁵ The case of Hezekiah was also astonishing: through prayer he added to the days of his life as king⁶ and routed the mighty army of the Assyrians with the help of a spiritual being. BOOK OF PERFECTION 41.⁷

19:20-31 *God Punishes the Arrogance of Sennacherib*

GOD HEARS ALL THINGS. NOVATIAN: When eyes are ascribed to God, it is implied that he sees all things;⁸ an ear, to show that he hears all things; a finger,⁹ to reveal a certain signification of the will; nostrils, to show that he is aware of our prayers as one is of odors;¹⁰ hands, to prove that he is the author of every created thing; an arm,¹¹ to make it known that no nature can resist his power; and finally feet,¹² to make it clear that he fills all things and that there is no thing in which God is not. ON THE TRINITY 6.6.¹³

19:32-34 *God Will Defend Jerusalem*

SALVATION ON ACCOUNT OF THE VIRTUE OF THE DEPARTED. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: The Lord's goodness is immense, and frequently he finds his way to grant the salvation of the majority on

account of a few just people. Why do I say on account of a few just people? Frequently, when a just person cannot be found in the present life, he takes pity on the living on account of the virtue of the departed and cries aloud in the words, "I will protect this city for my own sake and the sake of my servant David." Even if they do not deserve to be saved, he is saying, and have no claim on salvation, yet since showing love is habitual with me and I am prompt to have pity and rescue them from disaster, for my own sake and the sake of my servant David I will act as a shield; he who passed on from this life many years before will prove the salvation of those who have fallen victim to their own indifference. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 42.24.¹⁴

THE FORCE OF REPENTANCE TRANSCENDS GENERATIONS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: For the blessed David also had a fall like that which has now happened to you; and not this only but another also that followed it. I mean that of murder. What then? Did he remain prostrate? Did he not immediately rise up again with energy and place himself in position to fight the enemy? In fact, he wrestled with him so bravely that even after his death he was the protector of his offspring. For when Solomon had perpetrated great iniquity and had deserved countless deaths, God said that he would leave him the kingdom intact, thus speaking: "I will surely rend the kingdom out of your hand and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do this in your days." Wherefore? "For David your father's sake, I will take it out of the hand of your son."¹⁵ And again when Hezekiah was about to run the greatest possible risk, although he was a righteous man, God said that he would aid him for the sake of this saint. "For I will cast my shield," he says, "over this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE 1.14.¹⁶

¹ACW 40:260-61. ²See Acts 9:40. ³See Acts 5:3-10. ⁴See 2 Kings 4:32-36. ⁵See 2 Kings 2:23-24. ⁶See Is 38:1-5. ⁷CS 101:219. ⁸Ps 33:15 (32:15 LXX); 34:15 (33:16 LXX, Vg). ⁹See Exod 31:18. ¹⁰See Gen 8:21. ¹¹See Ps 136:12 (135:12 LXX, Vg); Deut 5:15. ¹²See Is 66:1. ¹³FC 67:36. ¹⁴FC 82:431. ¹⁵1 Kings 11:11. ¹⁶NPNF 1 9:105*.

19:35-37 *The Angel of the Lord*

THE TRUE STRENGTH OF THE ANGEL. ATHANASIUS: Since the evil spirits have no power, they play as on a stage, changing their shapes and frightening children by the apparition of crowds and by their changed forms. This is why they are to be despised the more for their powerlessness. The true angel sent by the Lord against the Assyrians had no need of crowds or apparitions from without, or loud noises or clappings, but he used his power quietly and destroyed 185,000 at one time. Powerless demons such as these, however, try to frighten, if only by empty phantoms. LIFE OF ST. ANTHONY 28.9-10.¹⁷

THE POWER OF GOD SAVED THE JEWS AT THE TIME OF HEZEKIAH. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: But the Jews will say, “Where is the evidence that God has turned away from us?” Does this still need proof in words? Tell me this. Do not the facts themselves shout it out? Do they not send forth a sound clearer than the trumpet’s call? Do you still ask for proof in words when you see the destruction of your city, the desolation of your temple and all the other misfortunes that have come on you? “But people brought these things on us, not God.” Rather it was God above all oth-

ers who did these things. If you attribute them to people, then you must consider that even if people were to have the boldness, they would not have had the power to bring these things to accomplishment, unless it were by God’s decree. The barbarian came down on you and brought all Persia¹⁸ with him. He expected that he would catch you all by the suddenness of his attack, and he kept you all locked in the city as if you were caught in the net of a hunter or fisherman. Because God was gracious to you at the time—I repeat, at that time—without a battle, without a war, without a hostile encounter, the barbarian king left 185,000 of his slain soldiers among you and fled, contented that he alone was saved. And God often decided countless other battles in this way. So also now, if God had not deserted you once and for all, your enemies would not have had the power to destroy your city and leave your temple desolate. If God had not abandoned you, the ruin of desolation would not have lasted so long a time, nor would your frequent efforts to rebuild the temple have been in vain. DISCOURSES AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS 6.3.6-7.¹⁹

¹⁷FC 15:162*. ¹⁸Sennacherib was king of Assyria, not Persia. This is probably a slip on the part of Chrysostom. ¹⁹FC 68:157-58.



THE END OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH 2 KINGS 20:1-21

OVERVIEW: The Lord, with a view to mercy and kindness, chooses to break his word and to extend the life of Hezekiah (CASSIAN). Hezekiah does not cease from penitence, for he remembers the words of Isaiah: “In the hour that you turn and lament, you shall be saved” (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). When Hezekiah was sick, he did not call to mind sumptuous feasting or glory or royalty but

righteousness (CHRYSOSTOM). Hezekiah is commanded to make a plaster with a lump of figs, because the fig tree symbolizes the Holy Spirit (METHODIUS). Hezekiah showed God’s treasure to the Assyrians, who ought never to have seen what they were sure to covet (JEROME). Hezekiah did not rejoice for the disaster of the captivity, but he could not oppose the will of the Lord and

received the Lord's commands with patience like a humble servant (AMBROSE).

20:1-6 I Will Heal You

IN HIS INFINITE MERCY, GOD REMAINS FREE

TO REVISE HIS JUDGMENTS. JOHN CASSIAN: Now let us rise to still higher instances. When king Hezekiah was lying on his bed and afflicted with grievous sickness, the prophet Isaiah addressed him in the person of God, and said: "Thus says the Lord: set your house in order for will die and not live. And Hezekiah," it says, "turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord and said: I beseech you, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart, and how I have done what was right in your sight. And Hezekiah wept much." After which it was again said to Isaiah: "Go, return, and speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: Thus says the Lord God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add to your life fifteen years, and I will deliver you out of the hand of the king of the Assyrians, and I will defend this city for your sake and for my servant David's sake." What can be clearer than this proof that out of consideration for mercy and goodness the Lord would rather break his word and instead of the appointed sentence of death extend the life of him who prayed for fifteen years, rather than be found inexorable because of an unchangeable decree? CONFERENCE 17.25.10-II.¹

HEZEKIAH IS SAVED BY THE POWER OF HIS

REPENTANCE. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Would you know the power of repentance? Would you understand this strong weapon of salvation and the might of confession? By confession Hezekiah routed 185,000 of the enemy.² That was important, but it was little compared with what shall be told. The same king's repentance won the repeal of the sentence God had passed on him. For when he was sick, Isaiah said to him, "Give charge concerning your house, for you shall die and not live." What

expectation was left? What hope of recovery was there, when the prophet said, "For you shall die"? But Hezekiah did not cease from penitence, for he remembered what was written: "In the hour that you turn and lament, you shall be saved."³ He turned his face to the wall, and from his bed of pain his mind soared up to heaven—for no wall is so thick as to stifle reverent prayer—"Lord," he said, "remember me. You are not subject to circumstance, but are yourself the legislator of life. For not on birth and conjunction of stars, as some vainly say, does our life depend. No, you are the arbiter, according to your will, of life and the duration of life." He whom the prophet's sentence had forbidden to hope was granted fifteen further years of life, the sun turning back its course in witness thereof. Now while the sun retraced its course for Hezekiah, for Christ it was eclipsed, the distinction marking the difference between the two, I mean Hezekiah and Jesus. Now if even Hezekiah could revoke God's decree, shall not Jesus grant the remission of sins? Turn and lament, shut your door, and beg for pardon, that God may remove from the scorching flames. For confession has the power to quench even fire; it can tame even lions. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 2.15.⁴

A PIOUS PERSON WILL EXULT IN RIGH-

TEOUSNESS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: For which of the things in our present life seems to you pleasant? A sumptuous table, and health of body, and glory and wealth? No, these delights, if you set them by that pleasure, will prove the bitterest of all things, compared with what is to come. For nothing is more pleasurable than a sound conscience and a good hope. And if you would learn this, let us inquire of him who is on the point of departing hence or of him that is grown old; and when we have reminded him of sumptuous banqueting that he had enjoyed, and of glory and honor and of good works that he had some time practiced and wrought, let us ask in which he exults the more; and we shall see him for the

¹NPNF 2 11:471**. ²See 2 Kings 19:35. ³Is 30:15. ⁴FC 61:104-5.

other ashamed and covering his face but for these soaring and leaping with joy. So Hezekiah, too, when he was sick, called not to mind sumptuous feasting or glory or royalty but righteousness. For “remember,” he said, “how I walked before you in an upright way.” *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW* 53.6-7.⁵

20:7-11 *A Lump of Figs*

THE FIG TREE IS A SYMBOL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. *METHODIUS:* The vine, and that not in a few places, refers to the Lord himself,⁶ and the fig tree to the Holy Spirit, as the Lord makes glad the hearts of people and heals them. And therefore Hezekiah is commanded 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, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;”⁷ which, on account of their great pleasantness the prophet calls figs. Micah also says, “They shall sit everyone under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.”⁸ 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 humankind. *SYMPOSIUM OR BANQUET OF THE TEN VIRGINS* 10.5.⁹

20:12-15 *Hezekiah’s Treasure House*

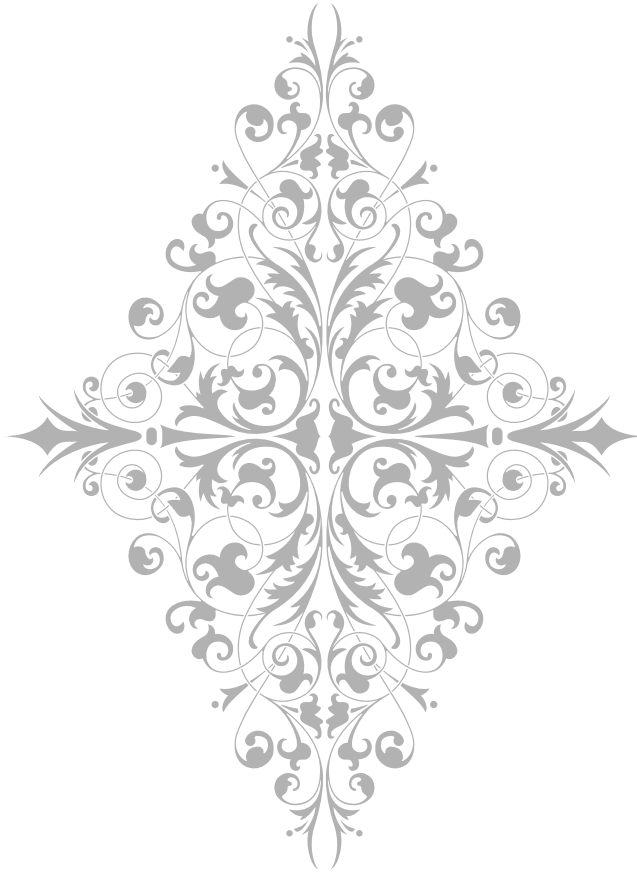
THE EYES OF COVETOUSNESS. *JEROME:* And assuredly no gold or silver vessel was ever so dear to God as is the temple of a virgin’s body. The shadow went before, but now the reality has

come. You indeed may speak in all simplicity, and from motives of amiability you may treat with courtesy the truest strangers, but unchaste eyes see nothing aright. They fail to appreciate the beauty of the soul and value only that of the body. Hezekiah showed God’s treasure to the Assyrians, who ought never to have seen what they were sure to covet. The consequence was that Judea was torn by continual wars and that the very first things carried away to Babylon were these vessels of the Lord. We find Belshazzar at his feast and among his concubines (vice always glories in defiling what is noble) drinking out of these sacred cups.¹⁰ *LETTER* 22.23.¹¹

20:17-21 *Some of Hezekiah’s Sons Will Be Exiled*

HEZEKIAH RECEIVES THE LORD’S COMMANDS. *AMBROSE:* Surely the just Hezekiah did not rejoice that the disaster of the captivity had fallen on his children, but he could not oppose the will of the Lord, and so he received the Lord’s commands with patience like a humble servant. Thus it happens that one could judge that merit and virtue could be evident even in captivity. For Jeremiah was not less happy in captivity,¹² nor was Daniel,¹³ nor Ezra,¹⁴ nor were Ananias and Azariah and Misael less happy than if they had not fallen into captivity.¹⁵ 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. *JACOB AND THE HAPPY LIFE* 8.36.¹⁶

⁵NPNF 1 10:331. ⁶See Jn 15:1. ⁷Gal 5:22-23. ⁸Mic 4:4. ⁹ANF 6:350. ¹⁰Dan 5:1-3. ¹¹NPNF 2 6:31. ¹²See Jer 37-38. ¹³See Dan 1:6. ¹⁴See Ezra 7:6. ¹⁵See Dan 3:19-96 (Vg). ¹⁶FC 65:141-42.



THE RETURN TO IDOLATRY
UNDER MANASSEH AND AMON
2 KINGS 21:1-26

OVERVIEW: For a period of time, the Lord God punished Manasseh, who was addicted to idols and had slain many innocent persons, but received him when he repented and forgave him his offenses (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS, CHRYSOSTOM). Amon did evil in the sight of the Lord above all who were before him, and the Lord soon destroyed him utterly from his good land (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS).

21:1-17 *Manasseh More Wicked Than the Amorites*

WICKEDNESS AND FINAL REPENTANCE OF MANASSEH. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: For it is written thus in the fourth book of Kings and the second book of Chronicles, or of Days: “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, following the abominable practices of the nations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole, as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put my name.’ He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.”¹ And Manasseh raised altars and served Baal there and said, “My name will last forever.” “He built altars

for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the Lord said to David and to his son Solomon, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.’” But they did not listen; Manasseh misled them to do more evil than the nations had done that the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.

The Lord said by his servants the prophets, “Because King Manasseh of Judah has committed these abominations, has done things more wicked than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has caused Judah also to sin with his idols; therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I am bringing on Jerusalem and Judah such evil that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line for Samaria and the plumb line for the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will

¹2 Chron 33:1-4.

cast off the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies; they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their ancestors came out of Egypt, even to this day.” Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he caused Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.² “Therefore the Lord brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, bound him with fetters and brought him to Babylon.”³ And he was bound and shackled all over with iron in the house of the prison. And bread made of bran was given to him scantily and by weight, and water mixed with vinegar but a little and by measure, so much as would keep him alive; and he was in straits and sore afflictions. “While he was in distress he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. He prayed to him,”⁴ saying, “O Lord, almighty God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous seed, who have made heaven and earth, with all the ornaments thereof, who have bound the sea by the word of your commandment, who have shut up the deep and sealed it by your terrible and glorious name, whom all people fear and tremble before your power; for the majesty of your glory cannot be borne, and your angry threatening toward the sinner is insupportable. But your merciful promise is unmeasurable and unsearchable; for you are the most high Lord, of great compassion, long suffering, very merciful and who repents of the evils of humankind. You, O Lord, according to your great goodness, have promised repentance and forgiveness to them who have sinned against you, and of your infinite mercy you have appointed repentance to sinners, that they may be saved. You therefore, O Lord, that are the God of the just, have not appointed repentance to the just as to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who have not sinned against you; but

you have appointed repentance to me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are multiplied; my transgressions are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of my iniquity. I am bowed down with many iron bands; for I have provoked your wrath and done evil before you, setting up abominations and multiplying offenses. Now, therefore, I bow the knee of my heart, beseeching you of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my iniquities; wherefore I humbly beseech you, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and do not destroy me with my iniquities. Be not angry with me forever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me into the lower part of the earth. For you are the God, even the God of them that repent, and in me you will show your goodness; for you will save me that am unworthy, according to your great mercy. Therefore I will praise you forever all the days of my life; for all the powers of the heavens do praise you, and yours is the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

“And God heard his plea”⁵ and had compassion on him. And there appeared a flame of fire about him, and all the iron shackles and chains that were about him fell off; and the Lord healed Manasseh from his affliction and “restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord indeed was God.”⁶ And he worshiped the Lord God alone with all his heart and with all his soul, and all the days of his life; and he was esteemed righteous. “He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them out of the city. He also restored the altar of the Lord and offered on it sacrifices of well-being and of thanksgiving; and he commanded Judah to serve the Lord the God of Israel.”⁷ . . . You have heard, our beloved chil-

²2 Chron 33:5-10. ³2 Chron 33:11. ⁴2 Chron 33:12. ⁵2 Chron 33:13.

⁶2 Chron 33:13. ⁷2 Chron 33:15-16.

dren, how the Lord God for a while punished him who was addicted to idols and had slain many innocent persons; and yet that he received him when he repented, and forgave him his offenses and restored him to his kingdom. For he not only forgives the penitent, but also reinstates them in their former dignity. CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 2.22.⁸

REPENTANCE GIVES WAY TO THE GRACE OF CHRIST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: For so Manasseh had perpetrated innumerable pollutions, having both stretched out his hands against the saints, and brought abominations into the temple, and filled the city with murders and wrought many other things beyond excuse; yet nevertheless after so long and so great wickedness, he washed away from himself all these things. How and in what matter? By repentance and self-examination. For there is no sin that does not yield and give way to the power of repentance, or rather to the grace of Christ. Since if we would but only change, we have him to assist us. And if you are desirous to become good, there is none to hinder us; or rather there is one to hinder us, the devil, yet he has no power, so long as you choose what is best and so attract God to your aid. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 22.6.⁹

21:19-24 *Amon Served Idols*

PUNISHMENT FOR THE UNREPENTANT. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: There is no sin more grievous than idolatry, for it is an impiety against God, and yet even this sin has been forgiven, on sincere repentance. But if anyone sins in direct opposition and on purpose to try whether God will punish the wicked or not, such a one shall have no remission, although he says to himself, "All is well, and I will walk according to the customs of my evil heart."¹⁰ Such a one was Amon the son of Manasseh. For the Scripture says, "And Amon reasoned an evil reasoning of transgression and said, My father from his childhood was a great transgressor and repented in his old age; and now I will walk as my soul lusts, and afterwards I will return to the Lord." And he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all who were before him. And the Lord God soon destroyed him utterly from his good land. And his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house, and he reigned two years only. CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 2.23.¹¹

⁸ANF 7:406-7**. ⁹NPNF 1 10:154-55*. ¹⁰Deut 29:19. ¹¹ANF 7:408.





THE PIOUS RULE OF JOSIAH

2 KINGS 22:1-20

OVERVIEW: Josiah destroys the pagan temples rebuilt by Manasseh and refurbishes the house of the Lord, which had been neglected during the impious reign of his predecessor (EPHREM). It is not without a reason that the book of Deuteronomy was discovered in the house of the Lord at the time of Josiah, because he, more than all the

other kings, showed a real fervor against the priests of Baal (ISHO'DAD). In the Scripture, women are praised when holy men fail, so that this may be a reproach for all men (JEROME). It is possible that Huldah's power of prophecy was superior to that of Jeremiah (ISHO'DAD). The dead undergo no evils either by enduring them them-

selves or by compassionate suffering for others but are liberated from all evils that when they lived here they endured for themselves and out of compassion for others (AUGUSTINE).

22:1-7 Josiah Did What Was Right

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PIETY OF JOSIAH.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord" for the thirty-one years in which he reigned. In the eighteenth year from the beginning of his rule, he began to purify Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In fact, he removed the foreign religions introduced by Manasseh and overturned the sanctuaries and altars. In the same eighteenth year he ordered an expiation of the temple and commanded the priests to make repairs. He brought in workers, gathered stones, materials and other things useful to building and supplied the money for the expected expenses, and in this case he religiously emulated the pious zeal of his great-grandfather Jehoash.¹ And at that time the refurbishment of the temple was not less necessary than it had been before, because for the fifty years in which Manasseh had reigned,² it had been neglected or given to profane uses. ON THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS 22.1.³

22:8-10 The Book of the Law

DEUTERONOMY WAS THE BOOK FOUND.

ISHO'DAD OF MERV: The book that was discovered was the Deuteronomy that Moses had placed in the ark as a precaution.⁴ It was brought out through a divine action, in order to show the people that it cried and argued against them because of their great iniquity and therefore did not want to stay in its place. Hilkiyah, who found the book, was the father of the prophet Jeremiah.⁵ It is not without a reason that the book was discovered at the time of Josiah because he, more than all the other kings, showed a real fervor against the priests of Baal, especially against

those of the ten tribes, that is, those that had survived among them. Indeed, if [the book] had been found at the time of the other kings, they would not have accepted it. They might have even torn it up, as Zedekiah tore the prophecy of Jeremiah and threw it into the fire.⁶ [Another reason] is that the time of their captivity had come. For the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity are usually counted from the eighteenth year of Josiah, the year in which the book was discovered: as if the captivity was about to come in those days but was hindered because of Josiah's virtue. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 22.8.⁷

22:11-14 The Prophet Huldah

WHEN HOLY MEN FAIL, WOMEN ARE PRAISED.

JEROME: We need not wonder that Huldah, the prophet and wife of Shallum, was consulted by Josiah, king of Judah, when the captivity was approaching and the wrath of the Lord was falling on Jerusalem: since it is the rule of Scripture, when holy men fail, to praise women to the reproach of men. AGAINST JOVINIANUS 1.25.⁸

HULDAH'S GIFT OF PROPHECY. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "They went to the prophet Huldah," and not to Jeremiah, even though he was already well known as a prophet, probably because Jeremiah was not there at the moment, or maybe because this woman surpassed him with the power of her gift of prophecy. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 22.14.⁹

22:18-20 Gathered to His Grave in Peace

THE DEAD ARE NOT AFFECTED BY EVILS AMONG THE LIVING.

AUGUSTINE: How do we say that they have been advised who have died

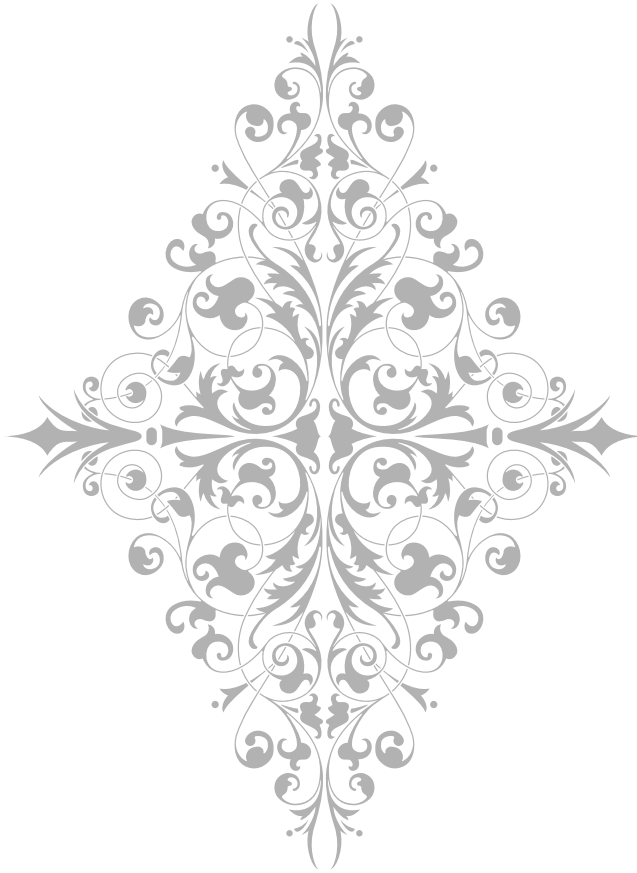
¹See 2 Kings 12:4-16. ²See 2 Kings 21:1-18. ³ESOO 1:564-65. ⁴See Deut 31:26. ⁵This assertion of Isho'dad appears to be historically groundless. ⁶Jer 36:23. ⁷CSCO 229:146-47. ⁸NPNF 2 6:364*. ⁹CSCO 229:147.

before the coming of the evils that followed their death, if after death they perceive whatever misfortunes befall the human life? Or is it that we are mistaken when we imagine that they are at rest when the restless life of the living concerns them? What is this, then, that God promised to the most devout king, Josiah, for a great reward, telling him that he would soon die in order that he might not see the evils that he was threatening to send on that place and that people? The words of God are these: "Thus says the Lord the God of Israel: My words, which you have heard and which you feared from my mouth when you heard what I said about this place and those who dwell in it, that it be forsaken and become a curse, and you rent your garments and wept in my sight, shall not come to pass, says the Lord of hosts. Behold I shall bring you to your fathers, and you shall be brought with peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evils that I bring upon this place and those who dwell in it." And Josiah, alarmed at

the dire threats of God, wept and tore his garments and then was made secure by an early death from all future ills, because he would so rest in peace that he would not see those evils. The souls of the dead, then, are in a place where they do not see the things that go on and transpire in this mortal life. How, then, do they see their own graves or their own bodies, whether they are buried or lie exposed? How do they take part in the misery of the living, when either they are suffering their own evil deserts, if such they have merited, or they rest in peace, such as was promised to this Josiah? For there they undergo no evils either by enduring them themselves or by compassionate suffering for others, but they are liberated from all evils that when they lived here they endured for themselves and out of compassion for others. *THE CARE TO BE TAKEN FOR THE DEAD* 13.16.¹⁰

¹⁰FC 27:374-75.







JOSIAH IS KILLED BY THE EGYPTIANS 2 KINGS 23:1-30

OVERVIEW: In zeal Josiah was superior to those who went before him (AMBROSE). Josiah served the Lord as a king when he performed acts in his service that none but kings can perform (AUGUSTINE). By abolishing all human sacrifices, Josiah abolished every form of the cult of the devil and the demons (ISHO'DAD). The old prophet, who had led the true prophet to transgression, knew that the time would have come according to the prophecy of that man of God when Josiah, king of the Jews, would dig up in the land the bones of many dead and with them defile the sacrilegious altars that had been set up for graven images but would have spared that tomb where the prophet lay¹ (AUGUSTINE). Because grievous destruction threatened the Jewish people, the just king Josiah was taken away beforehand (AMBROSE).

23:1-3 *Josiah Made a Covenant*

JOSIAH'S RELIGIOUS ZEAL. AMBROSE: Love faith. For by his devotion and faith Josiah won great love for himself from his enemies. For he celebrated the Lord's Passover when he was eigh-

teen years old, as no one had done it before him. As then in zeal he was superior to those who went before him, so do you, my children, show zeal for God. Let zeal for God search you through and devour you, so that each one of you may say, "The zeal of your house has eaten me up."² An apostle of Christ was called the zealot.³ But why do I speak of an apostle? The Lord himself said, "The zeal of your house has eaten me up."⁴ Let it then be real zeal for God, not mean earthly zeal, for that causes jealousy. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 2.30.154.⁵

23:4-9 *Destroying the Vessels Made for Baal*

JOSIAH USES HIS ROYAL POWER. AUGUSTINE: How, then, do kings serve the Lord with fear except by forbidding and restraining with religious severity all acts committed against the commandments of the Lord? A sovereign serves God

¹See 1 Kings 13:29-32. ²Ps 69:9 (68:10 LXX, Vg). ³Lk 6:15. ⁴Jn 2:17; the text of John says, "The disciples remembered that it was written."

⁵NPNF 2 10:67.

one way as man, another way as king; he serves him as man by living according to faith, he serves him as king by exerting the necessary strength to sanction laws that command goodness and prohibit its opposite. It was thus that Hezekiah served him by destroying the groves and temples of idols and the high places that had been set up contrary to the commandments of God;⁶ thus Josiah served him by performing similar acts. . . . It is thus that kings serve the Lord as kings when they perform acts in his service that none but kings can perform. LETTER 185.19.⁷

23:10-15 *Topheth Defiled*

ABOLISHMENT OF THE WORSHIP OF DEMONS. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: "No one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire." The passage through fire is the symbol of combustion. In fact, the demons demanded that [their worshipers] burn their own children, and sometimes they were immolated, sometimes they only underwent the symbolic rite mentioned above,⁸ as if they had been actually placed into the fire and consumed, and so the expectations of the demons were satisfied. Sometimes fire was also passed above somebody to signify that he was by now enveloped in fire. Then salt was thrown, too, according to the customs of those who worship the devil. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 23.10.⁹

23:16-18 *The Tomb of the Man of God*

A FULFILLED PROPHECY. AUGUSTINE: Yet from that love of the human heart, because of which "no one ever hated his own flesh,"¹⁰ if people believe that anything would be lacking to their bodies after death that in their own people or country the solemnity of burial demands, they become sad, and before death they fear for their bodies that which has no effect on them after death. Thus we read in the book of Kings that God through a prophet threatens another prophet who transgressed his word, that his body should not be returned to the sepulcher of his

ancestors. Scripture records it in these words: "Thus says the Lord: Because you have not been obedient to the Lord and have not kept the commandment that the Lord your God commanded you, and have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place wherein he commanded you that you should not eat bread or drink water, your dead shall not be brought in the sepulcher of your ancestors."¹¹ If we consider the extent of this punishment according to the Evangelist where we learn that after the body has been slain there is no occasion to fear that the lifeless members will suffer, it should not be called punishment. But, if we consider it in relation to the love of a person for his own flesh, then he might have been frightened and saddened while living at what he was not to feel when dead. This, then, was the nature of the punishment: The soul grieved that something would happen to its body, although, when it did happen, the soul did not grieve. Only to this extent did the Lord wish to punish his servant, for it was not from his own obstinacy that he refused to carry out the command, but, because of the deceit of another person who was deceiving him, he thought he obeyed when he did not obey. THE CARE TO BE TAKEN FOR THE DEAD 7.9.¹²

23:25-30 *Pharaoh Neco Killed Josiah*

JOSIAH IS TAKEN AWAY BEFOREHAND.

AMBROSE: Nobody must think that anything was detracted to the celerity of death because of one's merits. Enoch was kidnapped,¹³ lest malice might spoil his heart,¹⁴ and Josiah, who celebrated the Passover of the Lord in the eighteenth year of his reign in such a manner that he overcame in pioussness all the previous kings, did not survive longer through the merits of his faith. No, rather, because grievous destruction threatened the Jewish people, the just king was taken away before-

⁶See 2 Kings 18:4. ⁷FC 30:160. ⁸That is, the passage through fire.

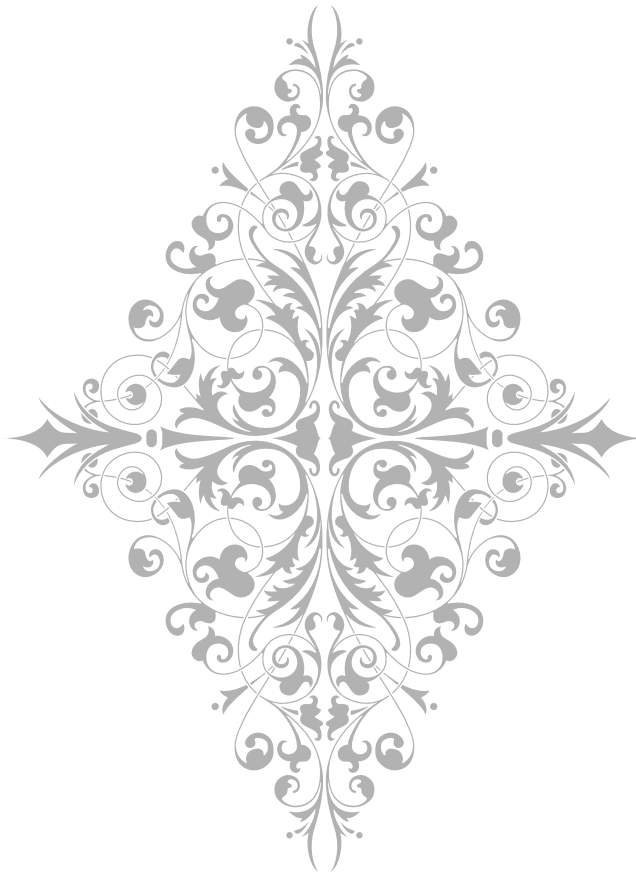
⁹CSCO 229:147. ¹⁰Lk 12:4. ¹¹1 Kings 13:21-22. ¹²FC 27:362-63.

¹³See Gen 5:24. ¹⁴Wis 4:11.

hand. I fear that you, too, were snatched away from us because of some offense on our part, so that, as a just person, you might escape in the eighteenth year of your reign the bitterness of impending evil.¹⁵ CONSOLATION ON THE DEATH

OF EMPEROR VALENTINIAN 57.¹⁶

¹⁵In this funeral oration Ambrose is addressing the emperor Valentinian (reigned 364-375), who supported his religious activity. ¹⁶FC 22:289-90**.





UNDER THE DOMINATION OF THE
EGYPTIANS AND THE BABYLONIANS
2 KINGS 23:31—24:20

OVERVIEW: Jehoahaz leaves his country and never comes back, according to the prophecy that Jeremiah had spoken against him¹ (ISHO'DAD). Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem and assaulted it, and the Lord gave it into his hand: power is given to evil against us according to our sins (CYPRIAN). It is more difficult to escape from the domination of vainglory than from that of lust, as is demonstrated by the case of Nebuchadnezzar (CASSIAN). It is much better that the priests melt the holy vessels of gold for the sustenance of the poor, if a sacrilegious enemy threatens to carry them off and defile them (AMBROSE).

23:31-36 Jehoahaz Reigned Three Months

JEHOAHAZ IS DEPORTED TO EGYPT. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Jehoahaz, also called Shalom,² reigned three months until the Egyptians came back from

Mabboug.³ At that stage [Pharaoh] enchained him and brought him to Egypt. So [Jehoahaz] left his country and never came back, according to the prophecy that Jeremiah had spoken against him.⁴ Pharaoh appointed his brother Heliakim as the new king and gave him the name of Jehoiakim. BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 23:31.⁵

24:1-3 For the Sins of Manasseh

NOTHING EVIL IS PERMITTED OUTSIDE THE WILL OF GOD. CYPRIAN: Necessarily, too, the Lord gives us this admonition, to say in our prayer, "And lead us not into temptation." In this part it is shown that the adversary has no power against us, unless God has previously permitted it, in order that all our fear and devotion and obe-

¹See Jer 22:10-12. ²See Jer 22:11. ³Probably Larchemish or Cerablus, the ancient capital of the Hurrians; the city was situated in the north of Mesopotamia. ⁴See Jer 22:10-12. ⁵CSCO 229:148-49.

dience may be turned to God, since in temptations nothing evil is permitted, unless the power is granted by him. Scripture proves this when it says, “Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem and assaulted it, and the Lord gave it into his hand.” Moreover, power is given to evil against us according to our sins; as it is written, “Who has given Jacob for a spoil and Israel to those who despoiled him? Has not God, against whom they have sinned and were unwilling to walk in his ways and to hear his law, even poured out on them the indignation of his fury?”⁶ THE LORD’S PRAYER 25.⁷

24:8-16 *The King of Babylon Assaulted Jerusalem*

A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF PRIDE.

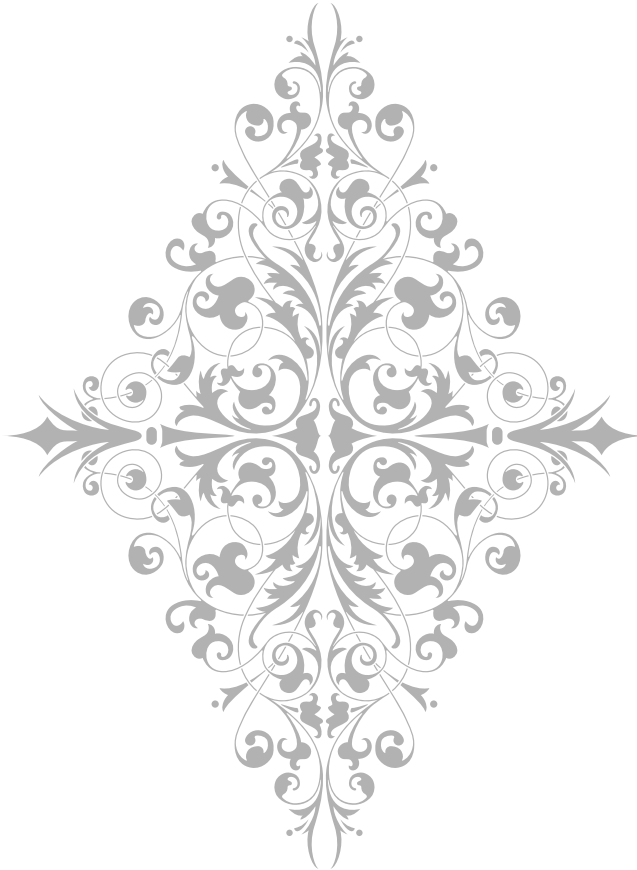
JOHN CASSIAN: There is an excellent and significant illustration in the book of Kings, showing how the sin of fornication is prevented by an attack of pride. When the children of Israel had been taken captive by Neco, king of the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians,⁸ came up and brought them back from the borders of Egypt to their own country,⁹ not indeed meaning to restore them to their former liberty and their native land, but meaning to carry them off to his own land and to transport them to a still more distant country than the land of Egypt in which they had been prisoners. And this illustration exactly applies to the case before us. For though there is less harm in yielding to the sin of

pride than to fornication, yet it is more difficult to escape from the dominion of pride. For somehow or other the prisoner who is carried off to a greater distance will have more difficulty in returning to his native land and the freedom of his fathers, and the prophet’s rebuke will be deservedly aimed at him: “Why have you grown old in a strange country? Indeed a man is rightly said to have grown old in a strange country, if he has not broken up the ground of his sins. CONFERENCE 5.12.4-5.¹⁰

TREASURES MUST BE SPENT FOR THE SUSTENANCE OF THE POOR. AMBROSE: The church has gold, not stored up but to lay out and to spend on those who need. What necessity is there to guard what is of no good? Do we not know how much gold and silver the Assyrians took out of the temple of the Lord? Is it not much better that the priests should melt it down for the sustenance of the poor, if other supplies fail, than that of a sacrilegious enemy should carry it off and defile it? Would not the Lord say, Why did you allow so many needy to die of hunger? Surely you had gold? You should have given them sustenance. Why are so many captives brought to the slave market, and why are so many unredeemed left to be slain by the enemy? It had been better to preserve living vessels than gold ones. DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 2.28.137.¹¹

⁶Is 42:24-25. ⁷FC 36:149. ⁸Babylonians. ⁹See 2 Kings 24:7.

¹⁰NPNF 2 11:245**. ¹¹NPNF 2 10:64*.





THE SIEGE AND DESTRUCTION
OF JERUSALEM
2 KINGS 25:1-30

OVERVIEW: When Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the most high God, uttered words of thanksgiving to God, repented of his past wickedness and recognized his own weakness, in that hour God restored to him his royal dignity (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). Jehoiachin and Evil-merodach made friends while they were in prison. When Evil-merodach was appointed as the new king, he granted Jehoiachin favors and gifts (ISHO'DAD). After Jehoiachin brought with him his mother and the mighty men of the kingdom, he left Jerusalem, deserting to the Babylonians. However, he displayed, at the same time, a mature repentance, so that he became "a seal of righteousness in circumcision"¹ (ORIGEN). Some of the prophets continued to prophesy in Israel, while others prophesied in Babylon and later in

the kingdom of the Persians (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA).

25:1-11 *Nebuchadnezzar Laid Siege to Jerusalem*

GOD WAS MERCIFUL EVEN WITH NEBUCHADNEZZAR. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: What think you of Nebuchadnezzar? Have you not heard from Scripture that he was bloodthirsty, fierce, with the disposition of a lion? Have you not heard that he disinterred the kings?² Have you not heard that he brought the people away into captivity? Have you not heard that he put the king's sons to the sword before Zedekiah's eyes and then

¹Rom 4:11. ²See Jer 8:1; Bar 2:24-25.

blinded him? Have you not heard that he shattered the cherubim?³ I do not mean the invisible cherubim—it is blasphemy to think it—but the sculptured images and the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, from the midst of which God was apt to speak with his voice. He trampled on the veil of sanctification, he took the censer and carried it away to a temple of idols; he seized all the offerings; he burned the temple to its foundations. What punishment did he not deserve for slaying kings, for burning the holy object, for reducing the people to captivity, for putting the sacred vessels in the temples of the idols? Did he not deserve ten thousand deaths?

You have seen the enormity of his crimes. Turn now to the loving-kindness of God. Nebuchadnezzar was turned into a wild beast; he dwelled in the wilderness; God scourged him to save him. He had claws like a lion's, for he had preyed on the saints. He had a lion's mane, for he had been a ravaging, roaring lion. He ate grass like an ox, for he had behaved like a brute beast, not knowing him who had given him his kingdom. His body was drenched with dew, because, after seeing the fire quenched by the dew, he had not believed. And what happened? Afterwards he says, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes to heaven . . . and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and glorified him who lives forever."⁴ When therefore he acknowledged the Most High, and uttered words of thanksgiving to God, and repented of his past wickedness and recognized his own weakness, in that hour God restored to him his royal dignity.

What then? If God granted pardon and a kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar after such terrible crimes, when he had made confession, will he not grant you the remission of your sins if you repent and the kingdom of heaven if you live worthily? God is merciful and quick to forgiveness but slow to vengeance. Therefore let no one despair of salvation. Peter, the chief and foremost of the apostles, denied the Lord thrice before a little serving maid; but, moved to repentance, he wept bitterly. His weeping revealed his heartfelt repentance,

and for that reason not only did he receive pardon for his denial but also retained his apostolic prerogative. *CATECHETICAL LECTURES 2.17-19.*⁵

25:22-30 *Jehoiachin Dined in the King's Presence*

THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JEHOIACHIN AND EVIL-MERODACH. ISHO'DAD OF MERV: Evil-merodach was the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Since he had ruled the kingdom badly and had, in addition, troubled the land with a severe conflict, when his father came back [from his military campaign], his father imprisoned him, fearing that he might rebel against him. Now he was imprisoned in the same place where also Jehoiachin was imprisoned. There they kept each other company for a long time and became friends. Therefore, after Nebuchadnezzar was dead and Evil-merodach was appointed as the new king, he granted [Jehoiachin] favors and gifts. And this was a reward given to Jehoiachin, because he had obeyed the prophecy and had surrendered, so that God did not refuse him the wage that he had earned.⁶ *BOOKS OF SESSIONS 2 KINGS 25.27.*⁷

THE ROLE OF JEHOIACHIN. ORIGEN: Jeremiah calls this son of Jehoiakim Jeconiah,⁸ and the Pharaoh Neco called the father of this man, though named Eliakim, Jehoiakim, whom Babylon, having carried off, cast forth before the gate, as the present prophet and Josephus in the tenth book of his *Antiquities* says.⁹ And the other editions have given the signet ring as a seal. And every person who through repentance makes shine again what is according to the image becomes a

³This is not attested by the biblical narrative and must be considered an assumption on the part of Cyril. ⁴Dan 4:34. ⁵FC 61:106-7*.

⁶Jehoiachin had given himself up to Nebuchadnezzar before the end of the siege (see 2 Kings 24:10-12). According to Isho'dad, he did that in obedience to the order of Jeremiah. There is no explicit reference to an order in the biblical text, but the Syriac author is probably referring to Jeremiah 21:9: "Those who go out and surrender to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live." ⁷CSCO 229:150. ⁸This is the Greek spelling (LXX) of the name Jehoiachin. See also 2 Kings 24:8-12. ⁹Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.5.2; 6.3; Jer 22:24.

seal, a ring on the “right hand of God.”¹⁰ For good works are understood as the part on the right of God, who places “the sheep at the right.”¹¹ The father gave this kind of seal to the profligate son who returned.¹² If Jeconiah had become this way, he would have been a model for those who are subjects of devotion. But that did not happen. Yet he seemed to be persuaded by what the prophet said: “He who goes out to surrender to the Chaldeans who besieged you shall live.”¹³ For after he brought with him his mother and the mighty men, he left, deserting to the Babylonians. But if he also displays mature repentance, so that he becomes “a seal of righteousness in circumcision.”¹⁴ So that, according to this, he seems to be on the right hand of God, he would be delivered, since he did pay a penalty for his recent sins, though one more moderate. For in Babylon, after he chastised in prison and in chains, due to Evil-merodach, he was then set free, becoming one who ate with the king, and thus in a foreign land he finished life. FRAGMENTS FROM THE CATENA ON JEREMIAH 14.¹⁵

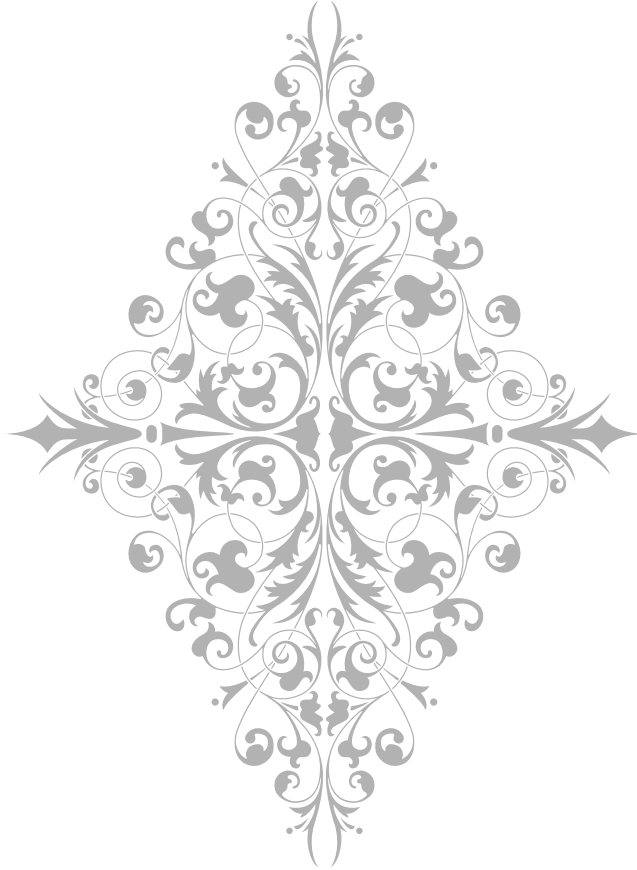
THE PROPHETS AT THE TIME OF THE CAPTIV-

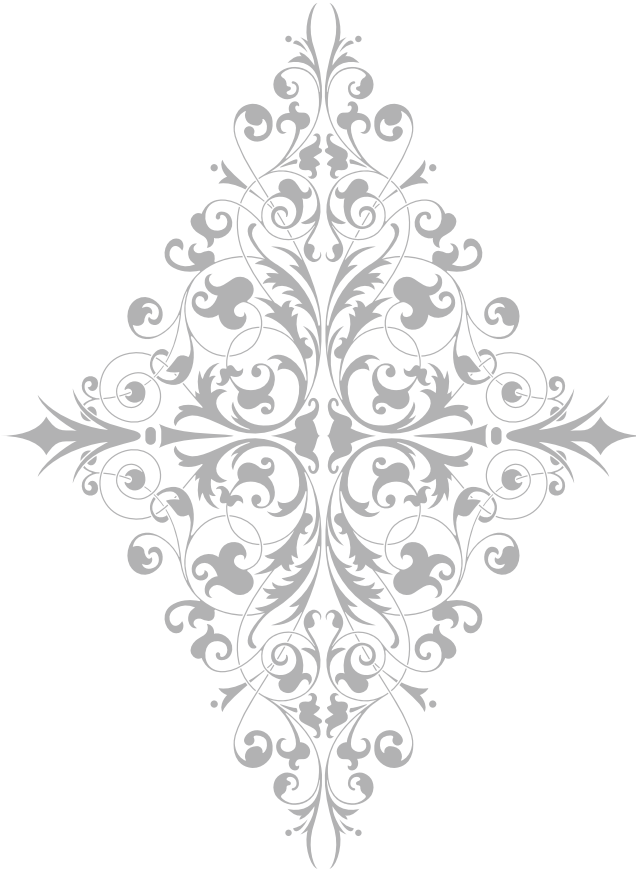
ITY IN BABYLON. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: In the twelfth year of king Zedekiah, seventy years before the dominance of the Persians, Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against the Phoenicians and Jews, as Berossus says in his “Researches on the Chaldeans.”¹⁶ Juba,¹⁷ writing “On the Assyrians,” admits that he took his account from Berossus, testifying to its accuracy. Nebuchadnezzar blinded Zedekiah and removed him to Babylon, deporting the whole people except a few who escaped to Egypt. The captivity lasted for seventy years. Jeremiah and Habakkuk continued to prophesy under Zedekiah, and in the fifth year of his reign Ezekiel was prophesying in Babylon. After him came the prophet Nahum, then Daniel, and again after him, Haggai and Zechariah prophesied for two years under Darius I, and after him, one of the twelve, the Herald.¹⁸ STROMATEIS I.I22.I-4.¹⁹

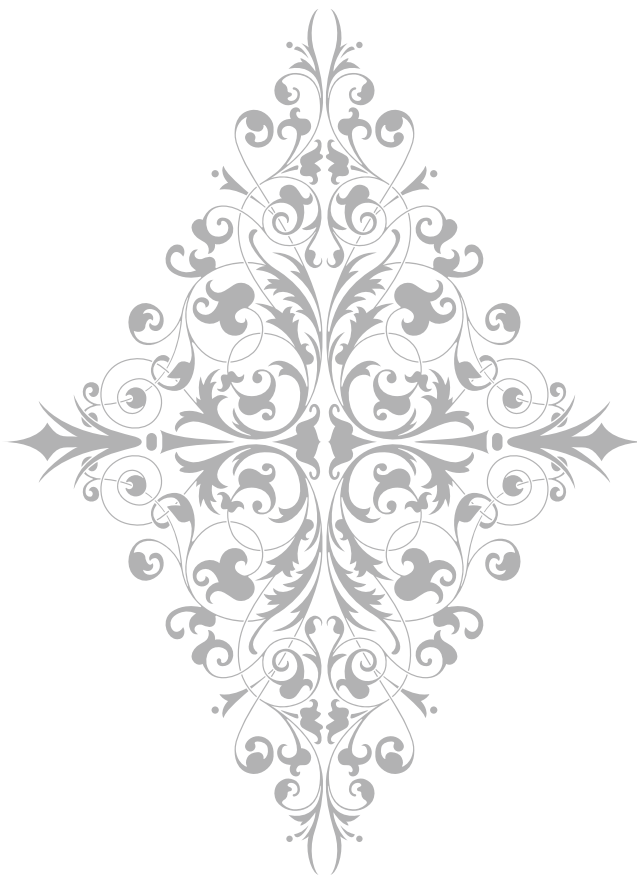
¹⁰Jer 22:24. ¹¹Mt 25:33. ¹²See Lk 15:22. ¹³Jer 21:9 (LXX). ¹⁴Rom 4:11. ¹⁵FC 97:286-87. ¹⁶Berossus was a Babylonian priest of Bel, who wrote a history of his country in Greek in the early Alexandrian age (around 290 B.C.). ¹⁷King of Mauretania and learned historian (c. 50 B.C.-A.D. 23). ¹⁸Malachi. ¹⁹FC 85:114.



1 C H R O N I C L E S







THE GENEALOGIES OF THE PEOPLE
OF GOD FROM ADAM TO SAUL
1 CHRONICLES 1:1–10:14

OVERVIEW: The book of Chronicles reports a detailed genealogy of the kingdom of Judah, demonstrating how all human beings are derived from a single man and how our Savior the Son of God descended from it. In addition, it describes the cities and the tribes that followed one another in the land of God after the captivity in Egypt (THEODORET).

THE GENEALOGY OF JUDAH. THEODORET OF CYR: There is abundant information in the books of Chronicles which were written to continue the books of the Kings and to preserve the memory of such important events. The first book begins with a genealogy that sets out to demonstrate how the human race came from a single man. Since it focuses only on the single kingdom of Judah,¹ it can tell us about its cities and the villages, and from where they took their names. Here we come to know Nathan,² from whom the blessed Luke³ constructed the beginning of his genealogy of our Lord and Savior, Son of David and Solomon's brother⁴ on his mother's side: "The following children were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimeah, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon, that is, the four children he fathered with Bersabea,⁵ daughter of Ammiel." And Rechab⁶ herself, who is men-

tioned in many books of Scripture, is said to have come from the tribe of Judah.

It also clearly explains why Reuben lost his birthright and Joseph gained it and also, finally, the reason why the tribe of Judah obtained the highest honor: "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph." It also explains the reason why such a great honor was conceded to Joseph. By the will of God Judah had the dignity of receiving the Lord who was born from him according to the flesh. This is the sense tacitly expressed with the words "a leader from him." Indeed the passage seems to assert that not only the kings of the earth derived from Judah, but also the eternal king himself who had no beginning and will never end.

¹Num 10:14; Judg 15:10; 2 Sam 2:4, 7; Ezra 5:8; Neh 1:3; 3:1-32; 2 Kings 18ff. ²Sir 47:1; 2 Sam 7:3, 8-17; 12:1-14; 1 Kings 1:11, 14, 22, 27, 32-38. ³Lk 3:23-38. ⁴Jesus thus becomes Solomon's brother as the Son of David. ⁵More commonly known as Bathsheba. ⁶Theodore equates the Rechab of 1 Chronicles 2:55 with Rahab the harlot, although her name is spelled differently in Greek.

It also describes the situation of the tribes beyond the Jordan, those of Reuben and Gad, and even the tribes of Manasseh which later were received into those of the Hagarites and the Itureans, and talks about the tribes of the Naphiseans, and all those peoples who entered into conflict with them. In addition the text relates how they fought and won, and made the Hagarites flee. And it also reports the reason for the victory: "When they received help against them, the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried to God in the battle, and he granted their entreaty because they trusted in him." It also describes the amount of the spoils of war: "They captured their livestock: 50,000 of their camels, 250,000 sheep, 2,000 donkeys and 100,000 captives. Many were slain because the war was from God. And they lived in their territory until the exile." QUESTIONS ON I CHRONICLES, PROLOGUE.⁷

THE GENEALOGY OF THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES. THEODORET OF CYR: The genealogy of the priests and the Levites comes after this. It relates that Zadok,⁸ who was high priest at the time of David, had been the eleventh from Aaron; that Azariah, nephew of Zadok, had been the first to receive the priestly anointing in the temple built by Solomon. Among them there was also Jehozadak, who was brought to Babylon as a war prisoner. Jesus⁹ was his son, a high priest as well, who delivered the people from bondage together with Zerubbabel,¹⁰ and built a temple for the Lord. Here we also learn that Korah, who revolted against the great Moses, was a nephew of Isaar,¹¹ son of Caath and brother of Amram, Aaron's and Moses' father. According to this lineage he was related to the first legislator.¹² But he himself paid in the desert for his errors, although his children did not share the punishment of their father. From here Samuel¹³ came and then Aeman, who intoned Psalms and was a nephew of the prophet Samuel. In fact he was the son of Joel, son of Samuel. On the other hand, Asaph,¹⁴ one

of the singers, came from the lineage of Gerson, son of Levi and brother of Caath. Aetham, who also belonged to the group of the singers, had Merari, the third son of Levi, as great-grandfather.

The text also explains the difference between the priests and the Levites. It relates that the Levites were initiated into all the ministries of the holy altar of God: "But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, doing all the work of the most holy place, to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded." It seems to me, in fact, that this book was written after the return from Babylon. For this reason it also talks about the bondage and explains its cause: "So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. Now the first to live again in their possessions in their towns were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants." These accounts show that the book was begun after the captivity. Indeed no historian ever relates facts that happened afterwards, but what happened before or during his times. And actually only the prophets have the power to foretell the future. In addition it says that also those who had inhabited that land before them had been enslaved. And actually many of them still live with them: the Canaanites, Chettites,¹⁵ Jebusites, who had been their companions in such a misfortune. Also the priests and the Levites were brought into captivity with the Israelites. I believe that those who were called "the saints' servants" were then called Nathinim. Many of them, in fact, consecrated themselves to the ministries of the priests and the Levites. There were among them also those who were

⁷PG 80:801-3. ⁸2 Sam 8:17; 15:35-36; 17:15; 1 Kings 1:7-45. ⁹Joshua.

¹⁰Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; 2:2; 6:7; 3:1-9; 6:7; Hag 2:18; Hag 2:21-23; Zech 6:12-13. ¹¹Izhar. ¹²I.e., Moses. ¹³1 Sam 1:9, 20, 25-28; 8:5, 11-22; 9:26-10:8; 15:35; 16:1-13; 25:1. ¹⁴1 Chron 15:17; 16:5, 7, 37.

¹⁵Hittites.

entrusted with the carrying of the water, the gathering of wood and other necessary duties. Indeed, if it was imposed to the Gabaonites,¹⁶ who were foreigners, to follow Joshua in the praises and to perform some works as porters or carpenters, this task was even more the duty of the Israelites. As a proof of this I have found in the interpretation of Hebrew names that this name means “house of *Iaō*,” that is, “of the God who is.” The text, in fact, mentions the children of Israel and among them Judah and Benjamin,¹⁷ and Ephraim¹⁸ and Manasseh. It also mentions the priests and the Levites, who inhabited those cities. About the *Korēnites*¹⁹ it says that they derived from Korah. It also says that among them there had been the guardians of the temple of God as well, and it seems that this custom had been introduced by Samuel and David. “All these, who were chosen as gatekeepers at the thresholds, were two hundred twelve. They were enrolled by genealogies in their villages. David and the prophet Samuel established them in their office of trust. So they and their descendants were in charge of the gates of the house of the Lord, that is, the house of the tent, as guards. The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south.” QUESTIONS ON I CHRONICLES, PROLOGUE.²⁰

THE TABERNACLE AND FURNISHINGS FOR WORSHIP. THEODORET OF CYR: The Chronicles also speak about the tabernacle because a temple of the Lord had not yet been built by either Samuel or David. The text also adds that that the holy services were held in the tabernacle. Worship was observed at that time according to the number of the days of the week. For it also says, “and their kindred who were in their villages were obliged to come in every seven days, in turn, to be with them.” With regard to the holy utensils it says, “Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out. Others of them were appointed over the furniture, and over all the holy utensils, also over the choice flour, the wine, the oil, the incense and the spices.” And about the priests it says, “Others, of the sons of the priests, prepared the mixing of the spices.” With regard to the tomb of Saul the Chronicles gives us much information, and in the Book of Kings itself we read that his bones were gathered and buried in the land of Jabesh.²¹ QUESTIONS ON FIRST CHRONICLES, PROLOGUE.²²

¹⁶Gibeonites. ¹⁷Gen 25:26; 32:23-32. ¹⁸Gen 41:52; 48:5; 2 Sam 20:1; 1 Kings 12:15-17, 20; Is 7:1-17; Ps 78:67 (77:67 LXX). ¹⁹Korahites. ²⁰PG 80:803-5. ²¹1 Sam 31:13. ²²PG 80:805-8.



DAVID KING OF HEBRON
1 CHRONICLES 11:1-9

OVERVIEW: Jerusalem is our inheritance (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). We have to add to this wisdom and eloquence a careful study and knowledge of Scripture (JEROME). There is no doubt that human wills cannot resist the will of God. God, who was with David, brought people to make him king over all Israel. Human hearts are inclined to God's will with the result that they will be welcomed in the heavenly kingdom (AUGUSTINE).

11:4 *David and Israel Marched to Jerusalem*

OUR NEW INHERITANCE. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: Farewell likewise, grand and renowned temple, our new inheritance, whose greatness is now due to the Word, which once was a Jebus and has now been made by us a Jerusalem. THE LAST FAREWELL, ORATION 42.26.¹

11:5 *The Stronghold of Zion*

YOU HAVE DAVID'S WISDOM AND STRENGTH. JEROME: You have a great intellect and an inexhaustible store of language, your diction is fluent and pure, your fluency and purity are mingled with wisdom. Your head is clear and all your senses keen. Were you to add to this wisdom and eloquence a careful study and knowledge of Scripture, I should soon see you holding our citadel against all comers; you would go up with Joab on the roof of Zion and sing on the housetops what you had learned in the secret chambers.² LETTER 58:II.³

11:9 *David Increased in Greatness*

HUMAN WILLS CANNOT RESIST THE WILL OF GOD. AUGUSTINE: There is no doubt that human wills cannot resist the will of God, "who has done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and on earth"⁴ and who has even "done the things that are to come."⁵ Nor can the human will prevent him from doing what he wills, seeing that even with human wills he does what he wills, when he wills to do it. . . . There is the case of David, whom God with happier outcome set up over the kingdom. We read of him: "And David went on growing and increasing, and the Lord of hosts was with him." Then, shortly thereafter, it is said, "But the spirit came on Amasai, the chief among thirty, and he said, We are yours, O David, and for you, O son of Isay; peace, peace be to you, and peace to your helpers; for your God helped you." Could Amasai have opposed the will of God, instead of doing his will, since God, through his spirit, with which Amasai was clothed, wrought in his heart that he should so will and speak and act? In like fashion, a little later on, Scripture says, "And all these men of war, well appointed to fight, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel." Obviously, it was of their own will that these men made David king; the fact is clear and undeniable. Nevertheless, it was God, who effects in human hearts whatsoever he wills, who wrought this will in

¹NPNF 2 7:394. ²See Lk 12:3. ³NPNF 2 6:123. ⁴Ps 135:6 (134:6 LXX). ⁵Is 45:11.

them. This is why Scripture first says, “And David went on growing and increasing, and the Lord of hosts was with him.” The Lord God, therefore, who was with David, brought these men to make him king. And how did he bring them to this? Surely it was not by binding them with any material chains. Rather, he worked within them; he seized their hearts; he drew them on by means of their own wills, which he had himself created within them. When, therefore, God wills to set up kings on earth, he holds the wills of people more in his own power than they are in the power of people themselves. And if this is so, it is surely he, and no other, who makes admonitions salutary and effects amendment in the heart of one who is admonished, with the result that he is established in the heavenly

kingdom. ADMONITION AND GRACE 14.45.⁶

HUMAN HEARTS ARE INCLINED TO GOD’S WILL. AUGUSTINE: In vain also do they object that what we have established from Scripture in the books of Kings and Chronicles—that when God wills the accomplishment of something which ought not to be done except by people who will it, their hearts will be inclined to will this, with God producing this inclination, who in a marvelous and ineffable way works also in us that we will—is not pertinent to the subject with which we are dealing. PREDESTINATION OF THE SAINTS 20.42.⁷

⁶FC 2:299-300*. ⁷FC 86:268.





THE HEROES OF DAVID
1 CHRONICLES 11:10-47

OVERVIEW: The observance of fasting becomes not the curbing of old passions but an opportunity for new pleasures (AUGUSTINE). The judgment of almighty God prefers innocence to gold; we, as David, have to scorn to receive gold in accordance with the will of our Lord. But also as David we have to respect the law (GREGORY THE GREAT).

11:17-19 David Poured Out Water as an Offering

OBSERVANCE OF FASTING. AUGUSTINE:

The observance of Lent becomes not the curbing of old passions but an opportunity for new pleasures. Take measures in advance with as much diligence as possible to prevent these attitudes

from creeping on you. Let frugality be joined to fasting. As satisfying the stomach is to be censured, so stimulants of the appetite must be eliminated. It is not that certain kinds of food are to be detested but that bodily pleasure is to be checked. . . . And holy King David repented of having excessively desired water. SERMON 207.2.¹

YOU HAVE TO SATISFY THE JUDGMENT OF ALMIGHTY GOD. GREGORY THE GREAT: I must tell you that I have been led to praise God the more for your work by what I have learned from the report of my most beloved son Probinus the

¹FC 38:91*.

presbyter; namely that, your excellency, having issued a certain ordinance against the perfidy of the Jews, those to whom it related attempted to bend the rectitude of your mind by offering a sum of money, which your excellency scorned, and, seeking to satisfy the judgment of almighty God, preferred innocence to gold. With regard to this, what was done by King David recurs to my mind, who, when he longed for water from the cistern of Bethlehem, which was wedged in by the enemy, had been brought him by obedient soldiers, said, "God forbid that I should drink the blood of righteous men." And, because he poured it out and would not drink it, it is written, "He offered it a libation to the Lord." If, then, water was scorned by the armed king and turned into a sacrifice to God, we may estimate what manner of sacrifice to almighty God has been offered by the king who for his love has scorned to receive

not water but gold. LETTER 122.²

WATER POURED AS A LIBATION TO GOD.

GREGORY THE GREAT: David desired long afterwards to drink water from the cistern of Bethlehem, which, when his bravest soldiers had brought to him, he refused to drink and poured it out as a libation to the Lord. For it was lawful for him to drink it, had he been so minded; but, because he remembered having done what was unlawful, he laudably abstained even from what was lawful. And he, who to his guilt previously feared not that the blood of dying soldiers should be shed, afterwards considered that, were he to drink the water, he would have shed the blood of living soldiers, saying, "Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy?" LETTER 45.³

²NPNF 2 13:35-36* (CCL 140A references this as *Letter 229*).

³NPNF 2 13:66 (CCL 140A references this as *Letter 27*).



THE FOLLOWERS OF DAVID
1 CHRONICLES 12:1-22

OVERVIEW: We are not seeking our own glory but the Lord's, and when God prevails we also triumph (AUGUSTINE).

12:17-18 *Peace to the One Who Helps You!*

WHEN GOD WINS, YOU PREVAIL. AUGUSTINE: "The Lord shall give the Word to them that preach good tidings, with great power."¹ Of you, also, I venture to make this prayer, that, in this struggle of ours, truth may prevail. For you are not seeking your own glory but Christ's,² and

when you win the victory, I also shall win it if I recognize my own error, and, contrarily, you prevail when I win, "for neither ought the children to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."³ And in the book of Paralipomenon we read that the sons of Israel went out to fight with peaceful heart, in the very midst of swords and blood shedding and the bodies of the slain, because they were thinking of the victory of peace, not their own. LETTER 75.⁴

¹Ps 68:11 (67:12 LXX, Vg). ²Jn 7:18. ³2 Cor 12:14. ⁴FC 12:343-44*.



DAVID KING OF ALL ISRAEL
1 CHRONICLES 12:23-40

OVERVIEW: The tongue is a sword. It slays human souls (JEROME).

12:38 *Warriors Arrayed for Battle Order*

MY OWN IS MY ENEMY. JEROME: “O Lord, deliver me from lying lip, from treacherous tongue”: not from another’s tongue but from my own. Another’s tongue does not injure me; my own is my enemy. Deliver me; deliver me from my own tongue. My tongue is a sword, and it is slay-

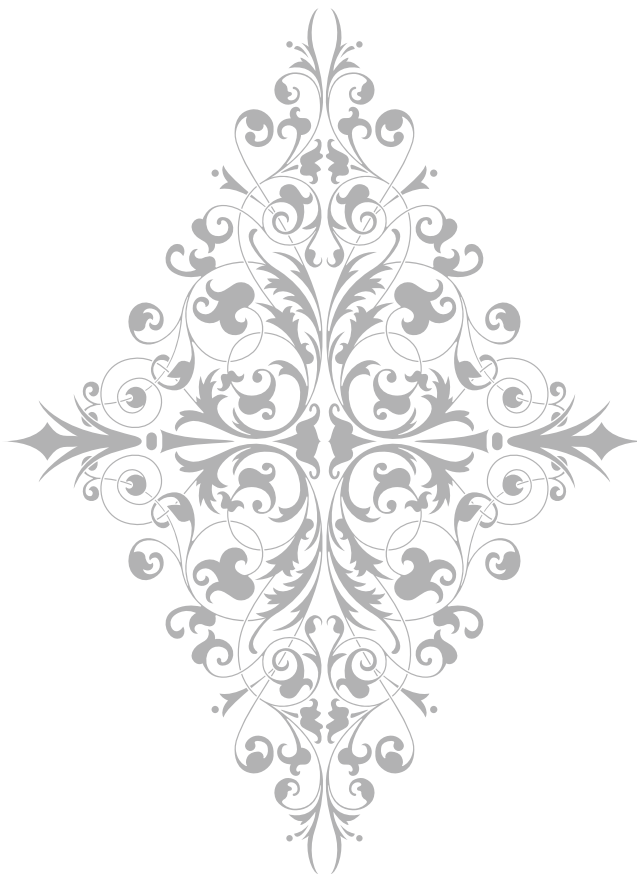
ing my soul. I think that I am harming my enemy; I do not realize that I am killing myself. My adversaries may contradict me when I speak to them, but I shall speak peace. Their spirit may be hostile, but let our spirit be that of peacemakers. It is written in Paralipomenon: “The sons of Israel came to fight with peaceful heart.” **HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 41 (Ps 119[120]).**¹

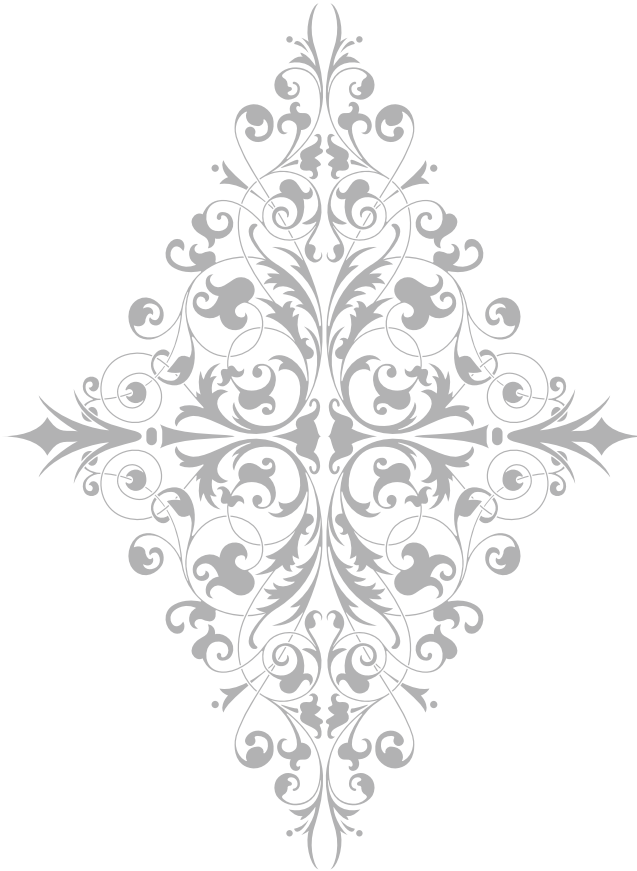
¹FC 48:315.

[THE ARK IS BROUGHT
TO THE HOUSE OF OBED-EDOM
1 CHRONICLES 13:1-14]
[See commentary on 2 Samuel 6]

[THE REIGN OF DAVID
1 CHRONICLES 14:1-17]
[See commentary on 2 Samuel 5:11-25]

[PREPARATIONS FOR CARRYING THE ARK
1 CHRONICLES 15:1-29]
[See commentary on 2 Samuel 6]





OFFERINGS FOR THE
TRANSFER OF THE ARK
1 CHRONICLES 16:1-36

OVERVIEW: The prophets sing a unique prayer to the Lord (ORIGEN). The divine Spirit inspires people when they sing hymns to God (EUSEBIUS). The action of the Lord makes one church out of the two peoples (CASSIODORUS). As there are many antichrists in the world, in the same way, knowing that Christ has come, we see that there are many christs in the world, who, like him, love righteousness and hate iniquity (ORIGEN). Glory and praise are before Christ, and strength and pride are in the place of his sanctification. So there will be joy for those who will look forward to the incorruption that he has promised (JUSTIN).

16:8 Give Thanks to the Lord

THE PRAISES OF ASAPH AND HIS BROTHERS.

ORIGEN: The sixth song is in 1 Chronicles, where David first established Asaph and his brothers for praising the Lord. The beginning of the song is as follows, "Praise the Lord, give thanks to him, and call on his name; make known his purposes among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works, which the Lord has done," and so forth. It should, however, be known that the song in 2 Samuel is very much like Psalm 18. Furthermore, the first part of the text in 1 Chronicles, up to the place where it says "and do my prophets no harm," is like Psalm 105, and the latter part of it, following the verse just mentioned, bears a likeness to the first part of Psalm 96, where it says, "Sing to the Lord, all the earth," up to the place where it says "for he comes

to judge the earth."¹ COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS, PROLOGUE 4.²

CHRONICLES AND PSALMS. ORIGEN: In the first book of Chronicles the psalm praising the Lord attributed to Asaph and his brothers, which begins "O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,"³ is, for the most part, the same as Psalm 104, down to the words "Do my prophets no harm!"⁴ After that it is almost identical to Psalm 95 from the beginning, "Sing to the Lord, all the earth!"⁵ LETTER TO JULIUS AFRICANUS 21.⁶

16:15 Remembering God's Covenant

MANY PROPHECIES OF THE FUTURE. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: As it has been supposed by some that the book of Psalms merely consists of hymns to God and sacred songs and that we shall look in vain in it for predictions and prophecies of the future, let us realize distinctly that it contains many prophecies, far too many to be quoted now, and it must suffice for proof of what Isaiah to make use of two psalms ascribed to Asaph, written in the time of David. For Asaph was one of the temple musicians then, as is stated in the book of Chronicles, and was inspired by the divine Spirit to speak the psalms inscribed with his name. PROOF OF THE GOSPEL 10.1.⁷

¹Ps 96:1, 13 (95:1, 13 LXX). ²OSW 238-39. ³Ps 105:1 (104:1 LXX). ⁴Ps 105:15 (104:15 LXX). ⁵Ps 96:1 (95:1 LXX). ⁶MFC 9:134. ⁷POG 2:191-92.

16:22 Do Not Harm the Prophets of God**ONE CHURCH OUT OF THE TWO PEOPLES.**

CASSIODORUS: How splendidly joined to each other are the sections proceeding from the same source to achieve the salvation of the human race. Who would not be amazed that what is said earlier in different psalms is clearly assembled so harmoniously here? Similarly David himself in the Chronicles is filled with the holy Spirit and made the Lord's praises resound with great expressions of joy by assembling sections of Psalms 95, 104 and 105, so that incense compounded of different aromas could happily rise to the Lord's presence; for sentiments that are clear, in no sense at odds with each other are united without difficulty. . . . My judgment is that there is another apt feature in the present instance: the action of the Lord made one church out of the two peoples. EXPLANATION OF THE PSALMS, CONCLUSION.⁸

CHRIST LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATES INIQUITY.

ORIGEN: There was no need that there should everywhere exist many bodies and many spirits like Jesus, in order that the entire humankind might be enlightened by the Word of God. For the one Word was enough, having arisen as the "Sun of righteousness," to send forth from Judea his coming rays into the souls of all who were willing to receive him. But if anyone desires to see many bodies filled with a divine Spirit, similar to the one Christ, ministering to the salvation of people everywhere, let him take note of those who teach the Gospel of Jesus in all lands in soundness of doctrine and uprightness of life and who are themselves termed "christs" by the holy Scriptures in the passage "Do not touch my anointed, and do not harm my prophets."⁹ For as we have heard that Antichrist comes and yet have learned that there are many antichrists in the world, in the same way, knowing that Christ has come, we see that, owing to him, there are many christs in the world, who, like him, have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and therefore God, the God of Christ, anointed them also

with the "oil of gladness." AGAINST CELSUS 6.79.¹⁰

16:23-31 Tell of God's Salvation**THE SPIRIT SPEAKS OF THINGS TO COME AS ALREADY HAVING HAPPENED.**

JUSTIN MARTYR: In another prophecy the prophetic Spirit, testifying through the same David that after being crucified, Christ would reign, said, "O sing to the Lord, all the earth, and proclaim his salvation from day to day; for great is the Lord and highly to be praised, terrible beyond all the gods. For all the gods of the nations are images of demons, but God made the heavens. Glory and praise are before him, and strength and pride in the place of his sanctification. Give glory to the Lord, the Father of the ages. Receive favor, and go in before his face, and worship in his holy courts. Let all the earth fear before him and be set upright and not shaken. Let them exult among the nations; the Lord has reigned from the tree."¹¹ Now when the prophetic Spirit speaks of things to come as already having happened, as is illustrated in the passages quoted, I will explain this too so that those who come on it will have no excuse for not understanding. Things he fully knows are to happen he speaks of in advance as if they had already occurred. Give careful attention to the passages quoted, and you will see that this is the way they must be taken. David uttered the words quoted above fifteen hundred years before Christ, made man, was crucified, and none of those who were crucified before him gave joy to the nations, nor of those crucified after him either. But in our time Jesus Christ, who was crucified and died, rose again and, ascending into heaven, began to reign; and on account of what was proclaimed by the apostles in all nations as coming from him, there is joy for those who look forward to the incorruption that he has promised. FIRST APOLOGY 41-42.¹²

⁸ACW 53:102. ⁹See Ps 105:15 (104:15 LXX). ¹⁰ANF 4:609*. ¹¹See also Ps 96:1-2, 4-10 (95:1-2, 4-10 LXX). ¹²LCC 1:268-69.

A NEW SONG. AUGUSTINE: “O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth.” If all the earth sings a new song, it is thus building while it sings; the very act of singing is building, but only if it sings not the old song. The lust of the flesh sings the old song; the love of God sings the new. Hear why it is a new song: the Lord says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.”¹³ The whole earth then sings a new song; there the house of God is

built. All the earth is the house of God. If all the earth is the house of God, he who clings not to all the earth is a ruin, not a house; that old ruin whose shadow that ancient temple represented. For there what was old was destroyed, that what was new might be built up. EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS 96.2.¹⁴

¹³Jn 15:12. ¹⁴NPNF 1 8:470.



ORDERS OF LEVITES 1 CHRONICLES 16:37-43

OVERVIEW: We think that the composition of the work is owed to David; that was given to Idithun for his use that he might correct the passions of his soul (BASIL).

16:41 Rendering Thanks to the Lord

IDITHUN WAS A SINGER IN THE TEMPLE.

BASIL THE GREAT: We know two psalms with the title “For Idithun,” the sixty-first and the thirty-

eighth. We think that the composition of the work is owed to David; that was given to Idithun for his use that he might correct the passions of his soul and also as a choral song to be sung in the presence of the people. Through it, also, God was glorified, and those who heard it amended their habits. Now, Idithun was a singer in the temple, as the history of the Paralipomenon testifies to us, saying, “And after them Heman and Idithun sounded the trumpets and played on the cymbals

and all kinds of musical instruments to sing praises to God.” And a little later it says, “Moreover David the king and the chief officers of the army separated for the ministry the sons of Asaph, and of Heman and of Idithun: to proph-

esy with harps, and with psalteries and with tympana.”¹ *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS 21.1* (Ps 61).²

¹1 Chron 25:1. ²FC 46:341.



THE PROPHECY OF NATHAN

1 CHRONICLES 17:1-27

[See commentary on 2 Samuel 7]

OVERVIEW: Nathan prophesies of one after David who would build the house of David. Although Solomon built the temple, Nathan must have been referring not to Solomon but to Christ, who was the only one worthy to build the house of God (EUSEBIUS).

17:11-13 *Nathan's Prophecy of the House of David*

NOT SOLOMON BUT CHRIST WILL BUILD THE HOUSE. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: There is no doubt that Solomon was the son of David and his

successor in the kingdom. And he first built the temple of God at Jerusalem, and perhaps the Jews understand him to be the subject of the prophecy. But we may fairly ask them whether the oracle applies to Solomon, which says, "And I will set up his throne for ever," and also where God swore with the affirmation of an oath by his holy one, "The throne of him that is foretold shall be as the sun and the days of heaven." For if the years of the reign of Solomon are reckoned, they will be found to be forty and no more. Even if the reigns of all his successors are added up, they do not altogether come to 500 years. And even if we suppose that their line continued down to the final attack on the Jewish nation by the Romans, how can they fulfill a prophecy which says, "Your throne shall remain for ever, and be as the sun and the days of heaven"? And the words, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son," how can they refer to Solomon? For his history tells us much about him that is foreign and opposed to the adoption of God. No. Hear the indictment against him: "And Solomon loved women, and took many strange wives, even the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabites, Ammonites, and Idumaeans, Syrians and Chaldeans, and Amorites, from the nations of whom the Lord said to the children of Israel, that they should not go in to them."¹

And in addition to this: "And his heart was not right with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father; and Solomon went after Astarte, the abomination of the Sidonians and after their king, the idol of the sons of Ammon. And Solomon did evil before the Lord."² And again further on he adds, "And the Lord raised Satan against Solomon, Ader the Idumaeans." Now who would venture to call God his father, who lay under such grievous charges, and to call himself the firstborn son of the God of the Universe? Or how could these sayings apply first to David, if you reflect. Therefore we require someone else, here revealed to arise from the seed of David. But there was no other born of him, as is recorded, save only our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ of God, who alone of the kings of David's line is called through the whole world the Son of David according to his earthly birth, and whose kingdom continues and will continue, lasting for endless time. It is attacked by many, but always by its divine superhuman power proves itself inspired and invincible as the prophecy foretold. PROOF OF THE GOSPEL 7.3.³

¹1 Kings 11:1. ²1 Kings 11:4. ³POG 2:86-87.

[THE VICTORIES OF DAVID
1 CHRONICLES 18:1-17]
[See commentary on 2 Samuel 8]

[WARS AGAINST THE AMMONITES AND
THE ARAMEANS
1 CHRONICLES 19:1-19]
[See commentary on 2 Samuel 10; 12:26-31]

[OVERTHROW OF RABBAH
AND VICTORIES OVER THE PHILISTINES
1 CHRONICLES 20:1-8]

[See commentary on 2 Samuel 12:26-31]

[GUILT OF DAVID AND PUNISHMENT
OF THE LORD
1 CHRONICLES 21:1-17]

[See commentary on 2 Samuel 24:1-25]



DAVID BUYS THE
THRESHING FLOOR OF ORNAN
1 CHRONICLES 21:18-30

OVERVIEW: Christ's church would grow up not in Israel but among the Gentiles (JEROME). It is appropriate that the place for building the temple should be on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite because the church is customarily designated by the term "threshing floor." Jebus is the same city as Jerusalem, but Jebus means "trampled on" and Jerusalem "the vision of peace." Therefore, while Ornan still held sway in this city it was called Jebus, but when he sold the site of his threshing floor together with his oxen and threshing sledges to David, it took the name Jerusalem because the Gentiles who still persisted in their obstinacy were trampled on as worthless and contemptible by the wicked spirits (BEDE).

21:18 *An Altar on a Threshing Floor*

THE CHURCH OF GOD GROWS UP AMONG THE GENTILES. JEROME: When of old the Philistines had been overcome, when their devilish audacity had been destroyed, when their champion had fallen on his face to the earth,¹ it was from this city that there went forth a procession of jubilant souls, a harmonious choir to sing our David's victory over tens of thousands.² Here, too, it was that the angel grasped his sword, and while he laid waste the whole of the ungodly city, he marked out the temple of the Lord in the threshing floor of Ornan, king of the Jebusites. Thus early was it made plain that Christ's church would grow up not in Israel but among the Gentiles. LETTER 46.2.³

21:25-26 *David Built an Altar to the Lord*

WHY DID THE LORD CHOOSE THE CITY OF

JEBUS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS TEMPLE? BEDE: David had prepared by singing psalms, and the other prophets too by prophesying prepared for the Lord who was indeed the true Solomon a place that he might build a house, because they taught the hearts of their hearers by true faith, earnestly urging them to receive with faith and devotion the Son of God who was coming in the flesh. . . . It is appropriate that this place should be on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite because the church is customarily designated by the term "threshing floor," as John says of the Lord: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor."⁴ Ornan, whose name means "enlightened" and who was a Jebusite by origin, signifies the Gentiles by his origin, and by his name he indicates these same [Gentiles] who were to be enlightened by the Lord and transformed into children of the church to whom the apostle rightly says, "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."⁵ Jebus is the same city as Jerusalem. Now Jebus means "trampled on" but Jerusalem "the vision of peace." As long as the Gentile Ornan reigned there it was called Jebus; but when David bought a place of burnt offering there, when Solomon built a temple to the Lord there, it was no longer called Jebus but Jerusalem, because, that is, as long as the Gentiles continued in ignorance of divine worship they were trampled on and made a mockery of by the unclean spirits, following mute idols according as they were led to do;⁶ but when they called to mind the grace of their Creator, they

¹See 1 Sam 17:49. ²See 1 Sam 18:7. ³NPNF 2 6:61. ⁴Mt 3:12. ⁵Eph 5:8. ⁶See 1 Cor 12:2.

immediately found in themselves both the place and the name of peace, as the Lord says of them, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."⁷ Therefore, while Ornan still held sway in this city it was called Jebus, but when he sold the site of his threshing floor together with his oxen and threshing sledges to king David, it took the name Jerusalem because the Gentiles who still persisted in their obstinacy were trampled on as worthless

and contemptible by the wicked spirits; but when they learned to sell all they had and offer it to the true king, they could no longer be trampled on by the demons and vices but were given a greater share of inner peace, which they possessed with their Creator. ON THE TEMPLE I. 5.4-5.⁸

⁷Mt 5:9. ⁸TTH 21:20-22*.



PREPARATIONS FOR
BUILDING THE TEMPLE
1 CHRONICLES 22:1-19

OVERVIEW: Because of his guilt, David could not build a temple of God (JEROME), although he occupied himself with gathering of the material of the temple (ORIGEN). Solomon was a man of peace, and so he was able to construct the famous temple for God, although his kingdom would not last as long as his descendant Christ's would (THEODORET OF CYR) who would be the ultimate man of peace (EUSEBIUS).

22:8 *David Not Allowed to Build the Temple*

THE GUILT OF DAVID. JEROME: Because he was a man of blood—the reference is not, as some think, to his wars, but to the murder [of Uriah]—he was not permitted to build a temple of the Lord. AGAINST JOVINIANUS 1.24.¹

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. ORIGEN: As a man of blood, David was prevented from constructing it; he seems, at least, to have been occupied concerning the gathering of the material of the temple. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 10.257.²

22:9 *A Man of Peace*

CHRIST'S PEACE MORE LASTING THAN SOLOMON'S. THEODORET OF CYR: Solomon means "peaceable"; as you can find in the Chronicles: God said to David when he wanted to build the new temple, "Lo, a son is born to you; he will be a man of repose, and I shall give him peace from all his enemies round about

because his name is Solomon, and I shall give peace and tranquility to Israel in his days. He will build a house for my name, and he will be a son to me, and I shall be a father to him, and I shall assure the throne of his kingdom in Israel forever." It is well known, however, that Solomon died without living long, and that his throne came to an end. He gives the name Solomon, therefore, to our peaceable Lord, of whom blessed Paul says, "For he is our peace, who has made the two one and has broken down the dividing wall."³ . . . Now it was not Solomon who had dominion to the ends of the world [either] but he who sprang from Solomon in his humanity, Jesus Christ, and was called Solomon on account of his peaceable and gentle nature and his being the cause of peace. COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF SONGS 3.⁴

THE ULTIMATE MAN OF PEACE IS CHRIST.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: This [passage quoted, 1 Kings 8:26-27] is also found in the same words in Chronicles. God then promised David he would raise up a king from his body and would be his father, so that the offspring of the seed of David should be called the Son of God and should have his throne in an eternal kingdom. This was prophesied to David by Nathan in the Second Book of Kings.⁵ . . . The same is also said

¹NPNF 2 6:363. ²FC 80:312. ³Eph 2:14. ⁴ECS 2:73. ⁵2 Sam 7:12. ⁶Eusebius also quotes Ps 89:4-5, 27-29, 36-37 (88:4-5, 27-29, 36-37 LXX) along with Ps 132:1-2, 11, 17 (131:1-2, 11, 17 LXX) as further references to Christ fulfilling this promise.

in Chronicles, and in the 88th [89th] Psalm.⁶ . . . And so Solomon, being unique in wisdom, understanding this oracle given to his father, and perceiving it to be no slight thing, but something beyond human nature, and more suitable to God than to himself, son of David though he was, and knowing who was meant by God by the Firstborn, and who was clearly foretold as the Son of

God, was overjoyed at the message and prayed that the words of the prophecy might be confirmed and that he who was foretold might come, calling him Firstborn and Son of God. PROOF OF THE GOSPEL 6.12.⁷

⁷POG 2:11-12.



DAVID ESTABLISHES THE RULES
OF PRIESTHOOD
1 CHRONICLES 23:1-32

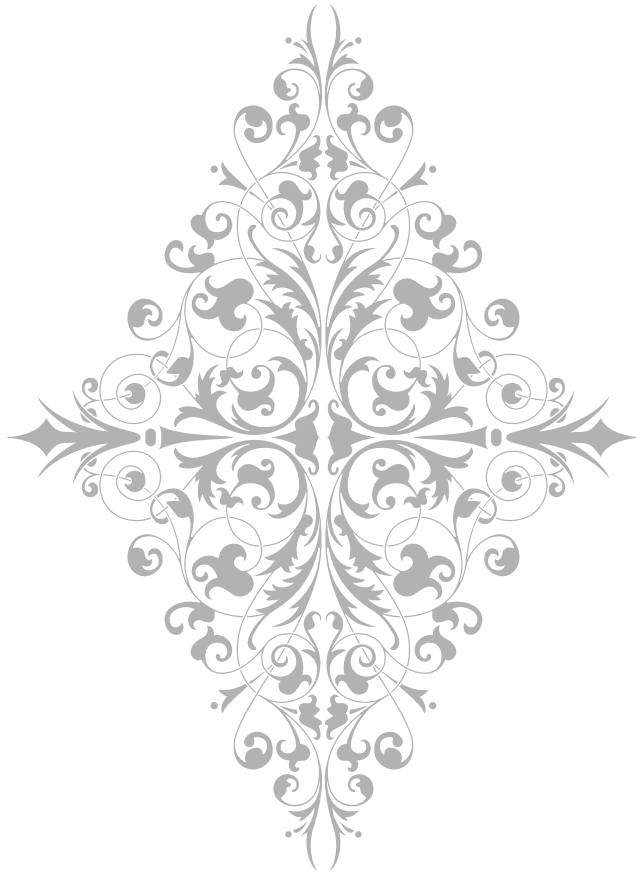
OVERVIEW: From the lineage of Moses the high priest was chosen to consecrate at the altar of the Lord (PROCOPIUS).

23:3 *The Levites Were Counted*

THE LINEAGE OF MOSES. PROCOPIUS OF GAZA: The text of Chronicles makes a list of the Levites according to the importance and dignity given them by the great Moses. It demonstrates how the successors of Moses were chosen for this purpose and how Zadok was appointed as the high priest, along with his nephew Eleazari, and also

Abimelech, nephew of Itamari. It includes two lineages, one of which is connected with Itamari which it attributes to those who descend from them. Also Luke mentions this genealogy in his Gospel, considering Zechariah as belonging to the lineage of Abijah. The aforementioned book [of Chronicles] shows that Abija was the seventh to obtain by lot this inheritance.¹ COMMENTARY ON 1 CHRONICLES 23.²

¹See 1 Chron 24:10. The LXX has Abijah listed as eighth. Procopius, as well as Theodoret (PG 80:813), may reflect an alternate textual tradition. ²PG 87:1205.



THE DIVISIONS OF THE PRIESTS
1 CHRONICLES 24:1-31

OVERVIEW: As the worship and magnificence of the temple increased, the graceful exercise of the ministry and the assembly of those ministering

might also increase, and David would organize his reign establishing the rules of priesthood and dividing his priests in sections (BEDE).

24:1 *The Divisions of the Priests*

PREPARATION FOR SOLOMON'S REIGN. BEDE:

If you of the brotherhood would take delight in hearing who that Abijah was from whose priestly division it is said that Zechariah derived his rank, he was the high priest during the time of King David. By the Lord's order, Aaron was the first single high priest appointed by Moses under the law; after his death his son, Eleazar, received the gift of the high priesthood.¹ When he too had died, his son, Phinehas, became his successor as high priest.² Thus up to the time of King David, over a period of about 470 years, one after the other became heir of the high priesthood. When David, burning with great zeal for religion, wanted to fashion a temple for the Lord, the Lord willed this to be carried out by his son Solomon instead. David himself nevertheless was concerned carefully to make ready everything that pertained to the future construction and reverent ceremonies of this temple.³ He also arranged for singers to chant the psalms daily at the time of sacrifice, to the tune of musical instruments. This was to arouse the minds of the people in attendance to remembrance and love of heavenly matters, not only by the sublimity of the words that were sung, but also by the sweetness of the sounds by which they were sung. Desiring that, as the worship and magnificence of the temple increased, the graceful exercise of the ministry and the assembly of those ministering might also increase, David called together all the descendants of the sons of Aaron, those descending from the stock of Eleazar and those from the stock of Ithamar, and he divided them into twenty-four sections, choosing individuals from each section as

high priests; the rest, who were in the sections of the lower priesthood (which is now called that of priest), he ordered to exercise their offices with this provision, namely, that when any one of the high priests departed this life, whoever was considered the best in his section should succeed him in the high priesthood.

David set up these sections in such a way that the individual high priests, along with the priests who were under them, should minister for eight successive days, that is, from sabbath to sabbath.⁴ And although all in the priestly class were equal, yet one of them who seemed to be more worthy of special reverence and more outstanding and in power was to have the name of "high priest." As to the order that was to be observed among these sections, it was determined by the casting of lots in the presence of King David and the leading persons of the priestly and Levitical families. In this distribution of lots, it is found that Abijah, from whose priestly division and generation Zechariah sprang, occupied the eighth place. It was fitting that the herald of the new covenant, in which the glory of the resurrection was declared to the world, was born in the place of the eighth lot, both because our Lord rose from the dead on the day after the sabbath, which is the eighth day following the seven days of creation, and because we are promised at the end of time an eighth age of everlasting resurrection, following the six ages of this world and a seventh of tranquility for souls, which comes in the next life. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.19.⁵

¹See Exod 28:1; Num 3:2-4; 20:25-28; Deut 10:6. ²Josh 24:33; Judg 20:28. ³See 2 Sam 7:4-13; 1 Chron 22:1-10. ⁴2 Chron 23:8. ⁵CS 111:190-91.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE MUSICIANS
1 CHRONICLES 25:1-31

OVERVIEW: The division of singers point to a rational part consisting of the human voice, an irrational part comprising musical instruments and a common part resulting from the fusion of the two (CASSIODORUS).

25:1 Set Apart for Service

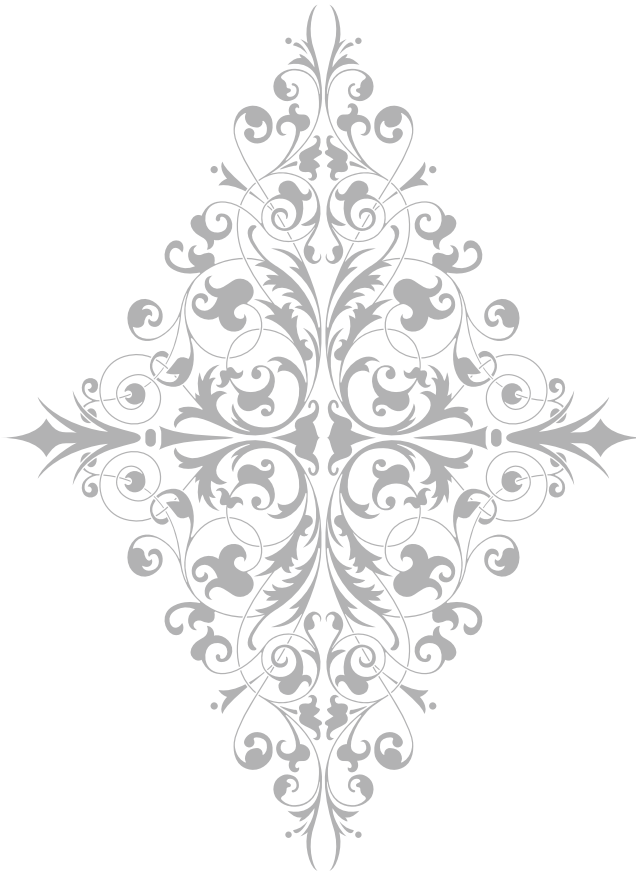
A THREEFOLD DIVISION. CASSIODORUS: We read in the first book of Paralipomena that when the prophet David grew old in years devoted to the Lord, he chose four thousand young men from the people of Israel to render the psalms, which he had composed through the Lord's inspiration, so as to attain the great sweetness of heavenly grace by means of pipes, lyres, harps,

timbrels, cymbals, trumpets, and their own voices. This sweet harmony clearly comprised a threefold division: a rational part consisting of the human voice, an irrational part comprising musical instruments and a common part resulting from the fusion of the two, such that the human voice issued forth in fixed melody and the tune of the instruments joined in harmonious accompaniment. With this performance the sweet and pleasant music presaged the Catholic church, which by the Lord's gift was to believe with varied tongues and diverse blending in the single harmony of faith. EXPLANATION OF THE PSALMS, PREFACE 2.¹

¹ACW 51:29.

[THE DIVISIONS OF THE GATEKEEPERS
1 CHRONICLES 26:1-31]

[MILITARY AND CIVIL ORGANIZATION
1 CHRONICLES 27:1-34]



DAVID'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR
BUILDING THE TEMPLE
1 CHRONICLES 28:1-21

OVERVIEW: As political prosperity is the business of emperors, so the condition of the church is the concern of shepherds and teachers (JOHN OF DAMASCUS). The temple of the Lord was built during the reigns in which the peace dominated (ORIGEN). We receive God's grace as grace alone, not according to our merit (AUGUSTINE). The Spirit of God dwells in our soul (JEROME). The fact that the entire height of the temple was 120 cubits refers to the same mystery as when the primitive church in Jerusalem, after the passion and resurrection and ascension of the Lord into heaven, received the grace of the Holy Spirit in the same number of men (BEDE).

28:3 *You Are a Warrior and Have Shed Blood*

GOD GAVE THE KINGDOM TO DAVID. JOHN OF DAMASCUS: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God; consider the outcome of their life and imitate their faith."¹ Emperors have not preached the word to you, but apostles and prophets, shepherds and teachers. When God gave commands to David concerning the house David intended to build for him, he said to him, "You may not build a house for my name, for you are a warrior and have shed blood." "Pay all of them their dues," the apostle Paul says, "taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due."² Political prosper-

ity is the business of emperors; the condition of the church is the concern of shepherds and teachers. Any other method is piracy, brothers. Saul tore Samuel's cloak, and what was the consequence? God tore the kingdom away from him and gave it to David the meek.³ ON DIVINE IMAGES, SECOND APOLOGY 12.⁴

THE TEMPLE OF PEACE. ORIGEN: Consider whether the story about David and Solomon concerning the temple hints at something like this. For when David, who wages the wars of the Lord and stands firm against many personal enemies and enemies of Israel, wishes to build a temple for God, he is prevented by God through Nathan, who says to him, "You shall not build me a house, because you are a man of blood."

Solomon, however, who saw God in a dream and received wisdom in a dream (for the reality [of God] was reserved for him who said, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here"),⁵ who enjoyed the profoundest peace so that each person at that time rested under his own vine and under his own fig tree and who was named after the peace in his time (for Solomon means "peaceful"),⁶ because of this peace has time to construct the famous temple for God. The temple for God is also rebuilt in the times of Esdras, when the truth overcomes wine along with the hostile king

¹Heb 13:7. ²Rom 13:7. ³1 Sam 15:27-28. ⁴JDDI 59-60. ⁵Mt 12:42. ⁶See 1 Chron 22:9.

and the women.⁷ COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6.4-5.⁸

28:9 *If You Seek God*

BEING WITH GOD. AUGUSTINE: There is a passage in the first book of the same Chronicles that declares the choice of the will: “And you, Solomon, my son, know you the God of your father and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts; if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.” But these people find some room for human merit in the clause “if you seek him,” and then the grace is thought to be given according to this merit in what is said in the ensuing words, “he will be found of you.” And so they labor with all their might to show that God’s grace is given according to our merits, in other words, that grace is not grace. For, as the apostle most expressly says, to them who receive reward according to merit “the recompense is not reckoned of grace but of debt.”⁹ ON GRACE AND FREE WILL II.¹⁰

THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU. JEROME: “Do you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy.”¹¹ And in another place: “The Lord is with you as long as you are with him. If you abandon him, he also will abandon you.” AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 3.1.¹²

28:11-12 *David Gave to Solomon the Plan of the Temple*

THE PLAN FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE. BEDE: It is to be noted, of course, that the thirty cubits of height spoken of above reached to the middle story; from there on to the third story another thirty cubits were added until the portico that was around the temple on the south and north and east reached the roof, as we learn from Jose-

phus’s account;¹³ from there to the top of the temple roof was another sixty cubits, and so the total height of the house according to the book of Paralipomenon amounted to 120 cubits.¹⁴ Also the portico that was in front of the temple to the east, according to the account of the aforesaid volume, was the same number of cubits in height. That is, the porticoes around the temple of which we have just spoken, this book calls treasuries and inner chambers. David, it says, “gave his son Solomon a plan of the portico, and of the temple, and of the treasuries, and of the upper room, and of the inner chambers and of the room for the mercy seat”; here too he refers to the outer houses that were outside the courtyard of the priests surrounding the temple, when he adds, “As also of all the courts that he had in mind, and of the surrounding chambers for the treasuries of the house of the Lord and for the treasuries for dedicated objects.” The fact that the entire height of the temple was 120 cubits refers to the same mystery as when the primitive church in Jerusalem after the passion and resurrection and ascension of the Lord into heaven received the grace of the Holy Spirit in the same number of men.¹⁵ For fifteen, which is the sum of seven and eight, is sometimes taken to signify the life that is now lived in the sabbath rest of the souls of the faithful¹⁶ but will be brought to perfection at the end of the world by the resurrection of their immortal bodies. Now this fifteen arranged in a triangle, that is, numbered with all its parts, makes 120. Hence by the number 120 the great happiness of the elect in the life to come is aptly represented, and by it the third story of the Lord’s house is aptly completed because after the present hardships of the faithful and after their souls receive their rest in the life to come, the complete happiness of the whole church will be achieved in the glory of the resurrection. To this mystery likewise refers, as we have said, the fact that the Lord on rising from

⁷See 1 Ezra 4:36-38 (LXX). ⁸FC 80:168-69. ⁹Rom 4:4. ¹⁰NPNF 1 5:448*. ¹¹1 Cor 3:16-17. ¹²FC 53:348. ¹³Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.3.2. ¹⁴See 2 Chron 3:4. ¹⁵See Acts 1:16. ¹⁶See Heb 4:9.

the dead and ascending into heaven sent to this number of men in tongues of fire the Holy Spirit, who enabled them, though differing from each other on account of the diversity of their languages, suddenly to speak in his praise in a common tongue by giving them a knowledge of all languages.¹⁷ For the church too in its own turn rising from the dead and ascending to heaven in incorruptible flesh will be fully and perfectly enlightened by the gift of the Holy Spirit when,

according to the promise of the apostle, “God” will be “all in all.”¹⁸ Then there will be complete unity of languages universally for the preaching of the wonderful works of God because all join with one mind and voice in praising the glory of the divine majesty that they see before them. ON THE TEMPLE I.8.2.¹⁹

¹⁷See Acts 2:3-4. ¹⁸1 Cor 15:28. ¹⁹TTH 21:30-32.

FROM DAVID TO SOLOMON 1 CHRONICLES 29:1-30

OVERVIEW: The stones of which the temple was made were white and precious because they were produced on the island of Paros (BEDE).

29:2 *Precious Stones*

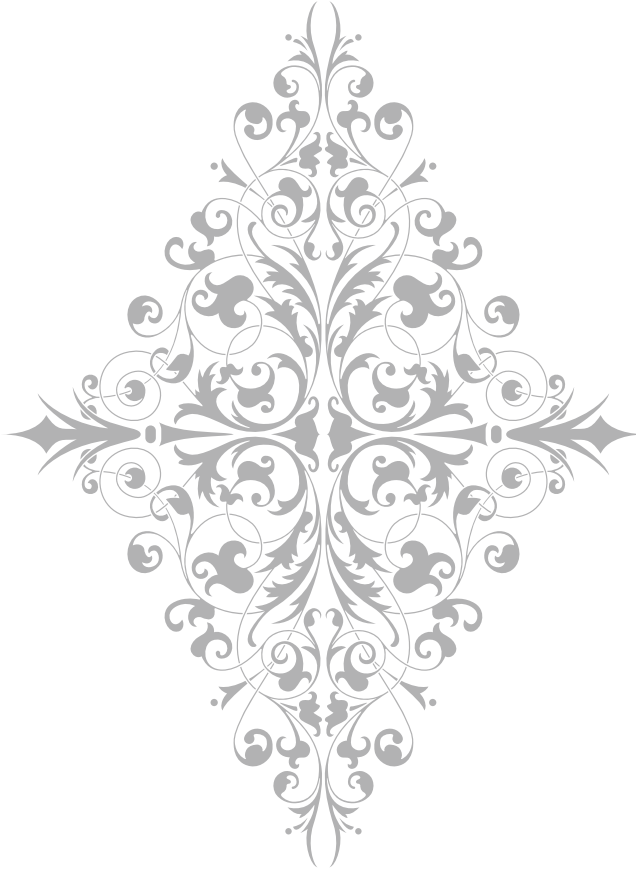
THE STONES FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE.

BEDE: What color the stones were with which the temple was made is openly stated in the book of Paralipomenon when David said to Solomon on showing him the materials of the temple that he

had procured, “I have prepared all manner of precious stones and marble of Paros in great abundance.” White marble is called Parian marble because it was produced on the island of that name. Hence the poet writes of it: “[past the] Isle of Olives, and then past snow-white Paros and the Cyclades sprinkled about the sea we sped o’er the waters tossed by many a wind.”¹ ON THE TEMPLE I.4.5.²

¹Virgil *Aeneid* 3:126-27. ²TTH 21:17.

2 C H R O N I C L E S



THE SOLEMN OFFERING OF SOLOMON

2 CHRONICLES 1:1-17

OVERVIEW: Ask and you will receive (CHRYSOSTOM). The truth is full of difficulty and obscurity. Solomon entered into the depth and declared the furthest point of wisdom to be the discovery of how very far off wisdom was from him (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). Solomon might judge his people “in wisdom” because the Lord had given him an abundance of prudence (ORIGEN).

1:7 *God Appeared to Solomon*

SPIRITUAL GIFTS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: You also therefore should ask nothing worldly, but all things spiritual, and you will surely receive. For so Solomon, because he asked what he ought, behold, how quickly he received. Two things now, you see, should be in one who prays: asking earnestly and asking what he ought, “since you too,” said he, “though you are parents, wait for your children to ask; and if they should ask of you anything inexpedient, you refuse the gifts; just as, if it be expedient, you consent and bestow it.” Do you too, considering these things, not withdraw until you receive; until you have found, do not retire; do not relax your diligence until the door is opened. For if you approach with this mind and say, “Except I receive, I will not depart,” you will surely receive, provided you ask such things as are both suitable for him of whom you asked to give and expedient for you the petitioner. But what are these? To seek the things spiritual, all of them; to forgive them who have trespassed, and so to draw near asking forgiveness; “to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting.”¹ If we thus ask, we shall receive. As it is, surely our asking is a mockery and the act of drunken rather than of sober people.

“What then,” said one, “if I ask even spiritual things, and do not receive?” You did not surely

knock with earnestness; or you made yourself unworthy to receive; or did quickly stop asking.

“And wherefore,” it may be inquired, “did he not say, what things we ought to ask”? No, truly, he has mentioned them all in what precedes and has signified for what things we ought to draw near. Do not say, then, “I drew near and did not receive.” For in no case is it owing to God that we receive not, God who loves us so much as to surpass even parents, to surpass them as far as goodness does this evil nature. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 23:5.²

1:10 *Give Wisdom and Knowledge*

THE SUBJECT OF GOD IS HARDER TO APPROACH. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: The truth, and the whole Word, is full of difficulty and obscurity; and as it were with a small instrument we are undertaking a great work, when with merely human wisdom we pursue the knowledge of the self-existent, and in company with, or not apart from, the senses, by which we are borne hither and thither and led into error, we apply ourselves to the search after things that are only to be grasped by the mind, and we are unable by meeting bare realities with bare intellect to approximate somewhat more closely to the truth and to mold the mind by its concepts. Now the subject of God is harder to come at, in proportion as it is more perfect than any other and is open to more objections, and the solutions of them are more laborious. For every objection, however small, stops and hinders the course of our argument and cuts off its further advance, just like people who suddenly check with the rein the horses in full career and turn them right round by

¹1 Tim 2:8. ²NPNF 1 10:161*.

the unexpected shock. Thus Solomon, who was the wisest of all people, whether before him or in his own time, to whom God gave breadth of heart and a flood of contemplation, more abundant than the sand, even he, the more he entered into the depth, the more dizzy he became, and he declared the furthest point of wisdom to be the discovery of how very far off it was from him.³

ON THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ORATION

2(28).21.⁴

A MAN OF PRUDENCE. ORIGEN: "There was no wise man like you before you, and there will not be after you." Therefore, because the Lord had given [Solomon] an abundance of prudence, "like the sand of the sea,"⁵ that he might judge his people "in wisdom," thus he could exercise many virtues at the same time. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 11.2.⁶

³Eccles 7:23. ⁴NPNF 2 7:296. ⁵See Gen 22:17. ⁶FC 71:171*.



LAST PREPARATIONS
FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE
2 CHRONICLES 2:1-18

OVERVIEW: By overseers' teaching authority we are instructed in all things how best to teach the ignorant and correct the contemptuous. The aforesaid overseers are rightly recorded as numbering seven thousand and eight thousand, but the perfect works of good people are appropriately symbolized by the number six. Nor should we pass over the fact that these seventy and eighty thousand hod carriers and stonemasons with their overseers were not from Israel but from among the proselytes (BEDE).

2:17-18 Solomon Took a Census

THE PERFECT WORKS OF GOOD PEOPLE.

BEDE: Now the overseers who were in charge of each operation are the writers of sacred Scripture by whose teaching authority we are instructed in all things as to how best to teach the ignorant and correct the contemptuous, to bear each other's burdens so that we may fulfill the law of Christ. But the more each one labors in giving his neighbors support in their needs or in correcting their mistakes, the more surely may he expect in the life to come the rewards whether of peace of soul after death or of blessed immortality of body. Consequently, the aforesaid overseers are rightly

recorded as numbering 70,000 and 80,000: 70,000 because of the sabbath rest of souls for the seventh day is consecrated to the sabbath, that is, rest; 80,000 because of the hope of resurrection on the eighth day, that is, after the sabbath, has already taken place in the Lord, and, it is hoped, will take place in us also on the eighth day and in the eighth age to come. The overseers, on the other hand, were 3,300, doubtless because of faith in the holy Trinity that the holy Scriptures proclaim to us. But the fact that in the book of Paralipomenon the number 3,000 is written instead of 3,300 has to do with the very same perfection of people of sublime virtue. For because the Lord completed the adornment of the world in the number six, the perfect works of good people are rightly apt to be symbolized by the same number, and because holy Scripture teaches that we must have the works of piety as well as true faith, the overseers of the temple works are rightly said to be 3,600. Nor should we pass over the fact that these 70,000 and 80,000 hod carriers¹ and stonemasons with their overseers were not from Israel but from among the prose-

¹A hod was a kind of wooden tray with a handle, used for carrying mortar or bricks on one's shoulders.

lytes, that is, strangers who sojourned among them. For it is written in the book of Paralipomenon, "And Solomon took a census of all the proselytes resident in the land of Israel, on the model

of the census that David his father had taken; and it was found that they numbered 153,600. And he put 70,000 of them carrying burdens on their shoulders," and so forth. ON THE TEMPLE 1.3.4.²

[THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE
2 CHRONICLES 3:1-17]

[See commentary on 1 Kings 6-7]

[THE SACRED FURNISHINGS
OF THE TEMPLE
2 CHRONICLES 4:1-22]

[See commentary on 1 Kings 7:13-51]

[TRANSPORT OF THE ARK
2 CHRONICLES 5:1-14]

[See commentary on 2 Samuel 6:1-11]

[SOLOMON CONSECRATES THE TEMPLE
2 CHRONICLES 6:1-12]

[See commentary on 1 Kings 8:12-53]

[CELEBRATION IN ISRAEL
AND APPEARANCE OF GOD
2 CHRONICLES 7:1-22]

[See commentary on 1 Kings 8-9]

[WORKS OF SOLOMON
2 CHRONICLES 8:1-17]
[See commentary on 1 Kings 9]

[VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
AND MAGNIFICENCE OF SOLOMON
2 CHRONICLES 9:1-28]
[See commentary on 1 Kings 10]

[DEATH OF SOLOMON
2 CHRONICLES 9:29-31]
[1 Kings 11:41-43]

[POLITICIANS' SCHISM
2 CHRONICLES 10:1-19]
[See commentary on 1 Kings 12]

[THE REIGN AND THE FAMILY
OF REHOBOAM
2 CHRONICLES 11:1-23]
[See commentary on 1 Kings 12; 14:21-31]

[INFIDELITY OF REHOBOAM
2 CHRONICLES 12:1-16]

[ABIJAH, KING OF JUDAH
2 CHRONICLES 13:1-22]

THE REIGN OF ASA
2 CHRONICLES 14:1-15

OVERVIEW: The vast army was defeated by the power of Asa's prayer (APHRAHAT).

14:10-15 *In God's Name*

THE POWER OF PRAYER. APHRAHAT: Asa prayed, and his prayer manifested great power: when Zerah the Indian [Ethiopian] went out against him with an army of one million with

him, Asa then prayed, saying, "By this shall your power be known, O our God, when you finish off a vast people by means of a small people." God heard his prayer and sent his angel to rout them. Thus the vast army was defeated by the power of Asa's prayer. DEMONSTRATION 4.8.¹

¹CS 101:12.





THE REFORMS OF ASA 2 CHRONICLES 15:1-19

OVERVIEW: Persevering in faith and virtue, we may attain to the palm and the crown (CYPRIAN). As humans have many facial expressions, so also do the feelings of their hearts vary. If it were possible for us to be always immersed in the waters of baptism, sins would fly over our heads and leave us untouched (JEROME). Impiety always leads us to worship false idols and to drive us away from the ineffable goodness of God (THEODORET).

15:2 *The Lord Is with You*

WE MUST PERSEVERE IN FAITH. CYPRIAN: We must press on and persevere in faith and virtue and in completion of heavenly and spiritual grace, that we may attain to the palm and the crown. In

the book of Chronicles [we read], “The Lord is with you so long as you also are with him; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.” EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM 8.¹

IF WE WERE CONTINUALLY IMMERSSED IN WATERS OF BAPTISM. JEROME: When we have been baptized we are told, “Behold, you are made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing happen to you.”² And again, “Don’t you know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone profanes the temple of God, God shall destroy him.”³ And in another place, “The Lord is with you so long as you are with him: if you forsake him, he will also forsake you.” Where is the

¹FC 36:326*. ²Jn 5:14. ³1 Cor 3:16-17.

person, do you suppose, in whom as in a shrine and sanctuary the purity of Christ is permanent and in whose case the serenity of the temple is saddened by no cloud of sin? We cannot always have the same countenance, though the philosophers falsely boast that this was the experience of Socrates; how much less can our minds be always the same! As people have many facial expressions, so also do the feelings of their hearts vary. If it were possible for us to be always immersed in the waters of baptism, sins would fly over our heads and leave us untouched. The Holy Spirit would protect us. But the enemy assails us, and when conquered he does not depart but is ever lying in ambush, that he may secretly shoot the upright in heart. **AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 3.1.**⁴

15:3 *Israel Was Without the True God*

THE DAMAGES OF IMPIETY. THEODORET OF

CYR: The passage shows the impiety of the ten tribes: “For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law; but when in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them.” Do not imitate, the Scripture says, the impiety of your brothers. They do not preach the true God but pursue false idols. For this reason they have been deprived of the priests and the teachers, who could teach them the law of God. Experience, therefore, becomes our guide in showing the damages of impiety. For after being afflicted by any kind of calamity they implore now the help of God, giving themselves entirely to the ineffable goodness of the Lord. **QUESTION 1, ON 2 CHRONICLES.**⁵

⁴NPNF 2 6:472*. ⁵PG 80:828.

[LAST ACTS OF ASA
2 CHRONICLES 16:1-14]

JEHOSHAPHAT,
THE NEW KING OF JUDAH
2 CHRONICLES 17:1-19

OVERVIEW: Jehoshaphat possessed the justice that David later committed, and the Lord established the kingdom in his hand (JEROME).

17:3-6 Jehoshaphat Followed the Way of the Lord

JEHOSHAPHAT, SUCCESSOR OF DAVID IN JUSTICE AND GLORY. JEROME: Of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, it is written, “And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, who walked in the first ways of David, his father.” From this it is clear that Jehoshaphat possessed the justice that David first possessed and that he did not commit the sins

that David later committed. “He trusted not in Baalim,” he says, “but in the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the sins of Israel. And the Lord established the kingdom in his hand and all Judah brought presents to Jehoshaphat. And he acquired immense wealth and riches and much glory.” “And when his heart had taken courage for the ways of the Lord, he took away also the high places and the groves out of Judah.” **AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.21.**¹

¹FC 53:329.



JEHOSHAPHAT MAKES A COVENANT WITH AHAB 2 CHRONICLES 18:1-34

OVERVIEW: God is so merciful that for the sake of our salvation he foregoes being spoken of in terms befitting his dignity (CHRYSOSTOM).

18:18-21 A Lying Spirit in the Mouth of the Prophets

IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS DIGNITY. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: In the case of Ahab, God said, “Who shall deceive Ahab for me?” In addition, there is also the fact that he always made himself

available for comparison with the pagan gods, and all this is below the dignity of God. However, viewed in another way, it becomes worthy of him. I say this for he is so merciful that for the sake of our salvation he foregoes being spoken of in terms befitting his dignity. **HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 64.2.**¹

¹FC 41:195*.



PEACE IN THE REIGN
OF JEHOSHAPHAT
2 CHRONICLES 19:1-11

OVERVIEW: God does not examine us according to the part, because by examining the whole and not taking the part only into account, you will find that your neighbor is better than you (BASIL). Moreover, the Lord alone cannot err in his judgment because he cannot be deceived in his knowledge (AUGUSTINE).

19:3 *Some Good Is Found*

GOD DOES NOT EXAMINE US ACCORDING TO THE PART. BASIL THE GREAT: If you see your neighbor committing sin, take care not to dwell exclusively on his sin, but think of the many

things he has done and continues to do rightly. Many times, by examining the whole and not taking the part only into account, you will find that he is better than you. God does not examine humans according to the part, for he says, "I come to gather together their works and thoughts."¹ Furthermore, when he rebuked Josaphat for a sin committed in an unguarded moment, he mentioned also the good he had done, saying, "But good works are found in you." ON HUMILITY.²

¹Is 66:18. ²FC 9:483*.

19:7 *No Perversion of Justice*

GOD CANNOT ERR IN HIS JUDGMENT. AUGUSTINE: Do not doubt that this duty of ours is a part of religion because God, “with whom there is no iniquity,” whose power is supreme, who not only sees what each one is but also foresees what he will be, who alone cannot err in his judgment

because he cannot be deceived in his knowledge, nevertheless acts as the Gospel expresses it, “He makes his sun to rise on the good and bad, and rains on the just and unjust.”³ LETTER 153.⁴

³Mt 5:45. ⁴FC 20:282-83*.

[WARS AND VICTORIES OF JEHOSHAPHAT UNTIL HIS DEATH 2 CHRONICLES 20:1-37]

THE IMPIOUS JEHORAM SUCCEEDS JEHOASHAPHAT 2 CHRONICLES 21:1-20

OVERVIEW: When Philistines and Arabs came to the land of Judah and wasted it, we had a clear indication of how God stirs up enemies to lay waste those countries that he judges to be deserving of such punishment (AUGUSTINE).

21:16-17 *Philistines and Arabs Invade Judah*

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD. AUGUSTINE: Just read the books of Paralipomenon and this is what you will find written in the second book: “And the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and of the Arabians who

border on the Ethiopians. And they came up to the land of Judah and wasted it, and they carried away all substance that was found in the king’s house.” Here we have a clear indication of how God stirs up enemies to lay waste those countries that he judges to be deserving of such punishment. And yet, was it not of their own will that the Philistines and Arabs came to lay waste the country of Judah? Or did they so come of their own will that the Scripture lies where it tells us that the Lord stirred up their spirit to do so? On the contrary. Both statements are true because they did come of their own will and God did stir up their spirit. The same thing could also be

expressed by saying that God both stirred up their spirit and that they came nevertheless of their own will. For the Almighty, who cannot possibly will anything unjust, is able to set in motion even the inclinations of their will in human hearts in order to accomplish through

these people whatever he wishes to achieve through their agency. ON GRACE AND FREE WILL 21.42.¹

¹FC 59:301.



THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH AND
THE USURPATION OF ATHALIAH
2 CHRONICLES 22:1-12

OVERVIEW: The justice one possesses in the past is destroyed by the fact that he has committed sin and has refused the God's law (JEROME).

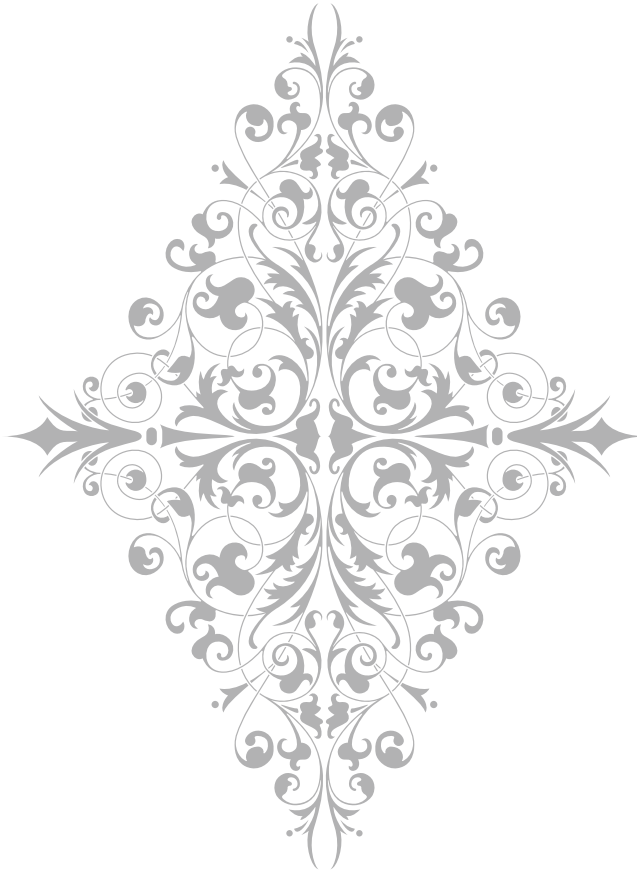
22:8-9 *Jehu Executed Judgment on the House of Ahab*

SON OF JEHOSEPHAT. JEROME: The Lord established the kingdom in Jehoshaphat's hand, and all Judah brought presents to him. And he acquired immense wealth and riches and much glory. . . . And, lest we suppose that the justice he

possessed in the past was destroyed by the fact that he committed this sin and was reproved by the prophet, it is written subsequently of Uzziah, his descendant, that Jehu found him lying in Samaria, and, when he was brought in, he killed him: "And they buried him," he says, "because he was the son of Jehoshaphat, who has sought the Lord with all his heart." AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.21.¹

¹FC 53:329-30*.

[JEHOIADA PROCLAIMS JOASH KING
2 CHRONICLES 23:1-21]





JOASH IS THE NEW KING OF JUDAH 2 CHRONICLES 24:1-27

OVERVIEW: Although the king is young, he could be meek, gentle and quiet (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). Joash forsook the temple of the Lord and served groves and idols, and the consequence of his sin was that he was given over to shocking and filthy passions (CASSIAN). The church of the Lord remains closed against terrors. The camp of Christ, invincible and brave and fortified by the protecting Lord, does not yield to threats (CYPRIAN). Zechariah was a man of God (BEDE).

24:1 *Joash Was Seven Years Old*

AN EXAMPLE OF A YOUNG KING. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: If in a small parish one advanced in years is not to be found, let some younger person who has a good report among his neighbors and is esteemed by them worthy of the office of a bishop—who has carried himself from his youth with meekness and regularity, like a

much elder person—after examination and a general good report, be ordained in peace. . . . Joash governed the people at seven years of age. Wherefore, although the person is young, let him be meek, gentle and quiet. CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 2.1.¹

24:17-25 *Perversion of Joash*

THE CONSEQUENCE OF JOASH'S PRIDE. JOHN CASSIAN: Some such thing we read of in the book of Chronicles. For Joash the king of Judah at the age of seven was summoned by Jehoiada the priest to the kingdom and by the witness of Scripture is commended for all his actions as long as the aforesaid priest lived. But hear what Scripture relates of him after Jehoiada's death and how he was puffed up with pride and given over to a

¹ANF 7:396.

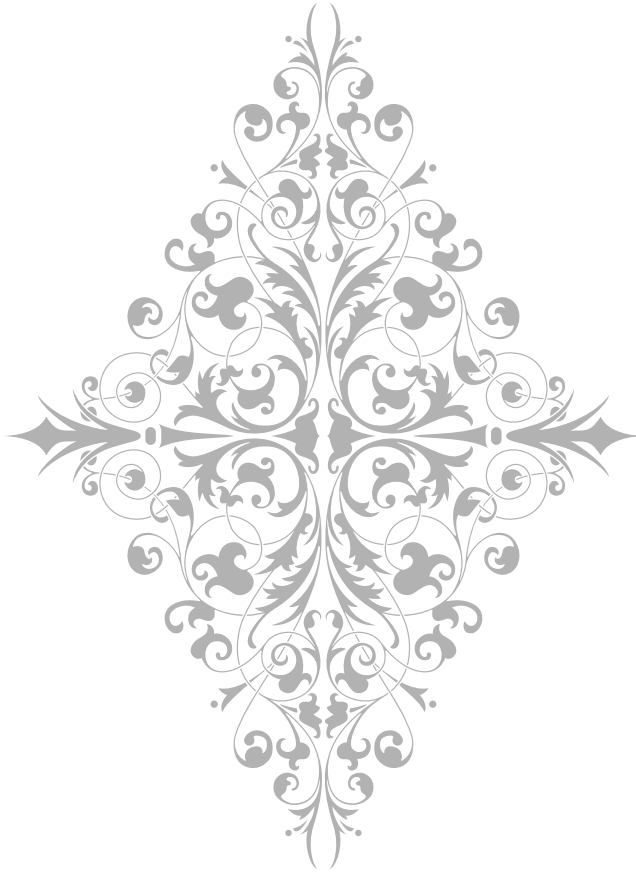
most disgraceful state. "But after the death of Jehoiada the princes went in and worshiped the king; and he was soothed by their services and hearkened to them. And they forsook the temple of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served groves and idols, and great wrath came on Judah and Jerusalem because of this sin." And after a little: "When a year was come about, the army of Syria came up against him; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the princes of the people, and they sent all the spoils to the king to Damascus. And whereas there came a very small number of the Syrians, the Lord delivered into their hands an infinite multitude, because they had forsaken the Lord the God of their fathers; and on Joash they executed shameful judgments. And departing they left him in great diseases." You see how the consequence of pride was that he was given over to shocking and filthy passions. For he who is puffed up with pride and has permitted himself to be worshiped as God, is (as the apostle says) "given over to shameful passions and a reprobate mind to do those things that are not convenient."² And because, as Scripture says, "everyone who exalts his heart is unclean before God,"³ he who is puffed up with swelling pride of heart is given over to most shameful confusion to be deluded by it, that when thus humbled he may know that he is unclean through impurity of the flesh and knowledge of impure desires, a thing that he had refused to recognize in the pride of his heart; and also that the shameful infection of the flesh may disclose the hidden impurity of the heart, which he contracted through the sin of pride, and that through the patent pollution of his body he may

be proved to be impure, who did not formerly see that he had become unclean through the pride of his spirit. INSTITUTES 12.21.⁴

OBSERVING THE WILL OF GOD. CYPRIAN: If there are any who think that they can return to the church without prayers but with threats, or think that they can make an entrance for themselves, not by lamentations and reparations but by terrors, let them certainly consider that the church of the Lord remains closed against such and that the camp of Christ, invincible and brave and fortified by the protecting Lord, does not yield to threats. The bishop of God, holding the gospel, can be killed as observing the precepts of Christ; he cannot be conquered. Zachariah, the high priest of God, suggests and gives to us examples of virtue and of faith. When he could not be terrified by threats and stoning, he was killed in the temple of God, crying out and saying the same thing that we shout also against heretics and say, "Thus says the Lord: You have forsaken the ways of the Lord, and the Lord will forsake you." LETTER 59.17.⁵

ZECHARIAH, A HOLY MAN. BEDE: Zechariah was son of high priest Jehoiada, a man who was likewise very holy. They stoned Zechariah between the temple and the altar, as the Lord himself bore witness when he made mention of the blessed martyrs in the Gospel.⁶ HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 1.3.⁷

²Rom 1:28. ³Prov 16:5 (LXX). ⁴NPNF 2 11:286-87. ⁵FC 51:189. ⁶See Lk 11:47. ⁷CS 110:26*.



WARS UNDER AMAZIAH
2 CHRONICLES 25:1-28

OVERVIEW: The Lord, wishing to punish the sin of idolatry, wrought this in this man's heart, with whom he was indeed justly angry, not to listen to sound advice but to despise it, and go to the battle, in which he with his army was routed. Besides, the refusal to hear the truth leads to commission of sin, and this sin is also punishment for preceding sin (AUGUSTINE).

25:7-20 *The Unfaithfulness of Amaziah*

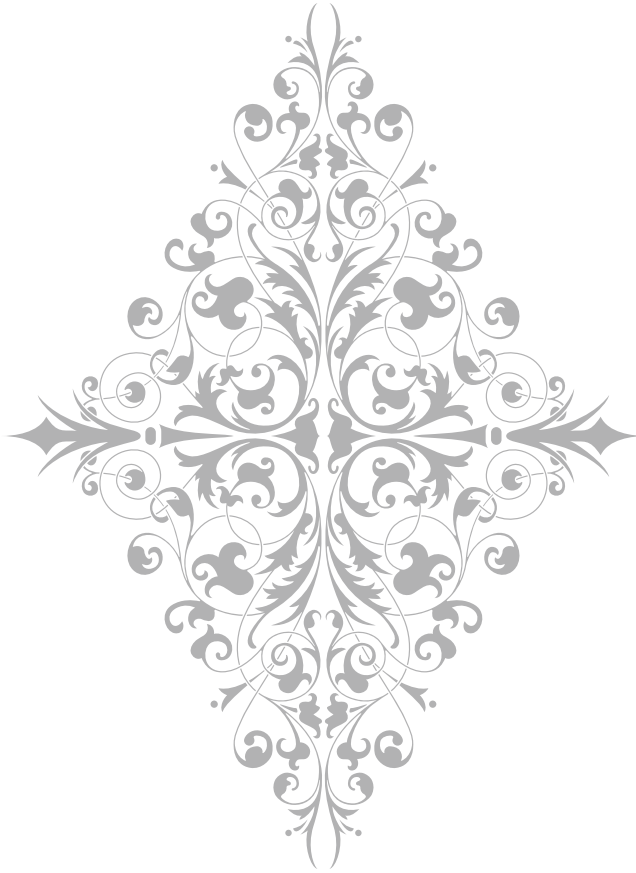
AMAZIAH WOULD NOT HEAR THE PRESCRIPTIONS OF GOD. AUGUSTINE: For the Almighty sets in motion even in the innermost hearts of people the movement of their will, so that he does through their agency whatsoever he wishes to perform through them—even he who knows not how to will anything in unrighteousness. What, again, is the purport of that which the man of God said to King Amaziah: “Let not the army of Israel go with you; for the Lord is not with Israel, even with all the children of Ephraim: for if you shall think to obtain with these, the Lord shall put you to flight before your enemies: for God has power either to strengthen or to put to flight”? Now, how does the power of God help some in war by giving them confidence and put others to flight by injecting fear into them, except it be that he who has made all things according to his own will, in heaven and on earth,¹ also works in human hearts? We read also what Joash, king of Israel, said when he sent a message to Amaziah, king of Judah, who wanted to fight with him. After certain other words, he added, “Now

stay at home; why do you challenge me to your hurt, that you should fall, you and Judah with you?”² Then the Scripture has added this sequel: “But Amaziah would not hear; for it came of God, that he might be delivered into their hands, because they sought after the gods of Edom.” Behold, now, how God, wishing to punish the sin of idolatry, wrought this in this man's heart, with whom he was indeed justly angry, not to listen to sound advice but to despise it and go to the battle in which he with his army was routed. ON GRACE AND FREE WILL 42 [21].³

FROM A HIDDEN JUDGMENT OF GOD COMES PERVERSITY OF HEART. AUGUSTINE: Is not sin also punishment for sin where Amaziah, king of Judah, did not wish to hear the good advice of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, not to go to war? We read, “Amaziah would not listen to him because it was the Lord's will that he should be delivered into their hands, because they sought the god of Edom.” We can recount many other events clearly showing that from a hidden judgment of God comes perversity of heart, with the result that refusal to hear the truth leads to commission of sin, and this sin is also punishment for preceding sin. For to believe a lie and not believe the truth is indeed sin, but it comes from the blindness of heart that by a hidden but just judgment of God is also punishment for sin. AGAINST JULIAN 5.3.12.⁴

¹Ps 135:6 (134:6 LXX, Vg). ²2 Kings 14:10. ³NPNF 1 5:462*. ⁴FC 35:254.

THE REIGN OF UZZIAH 2 CHRONICLES 26:1-23



OVERVIEW: Uzziah was branded by the Lord's anger on that part of the body on which those who win the Lord's favor are sealed (CYPRIAN). Those who in the conflict of battle have escaped the danger of death fall before their own trophies and triumphs (CASSIAN). It is lawful only for the priests to do offerings and to approach the altar (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). Only the chief priest has the right to enter the Holy of Holies (PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS). Sacred offices are conferred only by the laying on of the hands of the bishop (APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS). Because of their sin, Adam and Uzziah fled and hid in shame of their bodies (EPHREM). Uzziah is described as at first having been righteous, and then it is related that he was lifted up in mind and dared to offer sacrifice to God himself, and his face became leprous in consequence. Also among the Jews who rejected the Christ of God, the true High Priest, a kind of leprosy infected their souls, as in the days of Uzziah (EUSEBIUS).

26:16-23 A Leprous Disease

UZZIAH KNEW GOD'S INDIGNATION. CYPRIAN: When King Uzziah carried a censer and violently took on himself to sacrifice, against the law of God, and refused to submit or give place, despite the opposition of Azariah the priest, he was confounded by God's indignation and defiled with the markings of leprosy on his forehead, branded by the Lord's anger on that part of the body on which those who win the Lord's favor are sealed. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH 18.¹

UZZIAH WAS CAST DOWN BY PRIDE. JOHN CASSIAN: Of Uzziah, the ancestor of this king of whom we have been speaking, himself also praised in all things by the witness of the Scripture, after great commendation for his virtue, after countless triumphs that he achieved by the merit of his devotion and faith, learn how he was cast down by the pride of vainglory. "And," we are told, "the name of Uzziah went forth, for the Lord helped him and had strengthened him. But

when he was made strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, and he neglected the Lord his God." . . . You see how dangerous the successes of prosperity generally are, so that those who could not be injured by adversity are ruined, unless they are careful, by prosperity; and those who in the conflict of battle have escaped the danger of death fall before their own trophies and triumphs. INSTITUTES II.II.²

NOBODY CAN OFFER ANYTHING WITHOUT THE PRIEST. APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: As, therefore, it was not lawful for one of another tribe that was not a Levite to offer anything or to approach the altar without the priest, so also do you do nothing without the bishop; for if anyone does anything without the bishop, he does it to no purpose. For it will not be esteemed as of any avail to him. . . . For as Uzziah the king, who was not a priest and yet would exercise the functions of the priests, was smitten with leprosy for his transgression; so every lay person shall not be unpunished who despises God, and is so mad as to affront his priests and unjustly to snatch that honor to himself: not imitating Christ, "who glorified not himself to be made an high priest"³ but waited till he heard from his Father, "The Lord swore and will not repent, You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."⁴ If, therefore, Christ did not glorify himself without the Father, how dare anyone thrust himself into the priesthood who has not received that dignity from his superior and do such things that it is lawful only for the priests to do? CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 2.27.⁵

EVERYONE MUST REMAIN WITHIN THE ORDER OF HIS MINISTRY. PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS: This, then, is what must be said whenever someone acts out of place, even when he seems to be doing something right, for no one may get out of line in this way. Surely, there was nothing

¹LCC 5:136-37. ²NPNF 2 11:277-78. ³Heb 5:5. ⁴Ps 110:4 (109:4 LXX). ⁵ANF 7:410*.

unseemly in the fact that Uzziah burned incense in honor of God. . . . And yet the Word of God bars anyone who has taken over a task that is not for him. It teaches that everyone must remain within the order of his ministry,⁶ that only the chief priest has the right to enter the Holy of Holies, and this only once a year and in the state of hierarchical purity which Law demands.⁷ The priests cover the holy things, and the Levites “do not touch the holy things, lest they die.”⁸ That is why the Lord was angered by the boldness of Uzziah. . . . To sum up, The perfect justice of God rejects those who break the law. LETTER 8.⁹

HOW SACRED OFFICES ARE CONFERRED.

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS: Neither do we permit the laity to perform any of the offices belonging to the priesthood, as, for instance, neither the sacrifice, nor baptism, nor the laying on of hands nor the blessing, whether the smaller or the greater, for “no one takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God.”¹⁰ For such sacred offices are conferred by the laying on of the hands of the bishop. But a person to whom such an office is not committed but seizes on it for himself, he shall undergo the punishment of Uzziah. **CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES 3.10.**¹¹

ADAM LIKE UZZIAH. **EPHREM THE SYRIAN:** In the midst of paradise God had planted the Tree of Knowledge to separate off, above and below, sanctuary from Holy of Holies. Adam made bold to touch and was smitten like Uzziah: the king became leprous, Adam was tripped. Being struck like Uzziah, he hastened to leave: both kings fled and hid, in shame of their bodies. **HYMNS ON PARADISE 3.14.**¹²

A DOUBLE LOSS. EPHREM THE SYRIAN:

Remember Uzziah, how he entered the sanctuary; by seeking to seize the priesthood he lost his kingdom. Adam, by wishing to enrich himself, incurred a double loss. Recognize in the sanctuary the Tree, in the censer the fruit and in the lep-

rosy the nakedness. From these two treasures there proceeded harm in both cases. **HYMNS ON PARADISE 12.4.**¹³

IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH. **EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA:** Uzziah is described as at first having been righteous, and then it is related that he was lifted up in mind and dared to offer sacrifice to God himself, and his face became leprous in consequence. But Josephus carefully studied the additional comments of the expounders as well, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews as he was, hear his description of the events of those times. He tells: “Though the priests urged Uzziah to go out of the temple and not to break the law of God, he angrily threatened them with death unless they held their peace. And meanwhile an earthquake shook the earth, and a bright light shone through a breach in the temple and struck the king’s face, so that at once it became leprous. And before the city at the place called Eroga, the western half of the Mount was split asunder and rolling four *stadia* stopped at the eastern mountain, so as to block up the royal approach and gardens.”¹⁴ This I take from the work of Josephus on Jewish antiquities. And I found in the beginning of the prophet Amos the statement that he began to prophecy “in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, two years before the earthquake.”¹⁵ What earthquake he does not clearly say. But I think the same prophet further on suggests this earthquake when he says, “I saw the Lord standing on the altar. And he said, Strike the altar, and the doors shall be shaken, and strike the heads of all, and the remnant I will slay with the sword.”¹⁶

Here I understand a prediction of the earthquake, and of the destruction of the ancient solemnities of the Jewish race and of the worship practiced by them in Jerusalem, the ruin that should overtake them after the coming of our Savior, when, since they rejected the Christ of

⁶Num 7:5. ⁷Lev 16:34; Exod 30:10; Heb 9:7. ⁸Num 4:15. ⁹PDCW 273-74. ¹⁰Heb 5:4. ¹¹ANF 7:429. ¹²HOP 95. ¹³HOP 161-62.

¹⁴Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 9.10.4. ¹⁵Amos 1:1. ¹⁶Amos 9:1.

God, the true High Priest, leprosy infected their souls, as in the days of Uzziah, when the Lord himself standing on the altar gave leave to him that struck, saying, "Strike the altar." PROOF OF

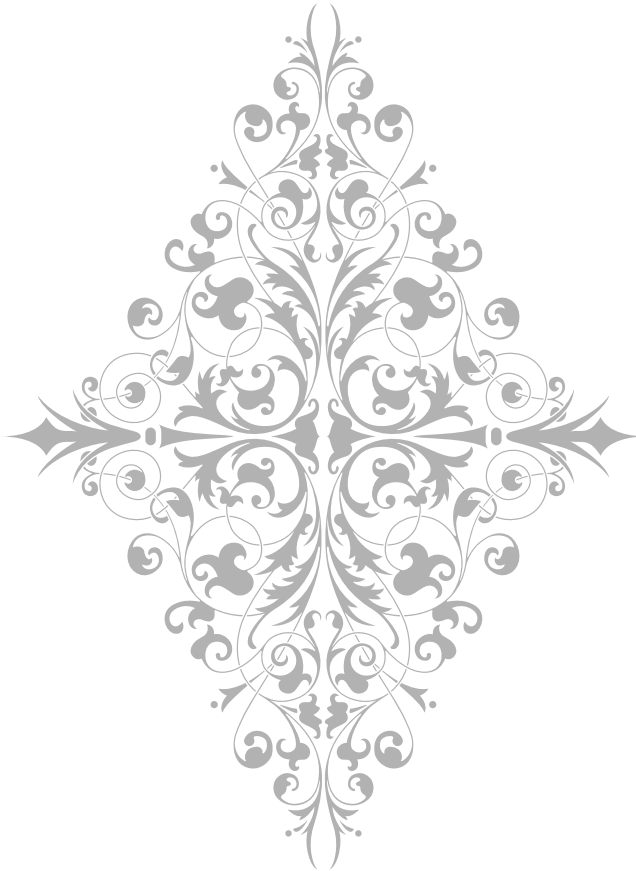
THE GOSPEL 6.18.¹⁷

¹⁷POG 2:32-33*.

[REIGN OF JOHAM
2 CHRONICLES 27:1-9]
[See commentary on 2 Kings 15:32-38]

[AHAZ BEGINS TO REIGN
2 CHRONICLES 28:1-27]
[See commentary on 2 Kings 16]







THE RETURN OF PASSOVER
AND HEZEKIAH'S REIGN
2 CHRONICLES 29:1–32:33
[See commentary on 2 Kings 18-20]

OVERVIEW: Hezekiah reinstated the celebration of Passover. As a man of prayer, he demonstrated where true strength was to be found and this is why he was able to defeat Sennacherib (PSEUDO-TERTULLIAN). Judah itself would have been resistant to such change had God not changed their hearts (AUGUSTINE). Hezekiah grew proud of his accomplishments, however, therefore God humbled him and Hezekiah repented. Had he not done so, he would have lost everything (CASSIAN).

30:1 Hezekiah's Invitation to Celebrate the Passover

THE MAN OF PRAYER DEFEATS SENNACHERIB. PSEUDO-TERTULLIAN:

As corrector of an inert People
That emulator [of David] Hezekiah arose;
He restored the Law to a sinful, forgetful
people
All God's mandates of old, he first

Commanded the people to observe,
Who ended war by his prayers,¹
Not by steel's point: he, dying, had a grant
Of years and times of life made to his tears:
Deservedly such honor his career obtained.
FIVE BOOKS IN REPLY TO MARCION 3.176-183.²

30:12 God Changes Judah's Mind

GOD BRINGS JUDAH BACK. AUGUSTINE: For who is "drawn," if he was already willing? And yet no one comes unless he is willing. Therefore he is drawn in wondrous ways to will by the one who knows how to work within the very hearts of individuals. Not that people who are unwilling should believe—which cannot be—but that they should be made willing from being unwilling.

That this is true we do not surmise by human

¹When one compares the sequence of events in Scripture, it will be seen that Hezekiah's reforms preceded his war with Sennacherib and Sennacherib's subsequent defeat. ²ANF 4:153**.

conjecture but discern by the most evident authority of the divine Scriptures. It is read in the books of the Chronicles, “Also in Judah, the hand of God was made to give them one heart, to do the commandment of the king and of the princes in the word of the Lord.” . . . Did the men of God who wrote these things—in fact, did the Spirit of God himself, under whose guidance such things were written by them—assail human free will? Away with the notion! But God has commended both the most righteous judgment and the most merciful aid of the Omnipotent in all cases. For it is enough for human beings to know that there is no unrighteousness with God. But how he dispenses those benefits, making some deservedly vessels of wrath, others graciously vessels of mercy—who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?³ If, then, we attain to the honor of grace, let us not be ungrateful by attributing to ourselves what we have received. “For what do we have which we have not received?”⁴ AGAINST TWO LETTERS OF THE PELAGIANS 37-38.⁵

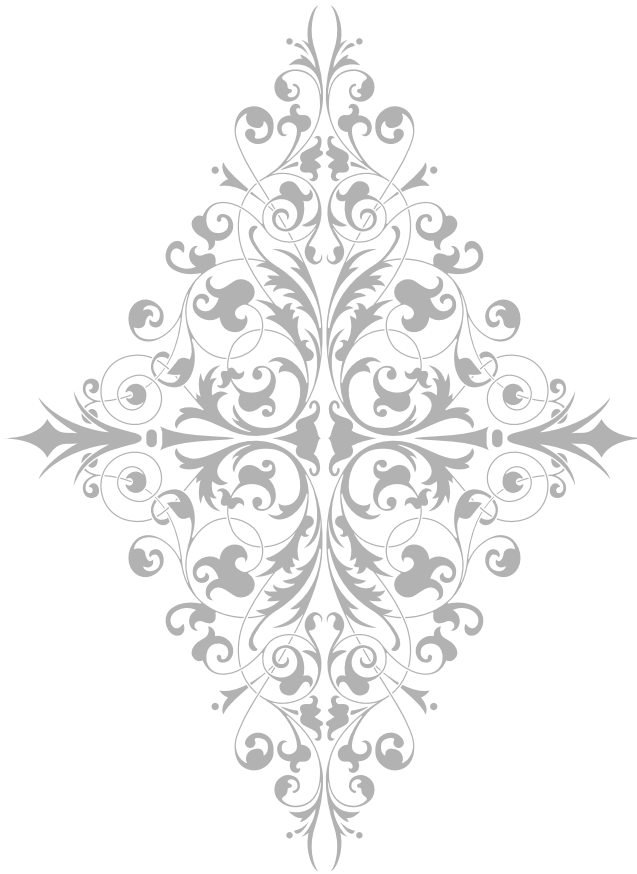
32:24-26 Hezekiah’s Pride

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY. JOHN CAS-
SIAN: “In those days,” we are told, “Hezekiah was

sick unto death, and he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord heard him and gave him a sign,” that, namely of which we read in the fourth book of the kingdoms, which was given by Isaiah the prophet through the going back of the sun. “But,” it says, “he did not respond to the benefits which he had received, for his heart was proud. And wrath was kindled against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. He humbled himself afterwards because his heart had been proud, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.” How dangerous, how terrible is the malady of vanity! So much goodness, so many virtues, faith and devotion, great enough to prevail to change nature itself and the laws of the whole world—all destroyed by a single act of pride! The result would have been that all his good deeds would have been forgotten as if they had never existed, and he would at once have been subject to the wrath of the Lord unless he had appeased him by recovering his humility. Thus, he who, at the suggestion of pride, had fallen from so great a height of excellence, could only mount again to the height he had lost by the same steps of humility. INSTITUTES II.IO.⁶

³1 Cor 2:15. ⁴1 Cor 4:7. ⁵NPNF 1 5:389-90**. ⁶NPNF 2 11:277**.





MANASSEH AND AMON
2 CHRONICLES 33:1-25
[See commentary on 2 Kings 21]

OVERVIEW. Hezekiah's son Manasseh shed much innocent blood, but he, like his father and others in the history of the faith, repented of what he had done, was forgiven and had his kingdom restored (JEROME). His baptism of repentant tears was accepted by God, washing away the wickedness he had committed (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS). If he had despaired, he would have missed all he obtained, but he contended with the devil and finished the race (JOHN CHRYSOSTOM).

33:10-12 *The Punishment of Manasseh*

THE PATTERN OF REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS. JEROME: O happy penitence which has drawn down upon itself the eyes of God, and which has by confessing its error changed the sentence of God's anger! The same conduct is in the Chronicles attributed to Manasseh, and in the book of the prophet Jonah¹ to Nineveh, and in the gospel to the publican.² The first of these not only was allowed to obtain forgiveness but also recovered his kingdom, the second broke the force of God's impending wrath, while the third, striking his breast with his hands, "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven."³ Yet for all that the publican with his humble confession of his faults went back justified far more than the Pharisee with his arrogant boasting of his virtues. LETTER 77.4.⁴

A BAPTISM OF REPENTANT TEARS. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: I know of a fifth baptism⁵ also, which is that of tears and takes much more work. It is received by one who washes his bed every night and his couch with tears;⁶ whose bruises sting through his wickedness;⁷ and who goes about mourning and is of a sad disposition. It is received by one who imitates the repentance of Manasseh⁸ and the humiliation of the Ninevites⁹ upon whom God had mercy; who utters the words of the Publican in the Temple, and is justified rather than the stiff-necked Pharisee;¹⁰ who like the Canaanite woman bends down and asks for mercy and

crumbs, the food of a dog that is very hungry.¹¹ ON THE HOLY LIGHTS, ORATION 39.17.¹²

33:10-20 *The Punishment of Manasseh*

REPENTANCE AFTER PUNISHMENT. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: What sort of comfort, to be every day looking for punishment and vengeance? No, if you would have some comfort from this delay, take it by gathering for yourself the fruit of amendment after repentance. Since if the mere delay of vengeance seems to you a sort of refreshment, far more is it gain not to fall into the vengeance. Let us then make full use of this delay, in order to have a full deliverance from the dangers that press on us. For none of the things enjoined is either burdensome or grievous, but all are so light and easy that if we only bring a genuine purpose of heart, we may accomplish all, though we be chargeable with countless offenses. For so Manasseh had perpetrated innumerable pollutions, having both stretched out his hands against the saints, and brought abominations into the temple, and filled the city with murders and wrought many other things beyond excuse; yet nevertheless after so long and so great wickedness, he washed away from himself all these things. How and in what manner? By repentance and consideration. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 22.6.¹³

GOD PUNISHED THE ENORMITY OF MANASSEH'S TRANSGRESSIONS. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: Manasseh, having exceeded all in fury and tyranny, and having subverted the legal form of worship, and shut up the temple and caused the deceit of idolatry to flourish and having become more ungodly than all who were before him, when he afterwards repented was ranked among the friends of God. Now if, looking to the magnitude of his own iniquities, he had despaired

¹Jon 3:5-10. ²Lk 18:9-14. ³Lk 18:13. ⁴NPNF 2 6:159. ⁵Gregory has just spoken of four previous types of baptism: that of (1) Moses, (2) the Jews, (3) Jesus' baptism of the Spirit; (4) Martyr's baptism by blood. ⁶Ps 6:6. ⁷Ps 37:5. ⁸2 Chron 33:12. ⁹Jn 3:7-10. ¹⁰Lk 18:13. ¹¹Mt 15:27. ¹²NPNF 2 7:358. ¹³NPNF 1 10:154*.

of restoration and repentance, he would have missed all that he afterwards obtained; but as it was, looking to the boundlessness of God's tender mercy instead of the enormity of his transgressions, and having broken in two the bonds of

the devil, he rose up and contended with him and finished the good course. *LETTER TO THE FALLEN THEODORE* I.6.¹⁴

¹⁴NPNF 1 9:95*.



THE PIOUS REIGN OF JOSIAH 2 CHRONICLES 34:1-33

OVERVIEW: Josiah demonstrated his zeal for the Lord in the many reforms he enacted against the idol worship of Israel (PSEUDO-TERTULLIAN). Through Huldah, God reprovved the king, priest and indeed all men (JEROME).

34:1-8 Josiah's Reforms

THE ZEAL OF JOSIAH. PSEUDO-TERTULLIAN:
With zeal immense, Josiah,
Himself a prince, acted in such a way

As no one before or after him had ever
 done!— Idols he
 Dethroned; destroyed unhallowed temples;
 burned
 With fire priests on their altars; all the
 bones
 Of false prophets were dug up; the altars
 burned,
 The carcasses to be consumed did serve
 For fuel!

FIVE BOOKS IN REPLY TO MARCION 3.184-191.¹

34:22-23 Predictions of Huldah

THE JUST POSSESSES THIS TITLE. JEROME: It is written in the book of Days: "Hezekiah fell because his heart was lifted up."² Certainly, no one but the ungodly will deny that Hezekiah was a just man. You may say, "He sinned in certain things, and, therefore, he ceased to be just." But Scripture does not say this. For he did not lose the title of just because he committed small sins, but he possessed the title of just because he performed many good deeds. Say all this to prove, with the testimonies of sacred Scripture, that the

just are not sinners simply because they have sinned on occasions, but they remain just because they flourish in many virtues. Of Josiah it is written, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of David his father. He declined neither to the right nor to the left"; and yet, although he was a just man, in a time of need and dire necessity, he sent Hilkiah to Huldah, the prophet, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. "And she dwelled," he says, "in Jerusalem in the second part" (a reference, undoubtedly, to that part of the city that is enclosed by an inner wall). "And she answered, 'Thus says the Lord the God of Israel: Go and tell the man that sent you to me.'" There is contained in these words a secret reproof of the king and priests and all men, because never was there any saint found among people who could predict the future. AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.22.³

¹ANF 4:153-54**. ²2 Chron 32:25. ³FC 53:332*.



THE DEATH OF JOSIAH
2 CHRONICLES 35:1-27

OVERVIEW: Josiah did not listen to the words of the Lord. If God gives you grace, give a full explanation in the work that you have promised; so your faults are eclipsed by your virtues (JEROME).

35:22-25 *The Death of Josiah*

IN THE MONUMENT OF HIS ANCESTORS.

JEROME: Finally, Josiah is killed by Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, because he would not listen to the words of the Lord from the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, or, as it is written in the Paralipomenon: "Josiah would not return but prepared to fight against him and did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God." And it is stated, "And he died and was buried in the monument of his ancestors. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, particularly Jeremiah, whose lamentations for Josiah all the singing men and singing women repeat to this day. And it became like a law in Israel: 'Behold, it is found written in the Lamentations.'" AGAINST THE PELAGIANS 2.22.¹

FOR MANY RIGHTEOUS THE VIRTUES ECLIPSE

THEIR FAULTS. JEROME: It is true that in the holy Scriptures many are called righteous, as Zachariah and Elizabeth, Job, Jehosaphat, Josiah, and many others who are mentioned in the sacred writings. Of this fact I shall, if God gives me grace, give a full explanation in the work that I have promised; in this letter it must suffice to say that they are called righteous, not because they are faultless but because their faults are eclipsed by their virtues. In fact Zachariah is punished with dumbness,² Job is condemned out of his own mouth,³ and Jehoshaphat and Josiah who are beyond a doubt described as righteous are narrated to have done things displeasing to the Lord. The first aligned himself with the ungodly Ahab and brought on himself the rebuke of Micaiah;⁴ and the second, though forbidden by the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, went against Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, and was killed by him. LETTER 133.13.⁵

¹FC 53:332-33*. ²Lk 1:20-22. ³Job 42:6. ⁴1 Kings 22:19-25.
⁵NPNF 2 6:280.

[THE LAST KINGS AND THE
DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM
2 CHRONICLES 36:1-23]
[See commentary on 2 Kings 23:31-25]

E Z R A



CYRUS GIVES FREEDOM TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD EZRA 1:1-11

OVERVIEW: Cyrus testifies publicly that the God of Israel is truly the maker of all kingdoms. The Lord made Cyrus foreshadow his only-begotten Son, because as he, after destroying the empire of

the Chaldeans, freed the people of God, so Christ, after destroying the kingdom of death and sin, freed all humankind. In his words Cyrus shows his faith, because he understands that the

people of Israel are the people of God before all nations. Cyrus also demonstrates his piety, by allowing all to go back to their homeland. The basins, the knives and the bowls typologically indicate different kinds of pious Christians (BEDE).

1:1-2 Cyrus Told to Build a House for the Lord

CYRUS PROCLAIMS THE POWER OF GOD.

BEDE: The ancient histories, with which also the Scripture of Daniel agrees, relate that Cyrus, king of the Persians, after allying with Darius, king of the Medians, destroyed the empire of the Babylonians and killed their last king, Balthazar, and razed and ransacked their capital. And therefore Cyrus, knowing that the kingdom of Israel had been entrusted to him by God, as soon as he defeated that kingdom that had captured the people of Israel and kept them in bondage, gave the Israelites permission to return to their homeland and to rebuild the house of their God, which had been set on fire. And not only did he proclaim by words that sentence of release to those present, but also he communicated it to those who were away in all the provinces of his kingdom by means of letters and testified through public voice that he who is the God of Israel was truly the maker of all kingdoms. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.I.¹

CYRUS AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST.

BEDE: Therefore the Lord made Cyrus similar to his only-begotten Son, our God and Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Cyrus, after destroying the empire of the Chaldeans, freed the people of God, and sent them back to their homeland and ordered them to rebuild the temple, which had been set on fire in Jerusalem, taking care that his edict was proclaimed everywhere through letters, so that Jeremiah's² words might be fulfilled, through which he had predicted what would have happened in the future; so the mediator between God and humanity, after destroying all over the

world the kingdom of the devil, called back from that tyranny his elect, who had been scattered, and now gathers them in his church. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.I.³

1:3-7 God's People Are Permitted to Go to Jerusalem

THE MEANING OF CYRUS'S WORDS. BEDE: In these words the great faith of the king and his great piety shine. His faith, certainly, because he understood that the people of Israel was the people of God before all nations. And his piety because without exception he allowed all who wanted to go back to their homeland. And again his faith, because he testified that that same Lord God dwelled in heaven and was in Jerusalem and moved to Jerusalem together with all those who were coming back from Babylon. Is it not clearer than light that he conceived him not as a corporeal being that can be enclosed in a place but as a Spirit that is everywhere? Indeed Cyrus confessed that [God] was in Jerusalem and in the temple, without doubting that he also ruled the kingdom of heaven at the same time. So he believed that he reigned in heaven but was nevertheless on earth with his faithful, in order to direct their minds and hands to make the good works of salvation. In addition, all the words of this Scripture are fragrant with spiritual meanings. To whom is it not obviously clear that only those with whom God is can actually move from the "confusion"⁴ of sin to the works of virtue, as from the bondage of Babylon to the freedom of Jerusalem? ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.I.⁵

1:8-11 Gold and Silver Vessels

SYMBOLISM OF THE VESSELS. BEDE: Therefore the basins, which are large vessels, signify the

¹PL 91:810. ²See Jer 29:10-14. ³PL 91:811 ⁴"Confusion" is the meaning of the name Babylon: see Jerome *Nom. Heb.* CCL 72:62.18. Bede often refers to this meaning in the course of his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah. ⁵PL 91:812.

clear hearts of the simple, who do not know how to hide in themselves any covert thought but always declare with a pure tongue the things they have in their mind . . . The knives, which they used to cut and divide in a right measure the members of the victims, so that, after everything had been prepared according to the ritual, a part might be consumed on the altar by the holy fire and a part might be given to the use of those who had made the offering, indicate those in the

church, who are renowned for the grace of discretion, who know perfectly how to distinguish the sacrifice of salvation, which is Christ. . . . The bowls, which are vessels for drinking, figuratively express those who are usually inebriated by a greater ardor of interior charity. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.I.⁶

⁶PL 91:816-17.



A LIST OF THOSE WHO RETURN
TO JERUSALEM
EZRA 2:1-70

OVERVIEW: Not only those who had migrated from Judah to Babylon belonged to Judah, but also those who were born in Babylon from their stock because, even though they were bodily born in Babylon, they longed for Judah and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem signifies the universal state of the holy church, which is all over the world, while the towns, which belong to Jerusalem, signify each of the virtues of the faithful (BEDE). The return of the Jews from captivity symbolically represents

the restoration of the soul after the captivity of sin (CASSIODORUS).

2:1-34 Returning to Jerusalem and Judah

BORN IN BABYLON BUT LONGING FOR JERUSALEM. BEDE: "Now these were the people of the province who came from those captive exiles. . . ." The text calls them children of the province of Judah, and not of Babylon. Indeed, not only those who had migrated from Judah to Babylon belonged to it, but also those who were born in Babylon from their stock. Even though they were bodily born in Babylon, they longed with all their heart for Judah and Jerusalem. And the one who represented them was their distinguished leader Zerubbabel, who showed with his name that he was born in Babylon but demonstrated with his intentions and actions that he was a citizen of Jerusalem.

In a different sense, they are the children of the church, the children of the heavenly homeland, not only those who have been already imbued with the sacraments of the church but also those who have erred among the impious for a long time but have been chosen for life before the centuries by divine election and in time are to be consecrated to the mysteries of divine grace. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.2.¹

THE ALLEGORICAL MEANING OF JERUSALEM AND THE TOWNS. BEDE: "All to their own towns," because they certainly lived in each of their towns, as they all belonged to Jerusalem and Judah in general. Therefore Jerusalem signifies the universal state of the holy church, which is all over the world. The towns, which belong to Jerusalem, signify each of the virtues of the faithful, in which they are defended from the temptations

and attacks of the evil spirits as in a fortress made of different towns.

Finally the towns, in which lived those who had come to Jerusalem and Judah from the exile, may be interpreted as the different churches of Christ, by all of which together the one universal church is formed. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.2.²

2:64-70 Offerings for the Temple

THE RESTORATION OF THE SOUL. CASSIODORUS: "A canticle of David, when the house was built after the captivity."³ So far as the literal sense is concerned, the heading points to the time when the temple at Jerusalem is known to have been refurbished by Zerubbabel, son of Salathiel, after it had been leveled to the ground by a hostile band of Chaldeans. But since he says nothing of this kind in what follows, and since the headings of psalms are never at variance with their content, it remains for us to investigate it in the spiritual sense. A destroyed house is built up when a soul following the captivity of sin begins to return to an understanding of the truth through the generosity of the Lord. This house, which is the universal church in which Christ dwells, is always raised up on living stones, because every day it gains increase in building from its confessors and does not cease to be built up until the number of the predestined is attained at the end of the world. We must store this psalm in our minds as the second of those proclaiming the first and the second coming of the Lord. EXPLANATION OF THE PSALMS 95.1.⁴

¹PL 91:817-18. ²PL 91:818. ³Ps 95, title (Cassiodorus quotes this title from Jerome's Vg). ⁴ACW 52:415.



ZERUBBABEL AND JESHUA
SET ABOUT TO REBUILD
THE TEMPLE
EZRA 3:1 - 7

OVERVIEW: The seventh month symbolizes the Holy Spirit's grace, which is described in the prophet Isaiah and in the Revelation of Saint John as sevenfold (BEDE). Even though the rebuilding of the temple was still in progress, prayers, rituals and celebrations were regularly performed in it (ATHANASIUS).

3:1 *When the Seventh Month Came*

AN ALLEGORICAL REFERENCE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. BEDE: In a higher sense, the seventh month suggests the Holy Spirit's grace, which is described in the prophet Isaiah and in the Revelation of Saint John as sevenfold. And certainly in that month, after our captivity, we gather in Jerusalem, where we are washed from our filthiness and the errors of vice, and protected by the defense of good works and finally are illumined by the greater grace of that same Spirit, so that we are lit in the love of supreme peace, which is contained in the true unity: Jerusalem, indeed,

means "vision of peace." ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.3.¹

3:2-7 *Making Offerings to the Lord*

RITUALS WERE PERFORMED AS THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT. ATHANASIUS: Or rather let them learn of you, who are so well instructed in such histories, how that Jeshua the son of Josedek the priest, and his brother, and Zerubbabel the wise, the son of Salathiel, and Ezra the priest and scribe of the law, as the temple was being built after the captivity, the feast of tabernacles being at hand (which was a great feast and time of assembly and prayer in Israel), gathered the people together with one accord in the great court within the first gate, which is toward the east, and prepared the altar to God, and there offered their gifts and kept the feast. And so afterwards they brought hither their sacrifices, on the sab-

¹PL 91:825.

baths and the new moons, and the people offered up their prayers. And yet the Scripture says expressly that when these things were done, the temple of God was not yet built; but rather while they thus prayed, the building of the house was advancing. So neither were their prayers deferred in expectation of the dedication, nor was the dedication prevented by the assemblies held for the sake of prayer. But the people thus continued to pray; and when the house was entirely finished, they celebrated the dedication, and brought their gifts for that purpose and all kept the feast for the completion of the work. DEFENSE BEFORE CONSTANTINUS 18.²

TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUNDING OF THE TEMPLE. BEDE: Typologically, in this passage, the founding of God's temple holds a figure of those who, recently converted to the faith, prepare a place or abode in their heart and body for the Lord, as the apostle says: "Do you not know that your limbs are the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you";³ and again, "That by faith Christ dwells in your hearts."⁴ Accordingly, those who when freed from captivity had come up to Jerusalem had indeed arranged to build a temple, which, by their labor, they eventually achieved, but first they built an altar and commended themselves to the Lord with daily burnt offerings, so that in this way being made more pure they might deserve to start

the work of building the temple. Likewise with respect to the spiritual edifice too it is necessary in every way that whoever has decided to teach others should first teach himself, and one who aims to instruct his neighbors to fear and love God should first make himself worthy for the office of teacher by serving God more eagerly, lest by chance he should hear from the apostle, "You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?"⁵ This is why the apostle says in regard to himself, "But I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, in case when preaching to others I myself should be found wanting."⁶ Consequently, it is fitting that the descendants of the exile are found to have offered God no victims or sacrifices other than entire burnt offerings . . . , because whoever lives an evil life yet desires to teach others to refrain from illicit acts must give himself over entirely to his Creator by living well and refraining even from things that are permissible, so that he might not only by the merit of good action more copiously obtain heavenly help in preaching but also, by the example of that same good work, encourage his hearers to follow more effectively what he teaches. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.3.⁷

²NPNE 2 4:245*. ³1 Cor 6:19. ⁴Eph 3:17. ⁵Rom 2:21-22. ⁶1 Cor 9:27. ⁷TTH 47:54-55; PL 91:835.



NEW FOUNDATIONS ARE LAID EZRA 3:8-13

OVERVIEW: The founding of God's temple figuratively points to those who, recently converted to the faith, prepare a place or abode in their heart and body for the Lord. The phases in the reconstruction of the temple typologically refer to the phases of Christ's passion and resurrection (BEDE). When Salathiel and Zerubbabel returned, they led the people more democratically, transferring the rule to the priesthood because of the intermingling of the priestly and royal tribes (BASIL). The Jews rejoiced because they had been freed from captivity and had received the authority to restore the temple, but they wept because they knew that the first temple had been destroyed on account of their wickedness (BEDE).

3:8-9 Zerubbabel and Jeshua Made a Beginning

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE PHASES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION. BEDE: [The text] says they came to the temple of God not because they found the temple already built, since, to be sure, it was said earlier that it did not yet have foundations. Rather, "to the temple of God" means to the place of God's temple—to the work by which

they desired to rebuild the temple. And so modern Jews¹ who habitually claim that not the temple walls but only the roof was destroyed by the Chaldeans are mistaken, since Ezra plainly writes that the descendants of the exiles rebuilt the temple from its foundations. However, since it was said above that they came to Jerusalem on the seventh month,² and here it is added that "in the second year of their arrival" they began the work of the temple "in the second month," it is clear that for seven months they prepared the stones, cement, timber and other necessary materials, but when the eighth month began they started to press on at last with their longed-for work: for there were six months in the first year and the seventh in the following. Any learned person will very easily find a great mystery in this. For seven pertains to the sabbath, on which day the Lord either rested from all his works after he created the earth³ or when he redeemed the world through his passion and rested in the tomb. Eight refers to the first day after the sabbath⁴ on which he rose from the dead; seven looks to the hope of our sabbath rest after death, eight to the joy of

¹These *moderni Judaei* mentioned by Bede cannot be identified (see TTH 47:60 n. 4). ²See Ezra 3:1-2. ³Gen 2:2. ⁴See Mt 28:1.

our everlasting happiness after resurrection. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.4.⁵

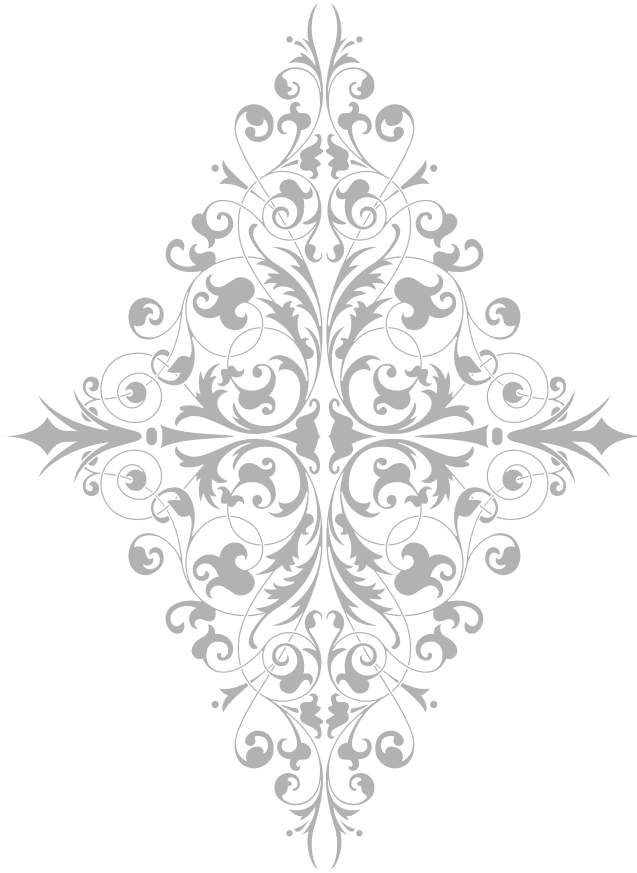
A MORE DEMOCRATIC REGIME. BASIL THE GREAT: When Jerusalem was demolished by Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom was destroyed, and no longer were there hereditary successions to the sovereignty as formerly; at that time, moreover, being out of power, the posterity of David were living in captivity. But, when the followers of Salathiel and Zerubbabel returned, they led the people more democratically, transferring the rule henceforth to the priesthood because of the intermingling of the priestly and royal tribes. LETTER 236.2.⁶

3:10-13 Old People Wept or Shouted for Joy

CRIES OF WEeping MIXED WITH CRIES OF JOY. BEDE: Of those who had seen the first temple, some were uttering cries of weeping, others of joy when the foundation of this temple too was laid before their eyes—of joy, indeed, because the temple of the Lord that had been destroyed had now begun to be restored; of weeping because they were distressed when they realized what a difference there was between the poverty of the undertaking of that time and the former most magnificent power of Solomon, whereby the original temple was founded. They rejoiced greatly

because they had been freed from captivity and had received the authority to restore the temple, but they wept loudly because they knew that the first temple, whose size and beauty they could in no way equal, had been destroyed on account of their wickedness. For the prophet's words, "The glory of this new house will be greater than that of the first,"⁷ pertain not to the greatness or decoration of the house but to the act of building itself, because the fact that the few surviving captives were able to accomplish such a great undertaking even as their enemies were opposing them was a greater and more obvious miracle of divine power than that a very rich king who had no adversaries at all but rather the very powerful and wealthy king of Tyre as a collaborator,⁸ did this with most accomplished craftsmen, just as he desired. So too, the glory of that most recent house will be greater than the first because the worshipers in the first house preached to the peoples the writings of the Old Testament, namely, the Law and the Prophets, whereas in the second house Christ and the apostles spread the good news of the grace of the New Testament and coming of the kingdom of heaven. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH I.4.⁹

⁵TTH 47:60-61; PL 91:835. ⁶FC 28:168-69. ⁷Hag 2:9. ⁸See 1 Kings 5:1-18. ⁹TTH 47:66; PL 91:838-39.



AN INTERMISSION IN THE WORK OF RECONSTRUCTION

EZRA 4:1-24

OVERVIEW: The Samaritans, who offer their help in the construction of the temple, figuratively represent false brothers, that is, heretics and evil Catholics. According to Josephus, the Artaxerxes to whom letters were sent was Cambyses. He also took the power of Ahasuerus, as this other king died in the first year of his reign. The number of forty-six years for the completion of the temple typologically refers to different phases of the perfecting of our Lord's physical body (BEDE).

4:1-5 *Let Us Build with You*

THE SAMARITANS AS A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN HERETICS. BEDE: The story is well known, because the text declares that the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin are the Samaritans, whom the king of the Assyrians, during the captivity of the ten tribes, assembled from different nations and moved into their cities and lands.¹ And while they had accepted the law of God and partly served it . . . , they still worshiped their old idols. Therefore those who abhorred the true followers of God promised that they would have helped in the reconstruction of the temple, so that, after being received in their society, they might cause a loss of funds. It is obviously clear to everybody that these people figuratively represent the false brothers, that is, the heretics and the evil Catholics. In fact, they are the adversaries of Judah, that is, of the confession and praise that now the church offers to the Lord through orthodox faith and works that are worthy of faith. They are also enemies of Benjamin, that is, of the son of the right, because they separate the people who listen to them from the fate of the faithful people who will receive the blessing and the eternal kingdom

at the right hand of the Judge. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.4.²

4:7-12 *Letters Written to King Artaxerxes of Persia*

LETTERS SENT TO AHASUERUS AND ARTAXERXES. BEDE: Josephus³ believes that this Artaxerxes, who forbade that the temple might be reconstructed in Jerusalem after receiving the letter from the Samaritans, was Cambyses, son of Cyrus, who took power after his father had reigned for thirty years and ruled the kingdom for eight years. Then the magi reigned one year after him, until Darius, son of Hystaspis, succeeded. And in the second year of his reign, in which he allowed the temple to be rebuilt, the angel said through the prophet Zechariah before the people: "O Lord of hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?"⁴ With regard to Ahasuerus, to whom it is said that a letter of accusation was sent as well, it is not mentioned whether he replied or wrote anything back, because he died in the same year in which he had begun to reign, so that he left to Artaxerxes all the power and also the care of this case. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 1.5.⁵

4:17-24 *Work on the Temple Stopped*

THE WORK WAS FINISHED AFTER FORTY-SIX YEARS. BEDE: The Jews said, "This temple was built in forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?"⁶ They answered as they understood.

¹See 2 Kings 17:24-41. ²PL 91:839. ³See Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.2.3. ⁴Zech 1:12. ⁵PL 91:841-42. ⁶Jn 2:20.

But lest we too should perceive our Lord's spiritual word in a carnal way, the Evangelist subsequently explained what temple it was of which he was speaking. As for their stating that the temple was built in forty-six years, they meant not its first but its second building. For Solomon, the first [builder], finished the temple very rapidly within seven years, during a time of great peace in his kingdom.⁷ It was destroyed by the Chaldeans,⁸ but after seventy years it began to be rebuilt, at the bidding of Cyrus the Persian, when the captivity was lightened.⁹ But the descendants of those who were deported were unable to finish the work that they were doing under the rulers Zerubbabel and Jeshua before forty-six years had passed, on account of the resistance of the neighboring nations.

This number [forty-six] of years is also most apt for the perfecting of our Lord's physical body.

Writers on natural history tell us that the form of the human body is completed within this number of days. During the first six days after conception it has a likeness to milk; during the following nine days it is changed into blood; next, in twelve days, it becomes solid; during the remaining eighteen days it is formed into the perfect features of all its members; and after this, during the time remaining until birth, it increases in size. Six plus nine plus twelve plus eighteen makes forty-five. If to this we add one, that is, the day on which the body, divided into its separate members, begins to grow, we find the same number of days in the building up of our Lord's body as there were years in the construction of the temple. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 2.1.¹⁰

⁷1 Kings 6:38. ⁸See 2 Kings 25:9. ⁹Ezra 1:1-3. ¹⁰CS 111:8.





ZERUBBABEL AND JESHUA RESUME
THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE
EZRA 5:1-17

OVERVIEW: Thanks to the exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Jeshua together with the entire people set out to rebuild the house of the Lord. In the holy church, when those who have been held back by the attacks of wicked people or spirits are suddenly set straight by the words of faithful teachers, they begin to burn so greatly for righteous pursuits that they cannot be overcome by any temptation. The fact that the temple was built from old and new stones can rightly be interpreted as corresponding to the fact that the one church of Christ is assembled from both peoples, namely, Jews and Gentiles (BEDE).

5:1-2 *Zerubbabel and Jeshua Set Out to Rebuild the Temple*

THE EXHORTATIONS OF HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH. BEDE: "Now the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews." . . . These things are reported in full detail in the books of the same prophets. And with their

words they reproached the laziness of those who had been negligent in the reconstruction of the temple and exhorted them to work with the help of God. And thanks to their exhortation and devotion, Zerubbabel and Jeshua together with the entire people set out to rebuild the house of the Lord. And certainly the prophet Haggai began with these words: "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and to Joshua,¹ son of Jehozadak, the high priest: Thus says the Lord of the hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house. Then the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?"² And a bit further: "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of

¹The NRSV, from which is quoted the text of Haggai, indifferently uses the two alternate spellings of this name: Jeshua-Joshua. ²Hag 1:1-4.

Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month.³ And as a sequel to the words that we have quoted above: “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.”⁴ In the same way Zechariah begins: “In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you.”⁵ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.6.⁶

5:3-5 *Who Gave You a Decree to Build This House?*

TO BURN FOR RIGHTEOUS PURSUITS. BEDE: The literal meaning is clear, namely, that the leaders of the Jews, strengthened by the prophets’ words, could not be hindered by the harring of the enemies from the holy work, from which they had ceased out of fear of the enemies when the prophets still remained silent. This occurs in the same way in the holy church now when those who have been held back by the attacks of wicked people or spirits and have remained for a while rather lax with respect to good deeds are suddenly set straight by the words either of faithful teachers or of the divine Scriptures and begin to burn so greatly for righteous pursuits that they cannot be overcome by any wiles of temptations or be called back from what they intended to do. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.6.⁷

5:6-17 *The Temple Built of Hewn Stone*

OLD AND NEW STONES. BEDE: This letter that Tattenai writes to Darius is very different from the one Rehum and Shimshai⁸ wrote to Artaxerxes. That letter was filled with accusation of the people of Jerusalem, this one with praise not only of the people but also of almighty God. Indeed, it begins as follows: “To Darius the king,

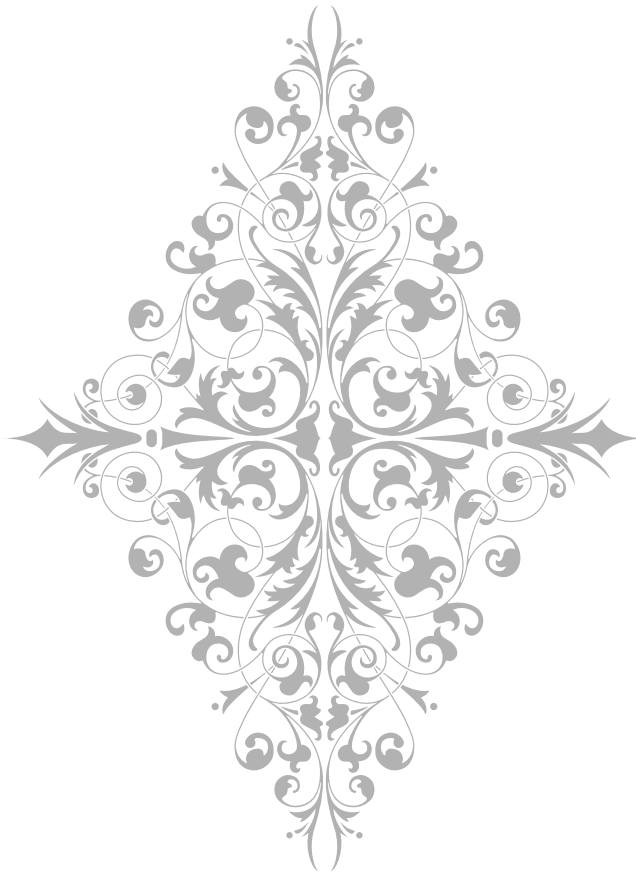
all peace: Let it be known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is built with unfinished stone, and the timbers are being laid in the walls; and the work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress in their hands. So we questioned those elders and spoke to them as follows, ‘Who gave you the authority to build this house?’ and so on. In these words we should also note in what sense it is said that God’s house was built from ‘unfinished stone,’⁹ when it is evident that such a great work could only have been built from finished stones. Yet by ‘unfinished stone’ we should understand new stone, which they themselves discovered unhewn but, by shaping it up, made it suitable for the building of the Lord’s house. For even though some of the old stones remained, which, as the lamenting Jeremiah shows, were scattered ‘at the end of every street,’¹⁰ yet no one can doubt that new stones also had to be shaped to complete the work of the temple. The mystery of this matter is undoubtedly plain, since we have seen that God’s church is built not only from those who by repenting regain their senses and return to the life of holiness that they have previously squandered by sinning, but also from those who have recently been called to the faith, arranged by the instruction of teachers as though with the measuring rod of builders and so inserted into the edifice of the Lord’s house in a place appropriate to themselves. Yet the fact that the temple was built from both old and new stones, that is, both from stones that had been finished long previously and from those that had remained unfinished for longer, can also rightly be interpreted as corresponding to the fact that the one church of Christ is assembled from both peoples, namely, Jews and Gentiles—the

³Hag 1:14-15. ⁴Hag 2:9. ⁵Zech 1:1, 3. In the original text of Bede, only the first verse (Zech 1:1) is quoted, but it seems clear that Bede forgot to add the exhortation of Zechariah (Zech 1:3). ⁶PL 91:843-44. ⁷TTH 47:81; PL 91:845-46. ⁸See Ezra 4:6-24. ⁹The Hebrew reads “hewn stone,” while Vg text reads *lapide impolito*, which Bede seems to interpret as “unfinished stone” but might be also intended as “unpolished stone,” that is, “roughly cut stone.” ¹⁰Lam 4:1.

Jews who long since had been as though finished through knowledge and mindfulness of God's law, the Gentiles who, being enslaved to idolatry, had not by any industry of spiritual architects or any cultivation of piety divested themselves of the

ugliness of a rustic and earthly mind. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.6.¹¹

¹¹TTH 47:82-83; PL 91:846-47.





THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETED

EZRA 6:1-22

OVERVIEW: Cyrus proposed a plan for the temple from his own ideas and noted the measurements and arrangements of the work as seemed appropriate to him. Darius designates the dutiful devotion of those kings who, recognizing the will of God, endeavored not only not to resist the Christian faith but also to assist it with their decrees. All the writers of sacred Scripture promise good things for the builders of the holy church (i.e., teachers) if they do not tire from adversities and cease from their holy labor. The priests and the Levites and all the people rejoice in the dedication of the Lord's restored house because all the orders of the holy church must share in the rejoicing when those who have sinned are reconciled by repenting (BEDE).

6:1-4 *The Height and Width Were Sixty Cubits*

DISCREPANCIES IN CYRUS'S MEASUREMENTS OF THE TEMPLE. BEDE: "And so that they lay foundations that may support a height of 60

cubits and a breadth of 60 cubits, three rows of unfinished stones¹ and in the same way rows of new timber": we need not comment on it because neither in the building of the first temple nor of the subsequent one are any of these measurements or works of this sort found.² It can thus be inferred that Cyrus proposed this from his own ideas and that he noted the measurements and arrangement of the work as seemed appropriate to him. Indeed, as Chronicles relates, in the first measurement (that is, inside the inner walls) the temple was 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide,³ but the height, as the history of Kings explains, was 30 cubits to the upper room;⁴ from there to the high chamber an additional 30 cubits, which was the level reached by the top of the porticos, as Josephus attests;⁵ and from there another 60 to the top of the roof, which is to say, 120 cubits all

¹See commentary on Ezra 5:6-17. ²Even though some modern scholars share Bede's doubts over these figures, the height and width may be correct; see TTH 47:86 n. 1. ³2 Chron 3:3. ⁴See 1 Kings 6:2.

⁵Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.3.2.

together, as Chronicles explains.⁶ Yet how does it say that three rows of unfinished stones and in the same way rows of new timbers are to be laid, when all inside the temple was lined with cedar, unless perhaps it was a custom of the Persians to make temples with varied work in such a way that there were three rows of stones throughout the walls and a fourth made skillfully from timbers, and Cyrus thought that this should be done too in the same manner in the Jerusalem temple; or perhaps we should understand that he spoke of the courtyard of the priests, which, built in a circle around the temple, had three rows of finished stones and a fourth of cedar wood⁷ and was as high as a man's chest; or else of the portico of the Lord's house that was in the front of the temple, concerning which Scripture, when King Solomon's palace was being built, relates thus: "And he made the greater courtyard round with three rows of hewn stones and one row of planks of cedar, and also in the inner courtyard of the Lord's house and in the portico of the house."⁸ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.7.⁹

6:6-8 *Let the Jews Rebuild the Temple*

DARIUS APPROVES AND SUPPORTS THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE. BEDE: The sequence of events in the text is as if Darius himself had read Cyrus's letter and, having perused it, immediately endorsed it with his authority, in such a way that suppressing all their adversaries, he ordered the temple of God to be rebuilt on its site just as the letter said, and himself, with a most devout mind in all things, assisted God's worshipers to serve his will. Let Artaxerxes, therefore, who above forbade that the house or city of God be built,¹⁰ designate those lords of worldly affairs who by inciting persecutions opposed the construction of the holy church, while in the upheaval of these persecutions that church flourished chiefly by the triumph of martyrs. Let Darius designate the dutiful devotion of those kings who, recognizing the will of God, endeavored not only not to resist the Christian

faith but also to assist it with their decrees; and many of them, forbidding the persecutions of their predecessors, wished that they themselves along with the people under their sway might be consecrated in the sacraments of the same faith. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.7.¹¹

6:13-15 *The Jews Built and Prospered*

GIFTS FOR THE BUILDERS OF THE HOLY CHURCH. BEDE: For these prophets had predicted that if they persisted in building the temple, soon, with the Lord's assistance, they not only would complete the work itself but also have a more abundant supply of all good things as a reward for their devotion. Among their proclamations are Zechariah's words: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will complete it, and you will know that the Lord of Hosts has sent me to you,"¹² which is to say, "When you see that the temple has been completed by Zerubbabel, by whom it was begun, then you will understand that I was sent by the Lord and that what I have said I have said at his command." And Haggai says, "From this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day when the foundations of the Lord's temple were laid, store it in your heart. Is the seed as yet to sprout? Or have the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree not blossomed? From this day on I will bless you."¹³ What happened in the event shows that this prediction was correct. But all the prophets, indeed all the writers of sacred Scripture, promise good things for the builders of the holy church (i.e., teachers) if they do not tire from adversities and cease from their holy labor. For divine help will be present, by which the Lord's house that has been begun may be brought to completion in the heart of their listeners by their believing and living well; and to the architects themselves will come the

⁶2 Chron 3:4. ⁷See 1 Kings 6:36. ⁸1 Kings 7:12. ⁹TTH 47:85-87; PL 91:848. ¹⁰See Ezra 4:17-24. ¹¹TTH 47:88; PL 91:848-49. ¹²Zech 4:9. ¹³Hag 2:18-19.

blessing of crops, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive [i.e., more abundance of spiritual gifts], which without any doubt will be more copiously granted to us by the Lord the more diligently we have endeavored to establish the abode of his glory either in ourselves or in the hearts of our neighbors. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.7.¹⁴

6:17-22 *The Dedication of the Temple*

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE DEDICATION. BEDE: But since the rebuilding of the house after the captivity, as has often been said, designates the correction of those who through sin have wandered from the path of truth that they had only just set out on, it is fitting that when the temple has been restored in this way it is dedicated by the priests and Levites and the rest of the descendants of the exiles with joy. For when those who have sinned are set straight,

“there is great joy” in heaven “in the presence of the angels of God”;¹⁵ there is joy also for the teachers who have labored for the salvation of those who go astray, and there is joy for all those who have migrated in their thoughts and deeds from Babylon [i.e., from “the confusion of sinners”] to the citadel of the virtues, which is truly the promised land. So both the priests and the Levites and all the people rejoice in the dedication of the Lord’s restored house because all the orders of the holy church must share in the rejoicing when those who have sinned are reconciled by repenting. They offer victims for this dedication when they bring vows of thanks to God for the efforts of sinners to lead a holy life and when many, observing their life devoted to God, are themselves spurred on to works of greater virtue. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.8.¹⁶

¹⁴TTH 47:92-93; PL 91:851. ¹⁵Lk 15:10. ¹⁶TTH 47:100; PL 91:859.





EZRA LEAVES BABYLONIA EZRA 7:1-26

OVERVIEW: According to Josephus, Artaxerxes was called Xerxes, and he reigned for twenty years after his father, Darius. Ezra rewrote not only the Law but also, as the common tradition of our forebears holds, the whole sequence of sacred Scripture. Ezra typologically represents Christ because, as the Jews are brought from captivity in Babylon

to freedom in Jerusalem by him, so the faithful are brought from the “confusion” of the vices to the “peace” and serenity of the virtues by Christ. Artaxerxes, who in his own way pays homage to God’s temple and priests with a most devout mind and offers willing service to him, like his predecessor Darius, signifies Christian rulers (BEDE).

7:1-5 Ezra Left Babylon

THE CHRONOLOGICAL POSITION OF ARTAXERXES' REIGN. BEDE: This Artaxerxes,¹ under whom Ezra came up from Babylon to Jerusalem, Josephus believes to be Xerxes son of Darius, who reigned after him.² Moreover, the books of the *Chronicon*³ hold that the successor of this same Xerxes, who also among them was called Artaxerxes, is designated here. Now Darius, under whom the temple was built, ruled thirty-six years; after him Xerxes ruled for twenty years; after him Artabanus ruled for seven months (which the chroniclers set down as a year); and after him Artaxerxes ruled for forty years.⁴ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.9.⁵

7:6 A Scribe Skilled in the Law

EZRA THE RESTORER OF THE LAW. BEDE: Now Ezra, who is called "a swift scribe in the law of Moses" for having restored the Law that had been destroyed, rewrote not only the Law but also, as the common tradition of our forebears holds, the whole sequence of sacred Scripture that had likewise been destroyed by fire, in accordance with the way that seemed to him to meet the needs of readers.⁶ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.9.⁷

7:7-10 Some People of Israel Also Went to Jerusalem

EZRA AS A TYPE OF CHRIST. BEDE: By his name too, which means "helper," Ezra openly stands for the Lord. For it is he by whom alone the people of the faithful are constantly liberated from tribulations and, as though from captivity in Babylon to freedom in Jerusalem, are brought from the "confusion" of the vices to the "peace" and serenity of the virtues as they advance by the steps of meritorious deeds. In the second psalm of the same *anabathmoi*⁸ [i.e., of the Ascents], the psalmist proclaims to all those who strive for the highest under whose leadership they ought to strive to attain it when he suggests, "My help is

from the Lord who made heaven and earth."⁹ In his actions, too, Ezra was a figure of the Lord, since Ezra led back no small portion of the people from the captivity to Jerusalem and at the same time conveyed money and vessels consecrated to God for the glory of his temple; and through his pontifical authority¹⁰ he purged these people of their foreign wives.¹¹ What all this suggests with regard to what is done or is going to be done in the church by the Lord is clear to the learned reader, but we will take pains to make them accessible to the less learned as well. For the fact that Ezra goes up from Babylon, and some of the children of Israel and descendants of the priests and the Levites go up with him. This signifies the merciful provision of our Redeemer by which, appearing in the flesh, he entered into the "confusion" of this world though he himself was free from the confusion of sins so that, when he returned, he might free us from all "confusion" and lead us with him into the restfulness of celestial "peace." ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.9.¹²

7:11-26 A Copy of the Letter That Artaxerxes Gave to Ezra

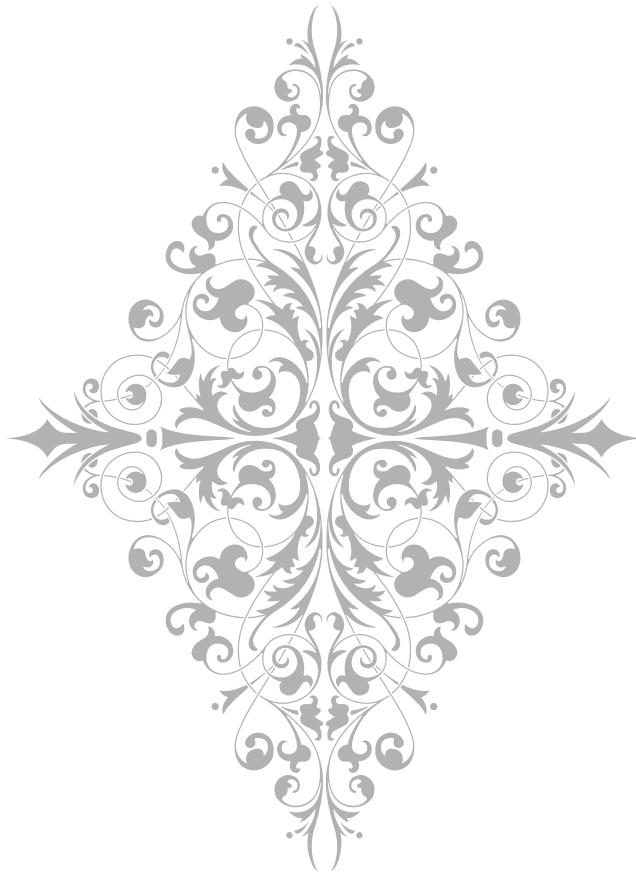
A FIGURE OF CHRISTIAN RULERS. BEDE: This Artaxerxes, who in his own way pays homage to God's temple and priests with a most devout mind and offers willing service to him, like his predecessor Darius signifies Christian rulers. Nor should one marvel if we have said that the successors of Cyrus, who caused the Lord's temple and city to be built, who loved and assisted his servants and law, contain a figure of Christian

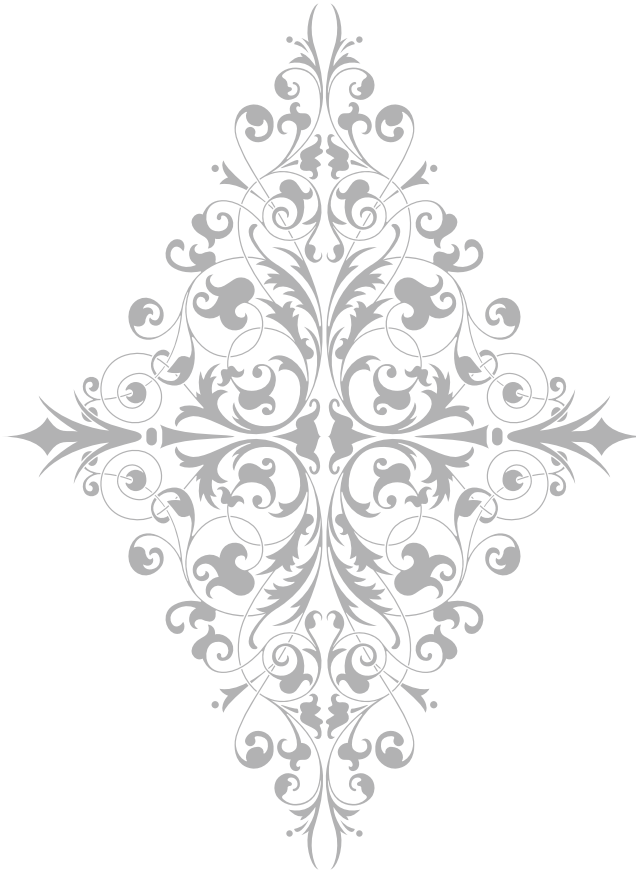
¹This Artaxerxes is a successor to the Artaxerxes who stopped the rebuilding of the temple; see Ezra 4:17-24. ²Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.5.1. ³Jerome *Chronicon* 110.18-21. ⁴See Jerome *Chronicon* 104a.25-110.21. ⁵TTH 47:109; PL 91:859. ⁶The idea that Ezra rewrote the entire sequence of holy Scripture is based on apocryphal sources, especially 4 Ezra 14:9-48; see TTH 47:109 n. 6. ⁷TTH 47:109; PL 91:859. ⁸Ps 120-134 (119-133 Vg). ⁹Ps 121 (120:2 LXX, Vg). ¹⁰By using the term "pontifical," Bede compares Ezra's authority with that of the pope and bishops in their role as representatives of Christ's power on earth. ¹¹See Ezra 10:6-44. ¹²TTH 47:113-14; PL 91:861.

kings, since the Lord himself said through the prophet that Cyrus came as a figure of his own Son and deigned that Cyrus should be honored through his name: "Thus the Lord says to my anointed Cyrus,"¹³ and the other things about

him that we have spoken about more extensively above.¹⁴ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.9.¹⁵

¹³Is 45:1. ¹⁴See Bede *In Ezr.* 1.108-215; see commentary on Ezra 6:6-8; TTH 47:88 n. 4. ¹⁵TTH 47:117; PL 91:863.





JERUSALEM IS FINALLY REACHED

EZRA 7:27–8:36

OVERVIEW: The heads of the families spiritually symbolize all teachers of God's people, who receive increases in their eternal reward commensurate with the number of souls they have acquired

for the Lord. Ezra carefully provides for himself a sufficient supply of ministers of God in order to carry out those things that touched on the needs of the temple. As a result of the captivity of the

Assyrians, the descendants of Israel are shown to have reached even as far as the region of Casiphia, since Ezra sent to that place for ministers of the Lord's house to be brought to him. The silver and gold and the vessels that were being sent from Babylon to Jerusalem designate souls that are converted to the Lord from the confusion and sins of this world. The three days of tarrying in Jerusalem are the excellent virtues of faith, hope and love that all the faithful should possess (BEDE).

7:27–8:14 *Family Heads and Genealogy*

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE HEADS OF THE FAMILIES. BEDE: "These are their family heads, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: Of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershon," and so on until the end of the genealogy. He carefully enumerates the leaders who came up with him from Babylon and unfolds their genealogy. He takes pains, too, to add their total, which reached 1,440, to suggest that the names of those who come up from the "confusion" of this world are contained in the book of life of the Lamb.¹ But also all teachers [i.e., the heads of the families] of God's people receive increases in their eternal reward commensurate with the number of souls they have acquired for the Lord, according to that parable in the Gospel wherein the good and wise servant said, "Master, your pound has earned ten pounds," and the master replied, "Take charge of ten cities,"² which is to say, "appear more glorious in the heavenly kingdom because of the life of those whom you have taught." ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.10.³

8:15-16 *No Descendants of Levi*

MINISTERS OF GOD WERE NEEDED. BEDE: Ezra fittingly arranged that before he began so great a journey, he might carefully provide for himself a sufficient supply of ministers of God's house in order to carry out those things that were

necessary for the needs of the temple when he arrived in Jerusalem. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.10.⁴

8:17-20 *At the Place Called Casiphia*

EZRA RECRUITS MINISTERS IN THE CASPIAN REGION. BEDE: It is worth noting here that although historians write Caspian,⁵ Ezra in this passage calls it Casiphia. For the Hebrews, not having the letter *p*, use the letter *ph* in Greek or barbarian names, as in Phetrus or Philatus. Thus, as a result of the captivity of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the descendants of Israel are shown to have reached even as far as the region of Casiphia, since Ezra sent to that place for ministers of the Lord's house to be brought to him, namely, Levites and Nathinnites, whom Josephus calls "sacred servants."⁶ Concerning these people it should be noted that they were living very freely and peacefully even among foreigners, since, at Ezra's command or requests, they were immediately able to appoint so great an army. For the catalogue of them that follows shows that there were 258 men chosen in that expedition; when these were added, Ezra is found to have had a total of nearly 1,700 men in his army. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.10.⁷

8:24-25 *Weighing Silver and Gold for the Temple*

SOULS CONVERTED TO THE LORD. BEDE: It has frequently been said that the silver and gold and the vessels that were being sent from Babylon to Jerusalem designate souls that are converted to the Lord from the confusion and sins of this world. So it is fitting that Ezra entrusts vessels of this kind to the priests to convey them to Jerusalem, because all who desire to join the community of the holy church must be washed in baptism

¹See Rev 21:27. ²Lk 19:16-17. ³TTH 47:127; PL 91:868. ⁴TTH 47:127-28; PL 91:868. ⁵See Orosius *Hist.* 1.2.47-50 (CSEL 5:207-13). ⁶Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.5.1. ⁷TTH 47:128-29; PL 91:869.

and consecrated to the Lord through the hands of priests. Equally, those who by sinning have been drawn away from the church's fellowship into the devil's servitude, and who by remaining in their sins have fallen into the captivity of the king of Babylon, must be reconciled to the holy church by doing penance through the office of a priest. And it is well that there are twelve priests to whom this charge was assigned because there are twelve apostles by whose teaching the church was first established throughout the world and by whose successors it does not cease to be built until the end of the world. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.II.⁸

8:31-33 *Arriving at Jerusalem*

THE VIRTUES OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE.

BEDE: Appropriately, it is added that when those who came up from Babylon arrived at Jerusalem, they remained there for a period of three days and only then offered and weighed out in the Lord's house the silver and the gold and the vessels that they had brought. For the three days of tarrying in Jerusalem are the excellent virtues of faith, hope and love that all the faithful should possess.⁹ Teachers, therefore, must first of all manifest these in themselves and only then offer those whom they have taught and educated in these same virtues to the Fathers who have preceded them in Christ for their approval. For when the

holy church finds that those whom we are catechizing are sound in faith and action, it is as if, on weighing the vessels that we offer in the temple through the hands of the priests, [the church] discovers them to be both of pure metal and of perfect weight. This is not only done in this church by the elect every day in examining the life of believers, but, as we said above,¹⁰ is also completed more perfectly in the heavenly Jerusalem in those who have deserved to enter it. For in this life, holy teachers, as though after remaining for three days in the silver and the gold that they brought as an offering when they reveal that they themselves are strong in faith, sublime in hope and fervent in love and show that their hearers shine forth like tested silver through the confession of true faith, gleam in the manner of the best gold through the purity of inviolate understanding and stand out as though they were vessels consecrated to God through the reception of spiritual gifts in themselves. In the heavenly homeland too, these same teachers, when they receive a reward first of all for their own faith, hope and love and then for those whom they have taught, it is as though after the joy of a three-day stay in Jerusalem they are honored more handsomely for the gifts and precious vessels worthy of God they have brought. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.II.¹¹

⁸TTH 47:129-30*; PL 91:869-70. ⁹See 1 Cor 13:13. ¹⁰See Bede *In Ezr.* 2.1340-54. ¹¹TTH 47:133*; PL 91:871.



EZRA CONDEMNS THE PRACTICE
OF MIXED MARRIAGES
EZRA 9:1-15

OVERVIEW: Through Ezra's condemnation of mixed marriages the Jews realize that their holiness had been polluted by the detestable actions of the Gentiles and even the leaders by whom they ought to have been corrected were the first to have gone astray. In the fact that Ezra falls on his knees and turns the mind of very many to repentance by pouring out prayers and tears, he

represents the Lord Savior, who deigned to pray before and at the time of his passion (BEDE).

9:1-3 *Not Separated from the Peoples of the Lands*

MIXED MARRIAGES HAVE POLLUTED THE PEOPLE OF GOD. BEDE: The crime of this trans-

gression is also plainly described in the prophet Malachi and is denounced by prophetic authority.¹ For when they had returned from captivity in Babylonia, not only the leaders and priests and Levites but also the remaining people cast aside their wives who were of the Israelite race, who were exhausted and unable to work due to their poverty and the privations of too long a journey and the weakness of their sex, and so their bodies had become weak and unattractive. And they joined in marriage with foreigners either because of the care they took of their bodies, or because they were the daughters of powerful and rich men. These Israelites, it should be understood, were not from among those who had come up with Ezra on that occasion but from those who had long since come up from captivity with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.² For those who had come up with Ezra could not have come so rapidly to despise the teaching of such a great guide and leader that, having remained in their homeland for not even five months, they would have abandoned their own wives and accepted foreign ones; rather, those leaders must be understood to have been from the number of those who were anxious to condemn this crime by reporting to Ezra. Nor should one be surprised how it is the people of Israel along with the priests and Levites who are said to have committed this crime, when the earlier return consisted more of people from Judah and Benjamin than from the ten tribes who were called Israel. "For it should be known that when Israel [i.e., the ten tribes] was led into captivity, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were without distinction also called by the former name 'Israel.'"³ In this verse, therefore, "the people of Israel" should not be interpreted as referring to the ten tribes (as opposed to Judah and Benjamin) but in a general way as referring to the people of God (as opposed to the people of the surrounding lands), who polluted the dignity of their heavenly name by associating with people of the lands. For the same prophet Malachi, whom the Hebrews declare to be none other than Ezra,⁴ also mentions this transgression in the book of his prophecy as follows:

"Judah has sinned, and a detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has desecrated the holiness of the Lord whom he loved and has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the Lord cut off the man who has done this, both the teacher and the disciple, from the tents of Jacob, even though he brings a gift to the Lord of Hosts."⁵ When he says "Judah" here, he clearly means that the people of the first return had been defiled by this crime. But by adding, "May the Lord cut off the man who has done this, both the teacher and the disciple, from the tents of Jacob," he showed by the words *master* and *disciple* that both the rulers and the people were polluted by this sin and that both, if they will not reform, must be rooted out from the fellowship of the holy. And when he added, "even though he brings a gift to the Lord of Hosts," he warns that those who do not shrink from submitting themselves to the devil by sinning offer victims to the Lord in vain.

In this episode we should admire the faith and excellent resolution of the people who were freed from captivity, who refer to themselves as "the holy seed" but the other nations in distinction to their own as "the people of the lands," so that they might openly imply that they themselves, although born from the earth, nevertheless have their dwelling not on earth but in heaven insofar as they, more than other nations, believed in the God of heaven and hoped to obtain heavenly blessings from him. Thus they rightly grieve that their holiness had been polluted by the detestable actions of the Gentiles, and, what is worse, they acknowledge that even the leaders by whom they ought to have been corrected were the first to have gone astray. And it should be carefully noted and used as an example of good works that while some leaders sinned and caused the common people who were entrusted to them to sin, other leaders who were of more wholesome view for their part do their best to correct those sins; but

¹Mal 2:11-12. ²See Ezra 1:1-2:70. ³Jerome *In Mal.* 1.1 (CCL 76A:903.18-20). ⁴According to the Talmud and Targums. ⁵Mal 2:11-12.

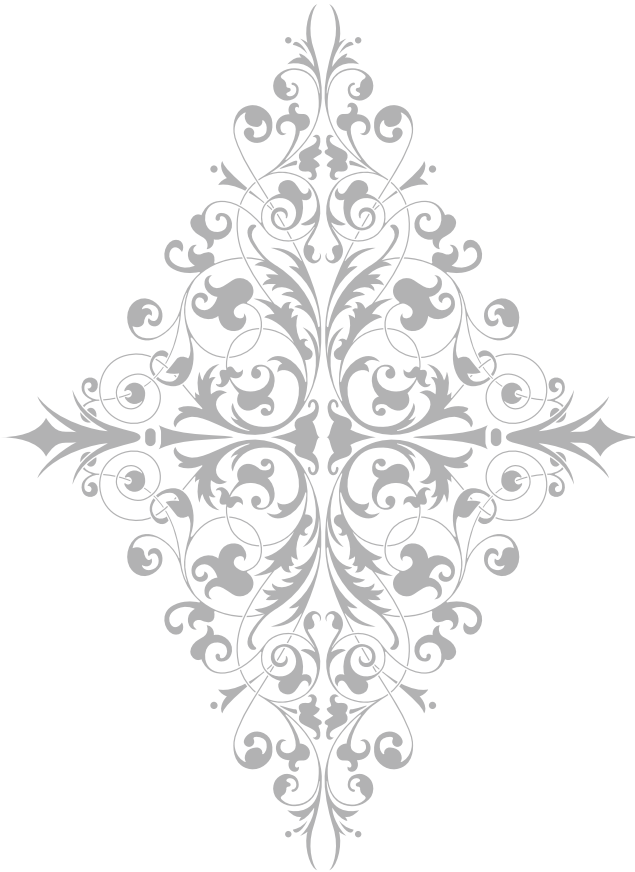
because they cannot do this themselves they refer the matter to their *pontifex* [i.e., their archbishop]⁶ through whose authority so grave, so manifold and so long-lasting a sin can be expiated. No one can doubt, in fact, that the foreign wives figuratively stand for the heresies and superstitious sects of philosophers, which, when they are recklessly admitted into the church, often greatly contaminate the holy seed of catholic truth and pure action with their errors. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.12.⁷

9:5-15 *Ezra Ashamed and Embarrassed*

EZRA IN HIS AFFLICTION SYMBOLIZES THE SAVIOR'S INTERCESSION. BEDE: Ezra had prepared himself through compunction of heart and through bodily affliction so that he might be made worthy to hear heavenly mercy, and only then did he begin to break forth in words of prayer. He bends his knees, spreads out his hands and pours forth prayers to the Lord at the time of the evening sacrifice, not doubting that this sacrifice that is offered with a humble spirit and contrite heart would be more pleasing to God than one offered with the flesh or blood of cattle. Typologically, however, in the fact that with his

garment torn he falls on his knees, spreads out his hands to God and turns the mind of very many to repentance by pouring out prayers and tears, as is written in what follows, he represents the Lord Savior, who deigned to pray for our sins both before and at the very time of his passion and who allowed his hands to be stretched out on the cross and the garment of his own flesh to be torn with wounds and mortified at the appointed time on behalf of our restoration, so that, as the apostle says, he who "died on behalf of our sins" might rise "for our justification."⁸ This was aptly done at the time of evening sacrifice either because the Lord at the end of the age⁹ offered the sacrifice of his own flesh and blood to the Father and ordered that it should be offered by us in bread and wine or because with legal sacrifice coming to an end, he freed us through his own passion and, separating us from the people of the lands, made us become heavenly and allowed those who are chaste in heart and body to adhere to him. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.12.¹⁰

⁶Again Bede compares the figure of Ezra with that of a Christian archbishop or the pope. ⁷TTH 47:136-39; PL 91:873-74. ⁸Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:3. ⁹That is, at the end of the fifth age of the so-called six world ages; see Bede *In Ezr.* 1.1220-27. ¹⁰TTH 47:141-42; PL 91:875-76.



THE RESTORATION OF MORALITY
AND PURITY AMONG THE PEOPLE
EZRA 10:1-44

OVERVIEW: After Ezra's prayers and grief for the pollution of Israel, a very great crowd of weeping people of both sexes and of all ages gathered around him. When the people assembled in the middle of winter, they trembled "because of their sin and the rain," and this was done to admonish for them and all other sinners. The sin of the Jews shows us how the minds of the faithful are tempted inwardly with much greater danger when they are seduced and enticed by their own lust. The different deeds accomplished by Ezra demonstrate in all their aspects that he was a type of Christ our Savior (BEDE).

10:1-5 *The People Wept*

EFFECTS OF EZRA'S PRAYER. BEDE: How much Ezra's prayer, tears and sorrow accomplished is shown when it relates that a very great crowd of weeping people of both sexes and of all ages immediately gathered around him. They were weeping either because those who had sinned were doing penance for their sin or because those who had remained pure were sorrowing over the transgression and downfall of their brothers. But whether it was the former or the latter or both groups who were weeping, all are shown to have been greatly troubled by the prayers and laments of their *pontifex*,¹ since even the women and children are said to have been present here as well. The event can also be understood to have happened in this way, namely, that first those who

were innocent and righteous flocked to Ezra when he says, "And all who feared the word of God concerning this transgression of those who had come up from captivity gathered around me,"² but now those who had sinned also came to do penance, together with their wives and children. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.13.³

10:7-14 *The People Assembled*

THE NINTH MONTH SIGNIFIES ONE ADMONITION FOR ALL. BEDE: The ninth month is the one that is called Casleu [Chislev] by the Hebrews and December by the Romans. Who does not know that this month comes in the middle of winter and is rainy and surprisingly stormy? Hence we should note all the more carefully that when the people assembled in the middle of winter, it is recorded that they trembled "because of their sin and the rain." For when they noticed that the rains were pouring down more than was usual even for this wet season, they were brought back to their conscience and understood that this had happened because of their sins and that heavenly wrath was imminent. Admonished by this disturbance of the sky, they grew frightened, and for this reason they had not dared to carry on their business in their own homes but sat down in the courtyard of the

¹Again Bede compares Ezra with an archbishop or the pope. ²Ezra 9:4. ³TTH 47:142-43; PL 91:876.

Lord's house and put on penitential and humble garb. This was done as a lesson for those who, even when the elements are stirred up and weather deteriorates into violent winds, floods of rain, heavy snowstorms, parching drought or even the death of people and animals, and when the judge himself threatens the force of his anger through open signs, do not at all seek to correct their behavior so as to placate that judge and escape the destruction hanging over them but instead merely busy themselves to find some means to avoid or overcome the adverse conditions raging outside on account of their sins. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.13.⁴

10:15-44 *They Pledged to Send Away Their Wives*

REJECTION OF THE FOREIGN WIVES AND EXPIATION OF THE SIN. BEDE: First they put away the unlawful wives, and only then do they offer a ram on their behalf so that, cleansed from the crime, they might approach the altar in a state of purity. For it is difficult for a person's offering to be acceptable to God if he does not first strive to abandon the misdeed for which he offers it, as Isaiah says: "Cease to act perversely; learn to do well."⁵ And because they who were the first to sin were the descendants or brothers of the high priest, it is right that they offer a ram from their flock as a punishment for their crime in order that by such a victim they might indicate that they themselves who were seen to be the teachers and rulers of the people, as it were the leaders of a flock of followers, had arranged to sacrifice themselves with respect to their former way of life and, purged by appropriate penance, to offer themselves to God through a better way of life. Meanwhile, it should be noted with what great art of warfare the devil constantly assails the faithful and how he never leaves them any time secure from battle. For consider how those who could not be overcome by misfortunes were overcome by enticements; they conquered their public enemies when the Lord's temple was built and dedi-

cated but were conquered by a desire for Gentile women, so that they did not keep the temples of their own hearts and bodies worthy for God to inhabit. Very clearly there is a complete allegorical interpretation of this for our own times. For we see that the minds of the faithful are tempted inwardly with much greater danger now when they are seduced and enticed by their own lust than when they were previously tempted outwardly when their brutal opponent was raging against their constancy by sword and fire. But the mercy of the Lord will be present, so that just as it then endowed those people with the virtue of patience against open battles of those who raged against them, in the same way it may also give us the protection of caution against the snares of enticements that catch us unawares. Accordingly, when the *pontifex*⁶ and all those who feared the Lord acted zealously, those who had sinned "were pricked in the heart,"⁷ and they cast out their foreign wives. Once they expelled the baseness of self-indulgence, the beauty of chasteness returned; once they cast out the debris of the vices, the flowers and spices of the virtues were strewn in the Lord's city. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.14.⁸

EZRA'S DEEDS FORESHADOWED THOSE OF THE SAVIOR. BEDE: Now Ezra himself was clearly a type of the Lord Savior too, inasmuch as he restored sacred Scripture, recalled the people out from captivity to Jerusalem, enriched the Lord's house with greater gifts, appointed leaders and guardians beyond the river Euphrates who were familiar with God's law and purified the descendants of the exiles from their foreign wives. For the Lord restored sacred Scripture, because when the scribes and the Pharisees either had defiled it by their traditions or taught that it should be understood according to the letter alone, he showed it was full of spiritual meaning,

⁴TTH 47:145-46; PL 91:878. ⁵Is 1:16-17. ⁶Ezra, who is compared with a Christian archbishop or the pope. ⁷Acts 2:37. ⁸TTH 47:150-51*; PL 91:880-81.

according as to whether it was written by Moses or by the prophets; and by sending the Holy Spirit on them he also caused the New Testament to be written down by apostles and apostolic men. He led the people out from captivity in Babylonia and brought them now liberated to Jerusalem and the promised land, not only because by suffering on that one occasion on the cross he redeemed the world through his own blood, and descending into hell he rescued all true Israelites [i.e., the elect] he found there and, leading them to the walls of the heavenly city, granted them the joys of inheritance they had once been promised; but also because daily gathering the faithful from the turmoil of this world, he calls them together to the fellowship of the holy church and the eternal kingdom. He increased the riches of the temple with gold and silver and precious vessels that either the people of Israel or rulers of the Persians had sent there through him, because by bringing those who believe in him from both peoples [i.e., Jews and Gentiles] into the church, he does not cease to adorn and glorify her always through the splendor of their faith and good works. He appointed leaders and guardians for all the people beyond the river who knew and taught God's law because in the holy church, which not only has been

cleansed in the river of sacred baptism but also by the sincerity of its faith has transcended the Babylonian river (that is, the turmoil of this changing world), he placed apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers.⁹ He purified the descendants of the exiles from their foreign wives because he forbade that those who by professing the faith had renounced the world should be enslaved any more to the enticements of the world. He also cast out the children of these mothers from the assembly of the returned exiles in case by chance when they grew up they might follow the faithlessness of their mothers rather than the faith of their fathers, because he taught that even those of our works that seem good to people are spurious if they are mixed with carnal pleasure or originate from the contagion of human favor, and so are not worthy of the fellowship of those who, completely renouncing the world with their whole mind, move on to the things of heaven and who rejoice not to be weakened by temporal enticements but on the contrary to be made stronger through adversities and to be prepared by them for their heavenly rest. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 2.14.¹⁰

⁹See Eph 4:11. ¹⁰TTH 47:151-52*; PL 91:881-82.



NEHEMIAH



NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER FOR GOD'S MERCY NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

OVERVIEW: By his words and deeds and person Nehemiah plainly designates the mediator of God and people, our Lord Jesus Christ. The city of Susa symbolizes the defenses of the mind of the faithful, especially of those who are charged with the salvation of the souls that are occasion-

ally snatched away from the church by the attacks of the devil. The words of Nehemiah literally describe his concern for Jerusalem, which was still undefended before its enemies, but typologically indicate the concern of those people in the holy church who are rightly afflicted because some of

their neighbors still are subject to sins (BEDE). The salvation in Christ is open to Jews and Gentiles (ORIGEN).

1:1-2 *Certain Men from Judah*

NEHEMIAH FORESHADOWS CHRIST THE MEDIATOR. BEDE: Nehemiah is interpreted in Latin as “My consoler is the Lord” or “the consoler from the Lord.” For when Nehemiah restored Jerusalem’s walls and, after delivering them from the disdain of their enemies, raised up the people of God to the observance of the divine law, it is surely clear that by his word and deed and person he not unsuitably designates the mediator of God and people, the man Christ Jesus,¹ who indicates that he was sent to console the poor in spirit when he said to his disciples as he was about to ascend to heaven: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete,”² that is, a Consoler, by whom the psalmist showed that God’s holy city (namely, the church) would be rebuilt and also those who mourn would be consoled when he said, “The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted,”³ and so on. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.15.⁴

THE DEFENSES OF THE MIND OF THE FAITHFUL. BEDE: Nehemiah writes that he was in the fortress of Susa when the men came who brought the news about Jerusalem. Susa is the capital city of the kingdom of the Persians, as we read in the book of Esther.⁵ Not only Nehemiah but also the prophet Daniel calls it a “fortress,” “not because the city itself is a fortress, for as we have stated it is a capital city and a very powerful one, but because it is so solidly built that it looks like a fortress.”⁶ Now Susa means “riding” or “returning.” The name aptly befits the defenses of the mind of the faithful, especially of those who are charged with the capture of Jerusalem, that is, for the salvation of those who are occasionally snatched away from the church through the devil’s attacks but by repenting are brought back

to the church again by the grace of God. For such people are in a returning fortress—that is, in the strength of a mind called back from the lowest delights to a longing for the heavenly homeland, from which they had fallen in their first parent; such people are in the very strong cavalry of the hearts of the saints who carry God as their rider, according to the prophet’s saying: “Mounting your horses, and your riding is salvation.”⁷ For the Lord indeed mounts his horses when he illuminates the hearts of preachers with the grace of his mercy so that he can rule them; and his riding is salvation because he not only carries to eternal salvation those over whom he presides by ruling them but also, so that he may likewise preside over them too, and through them makes others sharers of this same everlasting salvation as well. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.15.⁸

1:3-4 *The Wall of Jerusalem*

LITERAL AND ALLEGORICAL MEANING OF NEHEMIAH’S WORDS. BEDE: The literal meaning is evident, namely, that those who had remained after the capture, even though they seemed to be living at peace in view of the fact that the king of the Persians had shown himself to be their friend and not long previously had sent to them Ezra the scribe with letters in order that he should have authority over all the region beyond the river,⁹ nonetheless were in great distress because their enemies were blaming them and because the holy city still remained in ruins.¹⁰ But even now in the holy church, people are rightly afflicted and pricked by a salutary sense of remorse when, even though they themselves have repented of their past wrongdoings, they consider the fact that their neighbors still are subject to sins, so that, through the negligence of those who, having reformed, could have been profitable

¹See 1 Tim 2:5. ²Jn 14:16. ³Ps 147 (146:2-3 LXX, Vg). ⁴TTH 47:154*; PL 91:883. ⁵See Esther 1:2. ⁶Jerome *In Danielelem* 2.8.2 (CCL 75A:851.770-73). ⁷Hab 3:8. ⁸TTH 47:155-56; PL 91:883-84. ⁹See Ezra 7:25. ¹⁰This is the emendation proposed by DeGregorio; see TTH 47:156 n. 2.

to many, the devil has free entry into the church, as through the walls of a ruined city. It is even more lamentable if those very ones who should have been profiting others through their teaching and personal example show to observers an example of destruction in themselves by living corruptly. For this is what is meant by the fact that the gates of Jerusalem were burned down by enemy flames: that those who ought, by living and teaching well, to have been introducing worthy people into the assembly of the elect and keeping unworthy people out, perish instead in the fire of avarice, self-indulgence, pride, strife, envy, and the rest of the vices that the evil enemy is apt to bring in. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.15.¹¹

1:5-11 *God Will Gather His People*

SALVATION IN GOD IS OPEN TO ALL. ORIGEN:

But I say, Has the Lord used iniquity to snatch the nations from the power of his enemies and

recall them to faith in him and to his dominion? By no means. For "Israel" was once "the Lord's portion,"¹² but they made Israel turn from their God in sin, and because of their sins God said to them, "Behold, you have been separated by your sins and because of your sins you have been scattered under the whole heaven." But again he says to them, "If your dispersion should be from one end of heaven to the other, from there I will gather you, says the Lord." Because, therefore, "the princes of this world"¹³ had first invaded "the Lord's portion," "the good shepherd"¹⁴ had, necessarily, the ninety and nine having been left on the heights,¹⁵ to descend to the lands and seek the one sheep that was lost, and when it was found and carried back on his shoulders, to recall it to the sheepfold of perfection on high. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 9.7.¹⁶

¹¹TTH 47:156-57*; PL 91:884. ¹²Sir 17:17 (LXX). ¹³Jn 16:11. ¹⁴Jn 10:11. ¹⁵See Mt 18:12. ¹⁶FC 71:155.





NEHEMIAH IS SENT TO
JERUSALEM TO REBUILD THE WALLS
NEHEMIAH 2:1-20

OVERVIEW: We can properly take Artaxerxes, who with the same devotion of his predecessor Cyrus ordered that the city of Jerusalem be rebuilt, as a type of the Lord, who builds a city for himself from living stones. Sanballat and Tobias, who became greatly distressed because they realized that the buildings of Jerusalem were about to be restored, rightly signify the heretics and enemies of the church. As Nehemiah wanders around inspecting the various parts of the devastated city, so it is fitting for spiritual teachers to get up regularly at night and inspect with careful scrutiny the state of the holy church. Also holy

teachers, just like Nehemiah, are in the greatest distress as long as they discern that Jerusalem, that is the “vision of peace” that the Lord has commended to us, lies deserted due to wars of disagreements (BEDE).

2:1-8 *The King Granted Nehemiah’s Request*

ARTAXERXES IS A TYPE OF CHRIST. BEDE: We have plainly learned from the teaching of Isaiah how Cyrus, the first king of the Persians, represents a figure of the Lord Savior because he ended the captivity of the people of God and decreed

that the temple be restored.¹ So too, we can properly take the successor of this same empire, Artaxerxes, who with the same devotion ordered that the city of Jerusalem be rebuilt, as a type of the Lord, who builds a city for himself from living stones (that is, the one church made from all the elect) through the service of preachers. Thus it is appropriate that the name Artaxerxes means “a light that tests silently.”² For the Lord is indeed the light of life who tests the hearts of his faithful silently, at times illuminating them with the sweetness of celestial grace, at others clouding them with the burdens of this life, so that, instructed by temporal adversities, they might desire eternal goods more ardently. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.16.³

2:10 *Sanballat's and Tobiah's Displeasure*

FIGURES OF HERETICS AND ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH. BEDE: Heretics and all enemies of the church are also saddened whenever they notice the elect laboring for the catholic faith or the correction of morality so that the walls of the church may be rebuilt. Note how different their mood and situation was now from what it had been earlier, because above it was said that those who had remained from the captivity of Judea were “in great distress and disgrace”⁴ and that Nehemiah also conducted a prolonged fast with weeping and prayers because the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed and its gates burned down by fire. But now, by contrast, the enemies of this same holy city were saddened and became greatly distressed because they realized that its buildings were about to be restored and at the same time that the citizens would be delivered from the insults of their enemies. Hence we should recollect that, even in this life, that saying of the Lord can be fulfilled in which he said, “Amen, Amen, I say to you, that you will weep and mourn but the world will rejoice. You will grieve,” he adds at once, “but your grief will be turned into joy.”⁵ For surely, as the world that used to rejoice weeps, the sadness of the

just will be turned into joy when it is learned that the affairs of the holy church are prospering and those who by sinning have gone astray are returning to it by doing penance. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.16.⁶

2:11-13 *The Inspection of the Walls*

NEHEMIAH AS A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL TEACHERS. BEDE: He wanders around inspecting the various parts of the devastated city and examines carefully in his mind how each of these should be repaired. Similarly, it is fitting for spiritual teachers also to get up regularly at night and inspect with careful scrutiny the state of the holy church while others are resting, so that they might vigilantly investigate how they might repair and rebuild through chastening those things that have been defiled or destroyed in it by the warfare of sins. Jerusalem's wall lies in ruins, and the way of life of the faithful is soiled by earthly and base desires. The gates are consumed by fire when, as a result of their abandoning instruction in the truth, even those who ought to have been opening up the entrance of life to others also by teaching them now grow idle with the same laziness as everyone else and become slaves to temporal concerns. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.17.⁷

2:17-18 *Jerusalem in Ruins*

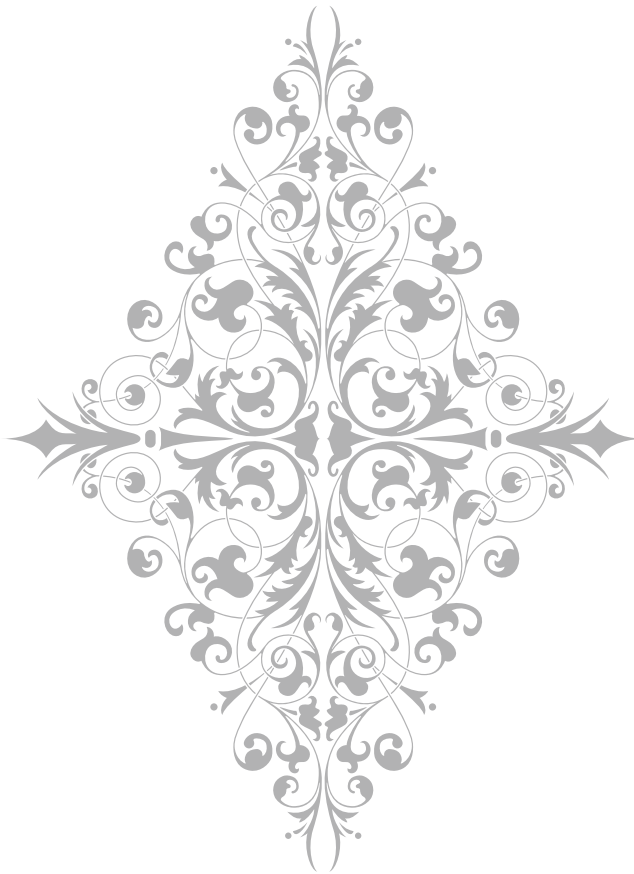
AN EXHORTATION TO RESTORE THE BUILDINGS OF FAITH. BEDE: These words are plain and exceedingly adaptable to a spiritual meaning because holy teachers—indeed, all who burn with zeal for God—are in the greatest distress as long as they discern that Jerusalem (that is, the “vision of peace”⁸ that the Lord has bequeathed and commended to us) lies deserted due to wars

¹See Is 44:28; Ezra 1:1-4. ²See Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72:129.3). ³TTH 47:158-59; PL 91:885. ⁴Neh 1:3. ⁵Jn 16:20. ⁶TTH 47:160-61; PL 91:886. ⁷TTH 47:161; PL 91:886. ⁸This is the meaning in Hebrew of the name Jerusalem.

of disagreements, and they behold that the gates of the virtues (which, according to Isaiah, “praise” should occupy)⁹ have been destroyed and subjected to insults while the gates of hell prevail. Hence they work hard to unite the ministers of the word in a single purpose so that those build-

ings of faith and good action that seemed to have been destroyed can rise again. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.17.¹⁰

⁹Is 60:18. ¹⁰TTH 47:161-62; PL 91:886.





THE RESTORATION OF
JERUSALEM'S WALLS
NEHEMIAH 3:1-32

OVERVIEW: It was right that the restoration of the city was begun by a high priest and his brothers, in order that those who were highest in rank might themselves in their good works become an example for all. The Fish Gate typologically refers to the community of Christians, because just as a flock stands for the Lord's faithful, so in the same way they are frequently called fish. They who build the Dung Gate in Jerusalem prefigure the ones who ordain

to the ministry of the holy church those through whom the filth of the vices is removed from the minds of the elect. The Pool of Shelah (which means "sent"), where the man born blind was given light, stands for the Lord Savior who was sent by God the Father for our illumination. The builders of the Gate of the Horses foreshadow the holy teachers, who show satisfactory examples of living to those who enter the doors of the holy church (BEDE).

3:1-2 *Priests Rebuild the Sheep Gate*

HIGH PRIESTS MUST BE AN EXAMPLE FOR

ALL. BEDE: This Eljahhib was the high priest at the time. He was the son of Joiakim, who, after his own father, Jeshua the high priest son of Jozadak, himself bore the insignia of the priesthood for a long time. And it was right that the restoration of the city was begun by a high priest and his brothers, in order that those who were highest in rank might themselves in their good works become an example for all. And it is well that, as the priests are building, it adds, "And as far as the Tower of One Hundred Cubits they sanctified it, as far as the Tower of Hananel." For priests build to the number of one hundred cubits when they enflame all those whom they are instructing with love and desire for eternal things. For the number one hundred, which in counting on the fingers moves from the left hand to right, represents celestial rewards, which, in comparison with temporal and base rewards, are as the right hand is to the left. They are also said to have sanctified the gate that they built. For it is the duty of priests to make their own actions more worthy than others through a special sanctification and to do this earnestly so that those who are joined with them might sanctify the Lord's name in themselves by living well. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.18.¹

3:3-5 *Building the Fish Gate*

TYPOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE FISH GATE.

BEDE: He gives the name Fish Gate to the gate that faced Joppa and Diospolis (i.e., Lydda).² It was nearest to the sea of all of Jerusalem's roads;³ today it is said to be called the Gate of David and is the first of the gates to the west of Mount Zion. This view appears to be borne out in Chronicles, in which it is written about Manasseh king of Judah: "After this he built a wall outside the City of David,⁴ to the west of Gihon in the valley, from the entrance of the Gate of the Fish in a circuit as far as Ophel, and he erected it much higher."⁵ Typologically, however,

just as a flock stands for the Lord's faithful, so in the same way they are frequently called fish. Thus, just as he says to Peter, "Feed my sheep,"⁶ so too he promises Peter together with Andrew and the rest of the apostles, "Come, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of people."⁷ In a parable he likewise says about these same fishermen, "They collected the good fish in baskets but threw the bad away."⁸ Therefore, the Fish Gate is built in Jerusalem when those orders are established in the church through which the elect, separated from the reprobate like good fish from the bad, may be brought into the fellowship of perpetual peace; and the Fish Gate is built when they rescue their neighbors, who observe them, from the waves of worldly agitation and desire and introduce them to the tranquility and peace of the spiritual life. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.18.⁹

3:13-14 *Malchijah Repaired the Dung Gate*

THOSE THROUGH WHOM THE FILTH OF VICE IS REMOVED.

BEDE: They say the site of the city of Jerusalem, being laid out on a gentle slope, inclines toward the north and east in such a way that rainfall does not accumulate there at all but rather flows out like rivers through the eastern gates and swells the torrent of Kidron in the valley of Jehoshaphat, taking with it all the waste of the streets. And so it appears likely that the Dung Gate is the one through which refuse and filth were generally to be driven out. It is not in any way of less virtue and usefulness for all impure things to be removed from the city of the Lord than for those things that are pure to be collected into it. They who build the Dung Gate in Jerusalem, therefore, are the ones who ordain to the ministry of the holy church those

¹TTH 47:162-63; PL 91:887. ²Lydda, now Lod, is a city in Palestine about ten miles from the sea. ³Jerome *In Sophoniam* 1.10 (CCL 76A:666.388-89). ⁴The City of David was the part of Jerusalem on the ridge to the south of the Temple Mount; see TTH 47:165 n. 1. ⁵2 Chron 33:14. ⁶Jn 21:17. ⁷Mt 4:19. ⁸Mt 13:48. ⁹TTH 47:164-65; PL 91:888.

through whom the filth of the vices is removed from the minds of the elect, but also through whom people of corrupt mind are kept away from the boundaries of the church while a shower of heavenly grace helps them and weakens every impurity, so that, according to the psalmist, “all who do evil” are eliminated “from the city of the Lord.”¹⁰ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.18.¹¹

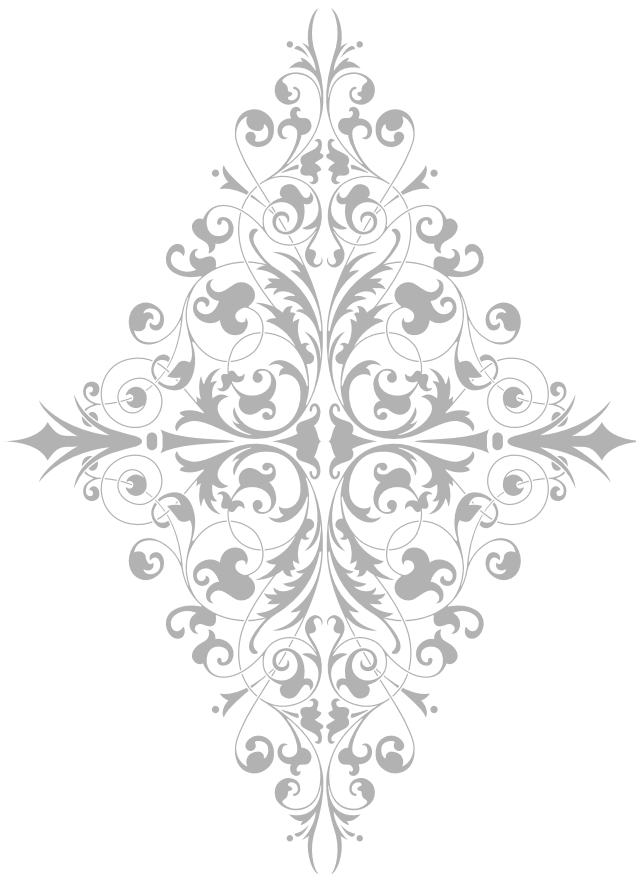
3:15 *The Wall of the Pool of Shelah*

DIVINE MYSTERIES FORESHADOWED IN THE POOL OF SHELAH. BEDE: The Pool of Siloa¹² (which means “sent”), where the man born blind was given light,¹³ stands for the Lord Savior who was sent by God the Father for our illumination. The spring of this pool can be very aptly understood as the same Father from whom he was born, about which the psalmist well says, “For with you is the spring of life; in your light we shall see light.”¹⁴ And the Spring Gate is built in Jerusalem when teachers are ordained in the church to preach belief in divine eternity to the nations. The walls of the Pool of Siloa are built too when the very firm and invincible testimonies of the Scriptures, in which the mystery of the Lord’s incarnation is described, are rooted in the mind of the faithful. Moreover these walls of divine utterances reach as far as the King’s Garden when, having recognized the mysteries of the Lord’s dispensation, we begin to bring forth shoots of the virtues with the help of that same king, our Lord God. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.18.¹⁵

3:28 *The Priests Repair the Horse Gate*

THE SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH. BEDE: Jeremiah mentions this gate and indicates that it is in the eastern part of the city when he writes typologically about the church, “And the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord from the Tower of Hananel”;¹⁶ and a little afterwards: “up to the torrent of Kidron and as far as the corner of the Gate of the Horse on the east.”¹⁷ Now horses, when they are put to good use, just as donkeys, camels and mules also do, sometimes represent peoples of the Gentiles who have been converted to the Lord, and at other times concerns for temporal matters that have been duly subjugated to the rule of the soul. And the priests built the wall of God’s city up to the gate of the horses when, after the calling of the Jewish people, holy teachers by spreading the word went on to lead the peoples of the Gentiles into the holy church. Similarly, they build up to the gate of the horses when they show satisfactory examples of living to those who enter the doors of the holy church in order to bridle the wanton motions of their flesh or soul, or perhaps when they control their own thoughts with which they consider it necessary to worry about their own and their family’s food and clothing¹⁸ in such a way that these thoughts in no way impede the freedom of that mind with which they have resolved always to seek heavenly things. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.18.¹⁹

¹⁰Ps 101:8 (100:8 LXX, Vg). ¹¹TTH 47:169; PL 91:890-91. ¹²This is the Latin spelling (derived from the Greek in the LXX) of the name “shelah.” ¹³Jn 9:7. ¹⁴Ps 36:9 (35:10 LXX, Vg). ¹⁵TTH 47:170-71*; PL 91:891. ¹⁶Jer 31:38. ¹⁷Jer 31:40. ¹⁸See Mt 6:31. ¹⁹TTH 47:177; PL 91:895.



PLOTS AGAINST JERUSALEM NEHEMIAH 4:1-23

OVERVIEW: The Samaritans exhorted by Sanballat to oppose the construction of the wall openly represent the heretics, who are separated from the unity of Christ and the church by schisms or wicked works. The sole refuge against all enemies of the church is prayer to God and the zeal of teachers. Against all the enemies of the church we must, according to the apostle, take up the armor of God, “so that” we may be able to “resist on the evil day and stand perfect in all things.”¹ We must keep a constant watch lest we may fall back into sins through the devil’s seduction (BEDE).

4:1-5 *What Are These Jews Doing?*

OBVIOUS FIGURES OF HERETICS. BEDE: Obviously this is the anger of heretics, these the words of those who in vain call themselves “samaritans” (that is, the “guardians of God’s law”)² despite the fact that they are greatly opposed to God and his laws inasmuch as, having been long separated from the House of David (that is, from the unity of Christ and the church) by heresies or schisms or wicked works, they are afraid to see the walls of the faith being built lest their own irreverence might be attacked and excluded; this is the ridicule of all who claim that “they know God, but in their deeds they deny him,”³ for indeed the Samaritans used to serve the Lord but without repudiating their own ancient gods. Typologically, they are imitated today by Christians but in such a way that they also consider their stomach a god⁴ and pursue greed (which the apostle clearly calls “slavery to idols”)⁵ and, being slaves to the remaining allurements of the world, serve “created things” more “than the Creator, who is praised forever.”⁶ And so, just like heretics, such

people do not want the walls of the church to be restored in case they are forced by the growing state of piety to retreat from their own impiety; such ones are apt to call the Jews (that is, confessors of the faith)⁷ “feeble” and say that they will be easily overthrown by the Gentiles, since in the daily battle of souls they love sins more than obtaining the victory palm of virtue. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.19.⁸

4:6-9 *The Jews Pray to God*

THE PROTECTION OF PRAYER. BEDE: This is the sole refuge against all enemies of the church—namely, prayer to God and the zeal of teachers, who, meditating day and night on his law, fortify the hearts of the faithful against the attacks of the devil and his soldiers by preaching, consoling and exhorting. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.19.⁹

4:10-15 *The People Stationed According to Their Families*

WE MUST TAKE UP THE ARMOR OF GOD.

BEDE: These things are also always done in the spiritual edifice. For the unwearied enemy lies in waiting with his unclean companions (namely, malicious spirits and people) who constantly endeavor to impede and, insofar as they can, to assault the works of the faith and virtues whenever we are incautious, and they attempt to kill the mind of the faithful with the sword of

¹Eph 6:13. ²Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72:142.3). ³Tit 1:16. ⁴Phil 3:19. ⁵Eph 5:5. ⁶Rom 1:25. ⁷Isidore *Etymol.* 8.4.2. ⁸TTH 47:179⁹; PL 91:896. ⁹TTH 47:180-81; PL 91:897.

depraved suggestion. But against these we must, according to the apostle, take up the armor of God, “so that” we may be able to “resist on the evil day and stand perfect in all things.”¹⁰ Now it is well said that he stationed the people “behind the wall in a circuit” with weapons so that, surrounded by a troop of armed men, the builders might press on in building the wall with a freer and securer hand. For the grades of the faithful are divided up: some build up the church by adorning it with good works on the inside, while others, armed with the weapons of sacred reading, keep vigilant for heretics who attack the same church. The former in religious devotion strengthen their neighbors in the truth of the faith, while the latter wage a necessary battle against the weapons of the devil or of the vices with which they struggle to assault this same faith and with pastoral solicitude repel the wolves lying in ambush from the Lord’s sheepfold. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.19.¹¹

4:15 *The Enemies’ Plot Was Known*

A VICTORY OBTAINED. BEDE: In the spiritual edifice too, if we are always clothed with the apostolic armor,¹² the stratagem of the devil and his angels who desire to subdue us will be foiled. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.19.¹³

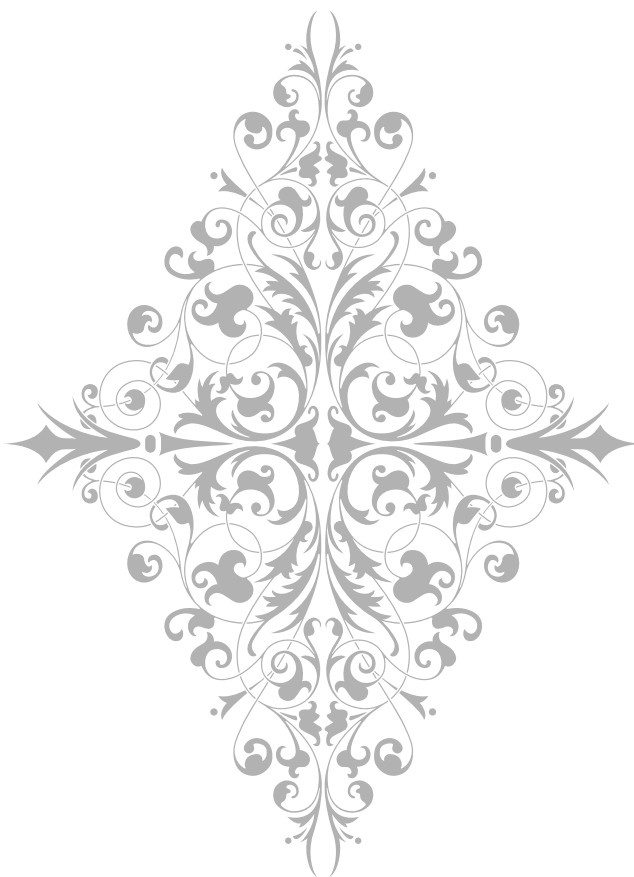
4:16-23 *Working and Watching*

A CONSTANT WATCH AGAINST THE DEVIL’S MACHINATIONS. BEDE: For it should be noted not only that half of the young men did the work and half were prepared to fight, but also that these same young men who were doing the work were all equipped with a sword. For so great is the ancient enemy’s craftiness, so great the fury of

his malice when he fights against the church, that not only preachers of the truth but even the very people of God themselves must always keep watch against his machinations, as though standing firm in battle. For the builders gird their loins with a sword when those who take pains to persevere in good works and who take pains to govern those in their charge by means of an ordered regimen (that is, to place the living stones in the edifice of the holy city in suitable arrangement) endeavor to restrain in themselves the laxness of wanton behavior with the sharpness of God’s Word. And we should not pass over the fact that when David and Solomon were building this same city, nothing is said about armed builders or attacking adversaries; rather, the city destroyed by their wrongdoings is restored with greater labor and effort, first because the spiritual edifice, which is concerned with the salvation of souls, is such that, as soon as we are reborn in baptism through the faith and confession of the Holy Trinity, we are made, through God’s grace, his city and house without any effort of our own; but if after our ablution in the sacred font we fall back into sins through the devil’s seduction and the victorious enemy demolishes the defenses of our virtue with the fire of the vices, it is necessary for us to repair those buildings of good works that we have lost through more serious efforts of prayer, mortification, vigils, alms and a stricter life. For it is harder for us to be free of known enticements of the vices than unknown, and it takes less effort to avoid an unknown pleasure of the flesh than to reject a familiar one. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.20.¹⁴

¹⁰Eph 6:13. ¹¹TTH 47:181-82; PL 91:897-98. ¹²See Eph 6:13.

¹³TTH 47:182; PL 91:898. ¹⁴TTH 47:182-83; PL 91:898.



NEHEMIAH FIGHTS AGAINST
USURY AND SOCIAL OPPRESSION
NEHEMIAH 5:1-19

OVERVIEW: The famine is caused not only by a scarcity of crops but also by the greed of the rulers, since they were demanding greater taxes from these people than they were able to pay. Nehemiah's words warn us that we should take care, whenever a general time of famine and destitution has afflicted the people, not only to give poor people what we can but also to forgive that tribute that we have been accustomed to exact from our subjects. Labors performed without piety cannot become fruitful before the Lord. Nehemiah's honest and moderate behavior mystically suggests that a work is an apostolic one when someone who has been promoted to be a ruler of God's people nobly undertakes the work of the ruler by building the church but does not seek a reward for his work (BEDE).

5:1-5 Having to Pledge Land and Houses

THE SCARCITY OF CROPS AND THE GREED OF THE RULERS. BEDE: The people desired to construct the city wall but were being hindered from the holy work by the severity of the famine. This famine had been caused not only by a scarcity of crops but also by the greed of the rulers, since they were demanding greater taxes from these people than they were able to pay. We see that this occurs among us in the same manner every day. For how many are there among God's people who willingly desire to obey the divine commands but are hindered from being able to fulfill what they desire not only by lack of temporal means and by poverty but also by the examples of those who seem to be endowed with the garb of religion but who exact an immense tax and weight of worldly goods from those whom they claim to be in charge of while giving nothing for their eternal salvation, either by teaching them or by providing them with examples of good living or by devoting effort to works of piety for them? Would that some Nehemiah (i.e., a "consoler from the Lord") might come in our own days and restrain our errors, kindle our breasts to love of the divine and strengthen our hands by turning

them away from our own pleasures to establishing Christ's city!

But we should observe according to the literal meaning that the unhappy outcry of the afflicted people was attended by a threefold distinction. For some, compelled by the famine, were proposing to sell their own children to the more wealthy for food; others, sparing their children, wished rather to give up their fields and own homes for food; and some, by contrast, prohibiting the sale of both children and fields, were urging that they should merely borrow money for the king's taxes, giving their fields and vineyards as a pledge until a fruitful supply of crops returned and they could restore the moneylenders what they had borrowed. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3,21.¹

5:6-11 Stop This Taking of Interest

AN EXHORTATION TO CHARITY AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY. BEDE: As the most excellent leader of the heavenly militia and "wise architect"² of God's city, he first of all declared that he himself had done what he wished the nobles and magistrates of the people to do, namely, to give alms to the poor and seek nothing from them except faithfulness to God's law and the building of his city. In this passage, we do not need to scrutinize the allegorical meaning but to observe the literal meaning of the text itself by performing it as diligently as we can, namely, so that quite apart from the daily fruits of almsgiving, we should take care whenever a general time of famine and destitution has afflicted the people, not only to give poor people what we can but also to forgive that tribute that we have been accustomed to exact from our subjects as though by right, in order that the Father might forgive us our debts too.³ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3,21.⁴

5:12-13 Holding the Wealthy to Their Promise

¹TTH 47:183-85; PL 91:899. ²1 Cor 3:10. ³See Mt 6:12. ⁴TTH 47:185*; PL 91:899.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNMERCIFUL.

BEDE: For [if one] either refuses to show mercy on poor people or is not ashamed to demand from them, as if lawfully, what they do not have to give, this person is shaken from his house (namely, is cast and shaken out from the fellowship of the holy church in which he believed he would remain forever) and deprived of his labors, doubtless, that is, of the fruit of good works in which he believed that he had toiled admirably. For labors performed without piety cannot become fruitful before the Lord. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.21.⁵

5:13 All the People Praise the Lord

A PROFOUND EFFECT. BEDE: When on hearing his declaration they all responded “Amen” and, praising God, did what Nehemiah had commanded, it is surely evident that they had not been forced by fear but had received his words in the inmost affection of their heart. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.21.⁶

5:14-19 Not Eating the Food Allowance**THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF NEHEMIAH’S**

GENEROUS BEHAVIOR. BEDE: Explaining this by means of a type, the apostle says that “the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. But I have not used any of these things.”⁷ For twelve years, Nehemiah and his brothers so lived under his leadership that they would not eat “the yearly provisions that were due to the governors,” so that by this he might mystically suggest that that work is an apostolic one when someone who has been promoted to be a ruler of God’s people nobly undertakes the work of the ruler by building the church but does not seek a reward for his work by asking for earthly goods from those whom he rules by preaching and living well. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.22.⁸

⁵TTH 47:185-86; PL 91:899-900. ⁶TTH 47:186; PL 91:900. ⁷1 Cor 9:14-15. ⁸TTH 47:186*; PL 91:900.





NEW PLOTS OF THE ENEMIES NEHEMIAH 6:1-14

OVERVIEW: Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem are like the heretics and false Christians who want to have a fellowship of peace with true believers but do not agree to follow ecclesiastical faith and, on the contrary, compel those who are on the peak of virtues to go down to the lowest depths of wicked works. Shemaiah, who invites Nehemiah to his house, is a traitor and an enemy who has been corrupted by the gifts of friendship with foreigners (BEDE).

6:1-9 *A Request for a Meeting*

NEHEMIAH'S ENEMIES FORESHADOW HERETICS AND FALSE CHRISTIANS. BEDE: The enemies of the holy city are urging Nehemiah to go down to the plains and to enter into a peace pact with them by together slaughtering calves as testimony to the arranged treaty, but he perseveres in the mountains so that the devout work is not neglected. So too, heretics and false catholics want to have a fellowship of peace with true catholics but with this stipulation, that they do not agree to ascend to the citadel of ecclesiastical faith or duty themselves but rather they compel those whom they see dwelling on the peak of the vir-

tues to go down to the lowest depths of wicked works or dogmas. And it is well that they want to enter into a pact with Nehemiah on one plain, doubtless because they desire that all those whom they are able to seduce be relaxed in the same freedom of the broader life that they themselves follow; and it is well that they wish to enter into a pact with him by together slaughtering calves, because false brothers are eager to offer the sacrifices of their prayer and action to God together with true catholics, so that, when they are believed to be genuinely faithful, they might be able to corrupt these same true catholics through the proximity of their association. But Nehemiah, representing the person of faithful teachers, by no means agrees to go down to the impious or to be defiled with their sacrifices but remains devout in the virtuous works he has undertaken; and the more severely his enemies tried to frighten him, the more he himself strove to become terrifying to these same enemies by doing a good work. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3:23.¹

¹TTH 47:187*; PL 91:900-901.

6:10-14 Intimidation**AN ATTEMPT AGAINST NEHEMIAH'S VIRTUE.**

BEDE: Pressured by the attacks of his enemies, Nehemiah enters the house of Shemaiah as though Shemaiah were his friend and brother but discovers that Shemaiah himself is a traitor and enemy, inasmuch as he had been corrupted by the

gifts of friendship with foreigners. For the elect always have "conflicts without and fears within,"² and not just the apostles but the prophets too lived a life fraught "with dangers from the nation, with dangers from Gentiles, with dangers from false brothers."³ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.23.⁴

²2 Cor 7:5. ³2 Cor 11:26. ⁴TTH 47:188*; PL 91:901.



COMPLETION OF THE WALL
NEHEMIAH 6:15-19

OVERVIEW: The wall is completed on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, after fifty-two days of work: both numbers have different mystical meanings. As in Jerusalem, where the sturdy structure of the wall was built, the enemies were hindered and stopped, so too in the holy church, when the sturdy structure of charity, self-restraint and peace is erected, unclean spirits grow afraid and their temptation is repelled (BEDE).

6:15 Twenty-five Days and Fifty-two Days**THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF THE NUMBERS.**

BEDE: According to the Hebrews, the month of Elul is the sixth month of the year, which is called September by the Romans. And it is right that

the wall of the holy city is completed in the sixth month of the year, so that by this number the perfected action of the faithful, whether penitents or the innocent, might also be designated. For the perfection of a good work is usually designated by the number six, either because the Lord completed the creation of the world on the sixth day and rested on the seventh or because he wished us to sweat with good actions within the six ages¹ of this world but to hope for a sabbath rest for our souls in the seventh, which comes in the next life. It is rightly completed on the twenty-fifth day of that same month, namely, on account of

¹For the theory of the six ages of the world, see Bede *In Ezr.* (CCL 119A:1.1201-28); *De Templ.* 66-71 (CCL 123B:445.1-544.98).

the five bodily senses, by the aid of which we ought to do good works outwardly: for just as the simple number five is often a figure of these senses, so when this is multiplied by itself to make twenty-five it designates these same senses with greater perfection. Therefore, we complete the wall of Jerusalem on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month when, diligently surrendering all of our bodily senses to divine servitude, we bring the pursuits of the virtues that we have begun to a sure end and, with the Lord's help, effectively complete whatever things have begun to do faithfully in defense of catholic peace.

It is also fitting that the wall is said to have been completed in fifty-two days. For the fiftieth psalm—in which the prophet also prays specifically for the construction of this city, saying, “Deal favorably, O Lord, in your good will with Zion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up”²—is one of repentance and forgiveness. On the fiftieth day of the Lord's resurrection, the Holy Spirit, through whom not only the desire to repent is poured into us but also the gift of pardon is conferred on those who repent, came to the primitive church. Now there are two precepts concerning charity, namely, love of God and of neighbors, in which, once pardon for sins has been granted to us by the Holy Spirit, we are commanded to endeavor to attain eternal life. It is therefore most appropriate that when rebuilding the wall of the holy city that had been destroyed by the enemies, its citizens restore it in fifty-two days, because this, undoubtedly, is the perfection

of the righteous in this life, namely, that they should not only, by repenting through the grace of divine inspiration, set right whatever sins they have committed but afterwards adorn themselves with good works in love of God and neighbors. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.23.³

6:16-19 *All the Nations Were Afraid*

THE STURDY STRUCTURE OF VIRTUE REPELS TEMPTATION. BEDE: Those who previously were seeking to frighten the builders of the holy city in order to hinder them from working now are themselves frightened when the construction of this same city is completed, and they are disheartened when they realize that its construction was begun and completed through God's authority. So too in the holy church, when the sturdy structure of charity, self-restraint, peace and the rest of virtues is erected, unclean spirits grow afraid and their temptation, put to flight by our strength, is repelled and makes our victory all the greater. This can be understood to apply equally to heretics and to false catholics, who, through the steadfast faith of good people that works through love, are either set straight and reformed or, having been exposed so that people can be on their guard against them, are expelled from the boundaries of the church. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.24.⁴

²Ps 51:18 (50:20 LXX, Vg). ³TTH 47:188-89; PL 91:901-2. ⁴TTH 47:189-90; PL 91:902.

GATEKEEPERS AND GUARDS
ARE APPOINTED
TO WATCH THE WALL
NEHEMIAH 7:1-3

OVERVIEW: The gatekeepers are those who have received “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” so that they might receive those who are worthy and humble but prevent the proud and the impure from entry into the heavenly city. The guardianship of the holy church is duly achieved only if everyone shows concern for all the faithful but makes a particularly diligent effort to take care of those over whom he has been put in charge by God’s authority (BEDE).

7:1-2 Gatekeepers Chosen

THE DOORS OF REGULAR DISCIPLINE. BEDE: In the spiritual sense too, whenever the walls of the church have been built by gathering new nations to the faith or by setting straight those who have erred, immediately the doors of regular discipline must be set in place so that the ancient enemy, who “prowls around like a roaring lion,”¹ might not in any place be able to invade the fold of the faithful. Gatekeepers, singers and Levites must be appointed to guard these same doors; it is clear that the character of all these accords with holy teachers. For the gatekeepers are those who have received “the keys to the kingdom of heaven”² so that they might receive those who are worthy and humble but prevent the proud and the impure from entry into the heavenly city by

saying, “You have no part or lot in this business, for your heart is not right before God.”³ The singers are those who with a devout voice preach the sweetness of this same heavenly homeland to their hearers; the Levites are those who always remain vigilant in regard to the observance of divine worship. Now Nehemiah ordered that “the gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot”⁴ (that is, throughout the whole night), doubtless either in case the enemy invaded under the cover of darkness or else in case any of the citizens were to go out incautiously and be captured by the enemy and killed. Likewise, throughout the night of this age also, guardians of souls must act diligently to ensure that the observance of devout living is not neglected, allowing the devil to sneak in to disturb the company of the faithful or to seize and destroy one of their number. But when the “Sun of righteousness”⁵ appears and the light of future blessedness shines forth, no longer will there be a need for barriers of self-restraint, because adversaries will no longer be given the ability to attack or tempt the faithful, since they will be condemned to eternal punishment along with their leader. Thus in his Apocalypse John says about the future glory of the holy city, “And its gates

¹1 Pet 5:8. ²Mt 16:19. ³Acts 8:21. ⁴Neh 7:3. ⁵Mal 4:2.

will not be shut ever, for there will be no night in that place.”⁶ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.24.⁷

7:3 *Guards Appointed*

GUARDIAN OF SOULS MUST BE WELL

TRAINED. BEDE: Guardians of souls must not be appointed from recent converts or from the common crowd but from those who, freed by the grace of God from the battle of vices, have already trained themselves to keep their mind in Jerusalem (that is, in the “vision of serene peace”) and who can say with the apostle, “But our dwelling is in heaven.”⁸ About this people is well said that they appointed “each in his own turn,” namely, so that when their course has been completed and they have been removed from this light, others may immediately be chosen in their place to rule

over the faithful; and that there may at no time be a shortage of those who make an effort to keep watch on behalf of the peace of the holy church “because of night-time fears,”⁹ since the truth of prophetic words, in which it is said to the same church, “In the place of your fathers, sons are born to you,”¹⁰ runs continuously to the end of the age. It is also well added, “and each opposite his own house.” For the guardianship of the holy church is duly achieved only if everyone shows concern for all the faithful but makes a particularly diligent effort to take care of those over whom he has been put in charge by God’s authority. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.24.¹¹

⁶Rev 21:25. ⁷TTH 47:190-91; PL 91:902. ⁸Phil 3:20. ⁹Song 3:8. ¹⁰Ps 45:16 (44:17 Vg). ¹¹TTH 47:191; PL 91:902-3.

A CENSUS OF THE CITIZENS NEHEMIAH 7:4-73

OVERVIEW: The fact that Jerusalem was still devoid of houses foreshadows the time when God’s word was spread far and wide by the apostles but churches had not yet been built. Nehemiah makes a review of the total of all the people, so that he might be able to determine which ones should dwell in the city of Jerusalem and which in the other cities (BEDE).

7:4 *Few People and No Houses*

A FORESHADOWING OF THE FIRST CONVERSIONS TO CHRIST. BEDE: Typologically, these

details correspond to that time when, as a result of God’s word being spread far and wide by the apostles, the whole world received the new seed of the faith and when churches had not yet been built but the peoples, as yet uninstructed, had merely begun to hear and receive the sacraments of the word. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.25.¹

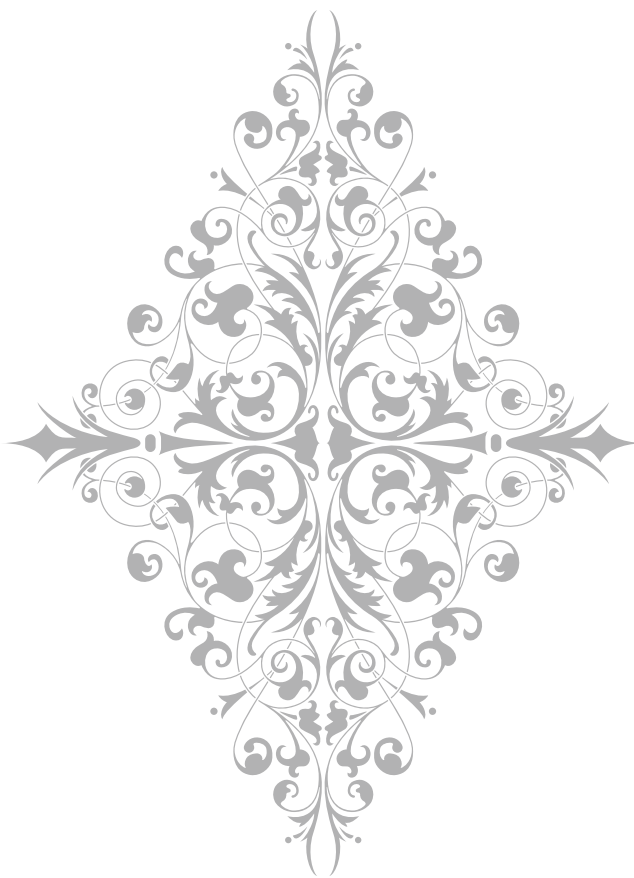
7:5 *Assembling the Nobles and the People*

¹TTH 47:191-92; PL 91:903.

NEHEMIAH'S CENSUS. BEDE: When, therefore, not only the nobles and officials but also all the common people had assembled before him, he diligently endeavored to make a census of their number so that, having made a review of the total of all the people, he might be able to determine

which ones should dwell in the city of Jerusalem and which in the other cities. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.25.²

²TTH 47:192; PL 91:903.





EZRA PROCLAIMS THE WORDS
OF THE LAW BEFORE THE PEOPLE
NEHEMIAH 8:1-18

OVERVIEW: The people gather before the Water Gate, because they are to be given spiritual drink by Ezra their high priest from the streams of Scripture. By the command to eat fat food and drink sweet drink, Ezra invites us to rejoice over the abundance of good action bestowed on us by God and over the very sweetness of hearing God's Word. In the Festival of Booths there is a foreshadowing of Christ's passion and the deliverance of humankind from the death of sin. The feast and assembly, which were held on the eighth day, symbolize the moment when all the obscurities of our mind are dispersed by the most luminous light of Christ and our resurrection (BEDE).

8:1-4 Ezra Reads the Law to the People

INSTRUCTION THROUGH DIVINE DISCOURSES. BEDE: As Nehemiah was seeking to make plans and decide who should reside in the city that they had built, the seventh month arrived, for it was not far off. For since the wall had been completed on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, not more than five days remained until the beginning of the seventh month. The whole of this seventh month, from its first day until the twenty-second, was conse-

crated with ceremonies prescribed by the Law; when these had been duly celebrated, only then did he return with the leaders and common people to decide who should be residents of the rebuilt city. The point to note here is the devotion and also the like-mindedness of the people who as one person (that is, with one and the same faith and love) came together at the Lord's temple; and they themselves asked their *pontifex*¹ to bring the book and recount for them the commandments of the Law that they must observe, so that along with the rebuilt city, a structure of good works pleasing to God might spring up in case, just as before, neglect of religion should lead to the ruination of the city as well. And it is appropriate that the city was completed in the sixth month and that the people gathered in it to hear the Law in the seventh; for in the Law there are six days for working and a seventh for resting.² And this, after we have done good work, is the form of our rest that is most beloved and most acceptable to the Lord: to abstain from servile work (that is, from sin) and devote ourselves to hearing and fulfilling his commandments with due diligence. This is

¹Bede is comparing Ezra with an archbishop or the pope; see also Ezra 9:1-3; 10:1-5; 10:15-44. ²See Exod 20:9-11.

why the Feast of Trumpets, by whose blast the people, amid their prayers and offerings, were more fervently moved to remembrance of the divine law, was placed in the beginning of this seventh month also.

Even today too, according to the spiritual meaning, the construction of the holy city should be followed by divine reading and the frequent sounding of trumpets, no doubt because it is necessary that when a people has been initiated into the heavenly sacraments they should also, as occasion requires, be carefully instructed by divine discourses how they should live. Now he says that the people assembled "in the square that is before the Water Gate." I think that by the Water Gate is meant the gate in the courtyard of the priests that surrounded the temple on all its sides in a square, especially on the temple's eastern side, where there was the bronze sea for washing the hands and feet of those going into the temple, the ten bronze washbasins for washing the victims and the altar of burnt offering between which and the temple Zechariah son of Berechiah was stoned to death.³ The people did not have permission to enter inside the gate of this court but only the priests and ministers of the Lord; the people were accustomed to stand outside of this gate and especially in the square that was at its eastern side, in order to listen to the word or to pray. Therefore, it is appropriate that the people gathered before the Water Gate, because they were to be given spiritual drink by their high priest from the streams of Scripture. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3,26.⁴

8:9-12 *Eat the Fat and Drink Sweet Wine*

TO REJOICE IN HOPE. BEDE: For it is a holy day of the Lord for us when we take pains to hear and carry out his words. On this day it is proper that, however much outwardly we have endured the obstacles of tribulations, we should be "rejoicing in hope,"⁵ in keeping with the apostle's saying: "As if sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."⁶

On this day we are also commanded to eat fat food and drink sweet drink, that is, to rejoice over the abundance of good action bestowed on us by God and over the very sweetness of hearing God's Word. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.26.⁷

8:13-17 *Written in the Law*

MYSTERIES FORESHADOWED IN THE FESTIVAL OF BOOTHS. BEDE: These matters are written about more fully in Leviticus,⁸ and it is also written that they were ordered to be done in memory of that very long journey, on which the Lord, leading his people out of Egypt, made them dwell in tabernacles in the desert for forty years, daily revealing to them the precepts of his law through Moses. Moreover it was ordered that the setting up of tabernacles (which in Greek is called *skēnopēgia*) was to be done every year for seven days, that is, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month to the twenty-second. It is well worth our while to make a thorough examination of the mystery of this observance through spiritual investigation, especially since in the Gospel the Lord deigned to attend this same feast and, as he addressed the people who gathered there, dedicated it with his most holy words.⁹ Our ancestors too, therefore, were set free from slavery in Egypt through the blood of a lamb and were led through the desert for forty years that they come to the promised land when through the Lord's passion the world was set free from slavery to the devil and through the apostles the primitive church was gathered and was led as it were through the desert for forty years until it came to the homeland promised in heaven, because in imitation of the forty-day fast that Moses and Elijah and the Lord himself fulfilled,¹⁰ the primitive church used to lead a

³See Mt 23:35; cf. Lk 11:51; 2 Chron 24:20-21. ⁴TTH 47:192-93*; PL 91:903-4. ⁵Rom 12:12. ⁶2 Cor 6:10. ⁷TTH 47:195; PL 91:905. ⁸See Lev 23:34-43. ⁹See Jn 7:2-14. ¹⁰See Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Mt 4:2.

life of great continence, thirsting always for its eternal homeland, and having set itself completely apart from all the distractions of this world, conducted its life as though in secret in daily meditation on the divine law. In remembrance of this time, we, too, ought to dwell in tabernacles, leaving our homes, that is, having forsaken the cares and pleasures of the world, we ought to confess that we are pilgrims in this life and have our homeland in heaven and desire that we may arrive there all the more quickly; this, too, in a holy feast in the seventh month (i.e., in the light of celestial joy) when the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was commended by the prophet as sevenfold,¹¹ fills our heart. We are ordered to remain in these tabernacles for seven days because during the entire time of this life, which we accomplish in as many days, we must bear in mind that, like our ancestors, we are dwellers and pilgrims on earth in the eyes of the Lord. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.27.¹²

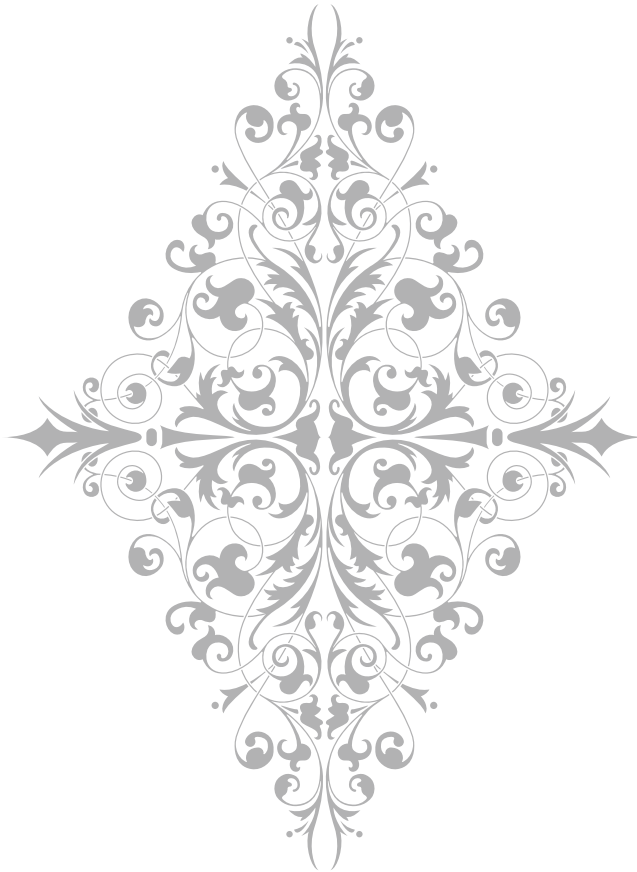
8:18 On the Eighth Day, a Solemn Assembly

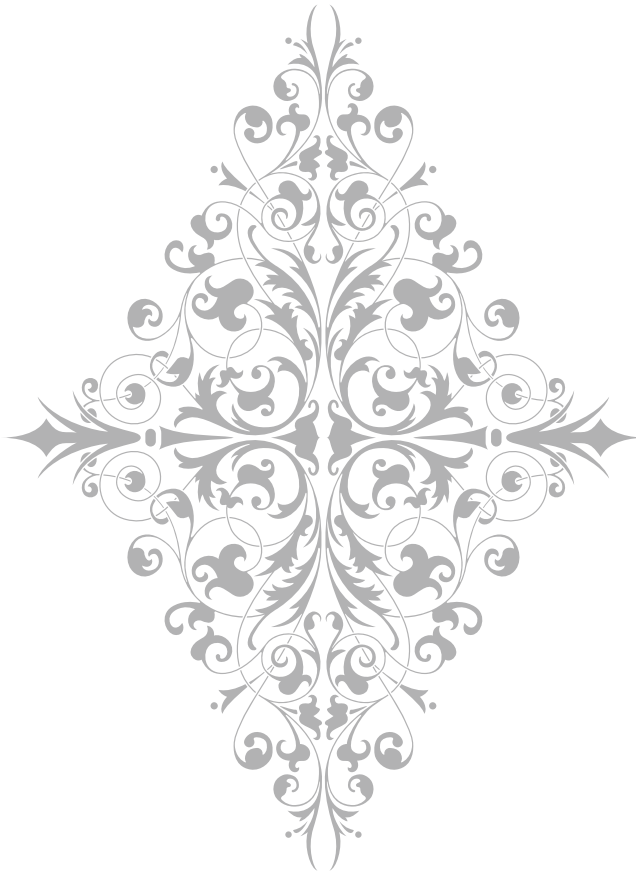
A FIGURE OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SAINTS.

BEDE: The literal sense is clear to this extent: the Feast of Tabernacles¹³ itself was customarily celebrated for seven days (i.e., from the fifteenth moon of the seventh month to the twenty-first); then, on the eighth day (i.e., the twenty-second day of the month), a second assembly of the people was held, an assembly notable for its greater festivity. For it is written in Leviticus, “From the

fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in all the crops of your land, you shall celebrate a festival of the Lord for seven days; on the first day and on the eighth there will be a sabbath, that is, a day of rest. And on the first day you shall take for yourselves the fruits of the most beautiful tree,”¹⁴ and so on. Therefore, for the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, Ezra read to the people from the Book of the Law of God, doubtless because this is our true feast of the mind in this life—that each day (i.e., through all the good works by which we are illuminated by the Lord), we should make time for reading, hearing and performing his words with a resolute heart. But this feast begins “on the fifteenth day of the month when the moon is at its fullest in the evening,”¹⁵ when all the obscurities of our mind are dispersed by the most luminous light of Christ. And the eighth day of the sabbath (i.e., of rest) follows it, namely, at the moment of our resurrection in the life to come by whose joys in our present life we are uplifted in hope but that we will then enjoy in reality when the most longed-for gathering, the whole assembly of the saints (both of angels and of human beings), having been gathered in their Creator’s sight and never to be separated, will rejoice. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.27.¹⁶

³See Mt 23:35; cf. Lk 11:51; 2 Chron 24:20-21. ⁴TTH 47:192-93*; PL 91:903-4. ⁵Rom 12:12. ⁶2 Cor 6:10. ⁷TTH 47:195; PL 91:905. ⁸See Lev 23:34-43. ⁹See Jn 7:2-14. ¹⁰See Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Mt 4:2.





THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL
MAKE A PUBLIC CONFESSION
NEHEMIAH 9:1-38

OVERVIEW: Following the examples of the people of Israel, we should search out with careful scrutiny the ways we can fulfill each duty with the reproof of our heart and body. From the public reading of the Book of the Law at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah a most beautiful custom has developed in the church, namely, that through each hour of daily psalmody a passage from Old or New Testament is recited by heart for all to hear. After the Feast of the Tabernacles (Booths) and after purging themselves with resolved purpose from the contagions of their wrongdoings, the people of Israel unite themselves to the divine covenant and confirm its terms by word and in writing (BEDE).

9:1-2 *The People Assembled in Sackcloth*

COMMITMENT TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. BEDE: One should note the devotion of the people reformed after the captivity: when the feast that had been commanded by the Lord's law had been duly completed, after just one day's intermission, they immediately came together of their own accord with fasting and with repentance, and they diligently carried out what on the days of sacred readings and rejoicing they had heard must be done by separating themselves in mind and body from the fellowship of those who were proven to be alienated from the Lord and his worship, lest through the association and examples of the wicked they should again fall into the evils of captivity and hardship that, they discerned, they had just at that time barely escaped after long revolutions of times and ages. And what are we to reflect on mystically about these matters except that, following the examples of such people, whatever we have learned in a public meeting or reading should be done, we should reflect on again with mutual discussion among ourselves, and we should search out with careful scrutiny the ways we can fulfill each duty with the reproof of our heart and body. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.28.¹

9:3 *Reading from the Book of the Law*

A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE FOR THE CHURCH.

BEDE: "And they rose up to stand, and they read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God four times a day, and four times a night they confessed and prayed to the Lord their God." For who would not be amazed that such a great people had such extraordinary concern for devotion that four times a day—that is, at the first hour of the morning, the third, the sixth and the ninth, when time was to be made for prayer and psalmody—they gave themselves over to listening to the divine law in order to renew their mind in God and come back purer and more devout for imploring his mercy; but also four times a night they would shake off their sleepiness and get up in order to confess their sins and to beg pardon. From this example, I think, a most beautiful custom has developed in the church, namely, that through each hour of daily psalmody a passage from Old or New Testament is recited by heart for all to hear, and thus strengthened by the words of the apostles or the prophets, they bend their knees to perseverance in prayer, but also at night, when people cease from the labors of doing good works, they turn willing ears to listen to divine readings. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.28.²

9:6-38 *An Agreement in Writing*

NEW UNITY IN THE DIVINE COVENANT.

BEDE: "And Ezra said, 'You yourself, O Lord, you alone made the heaven, the heaven of heavens, and all their host, the earth and all that is on it,'" and so on up until the end of his prayer or confession. It was said above that they were confessing their sins and the sins of their ancestors; here, when Ezra prays, it is shown more fully how this was done. But where he says at the end, "Because of all this, therefore, we ourselves are making a covenant and writing it down, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are signing it," and so on,

¹TTH 47:200; PL 91:908. ²TTH 47:200-201; PL 91:908.

it is shown more clearly with what gracious devotion all the various persons made a new assembly after the Feast of the Tabernacles, namely, so that after purging themselves with resolved purpose from the contagions of their wrongdoings, they might unite themselves to the divine covenant and confirm its terms by word and in writing. Thus separated from association with the

ungodly, they would more confidently complete the work they began long ago, that is, to choose citizens from among the devout who were suitable to rebuild the city. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.29.³

³TTH 47:201*; PL 91:908-9.



A NEW COVENANT IS SIGNED NEHEMIAH 10:1-39

OVERVIEW: We also, as Ezra commands, should always keep a spiritual sabbath, should always take a rest from servile work (i.e., sin), should always make time for and consider that the Lord is God. The excellent order of religious life established at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah ought to be imitated by us, too, in a spiritual manner (BEDE).

10:30-31 *Not Buying Merchandise on the Sabbath*

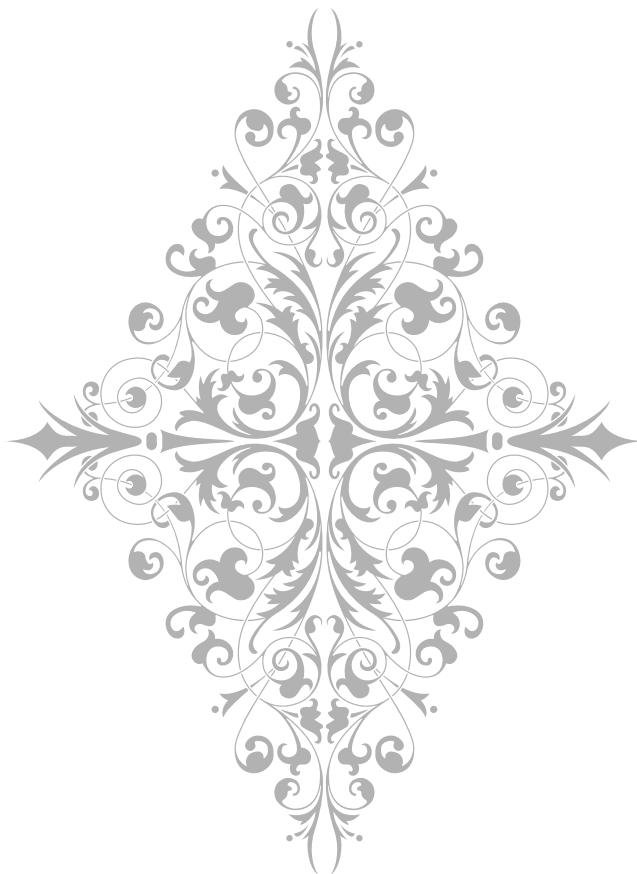
A WARNING AGAINST THE ENTICEMENTS OF SIN. BEDE: We, too, should always keep a spiritual sabbath, should always take a rest from servile work (i.e., sin), should always make time for and consider that the Lord is God, so that after such a sabbath, when we have been freed from the sins of conscience, we may come to the sabbath of future glory in heaven. But the peoples of the land seek a way to profane our sabbath by bringing in all sorts of things to sell us on the holy day because unclean spirits try hard to pollute the cleanness of our heart; and once they have received the payment of our consent, they heap on us the enticements of the vices in order to defile the day of greatest holiness (i.e., to darken the light of our devout thought or action with the sins they have sent in). But we should entirely shun merchandise of this sort with the walls of our closed-off city, that is, with the pro-

tection of a more perfected life. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.30.¹

10:32-39 *Committed to the Service of God*

A MODEL TO BE IMITATED IN A SPIRITUAL MANNER. BEDE: All these matters that are contained in this chapter are relevant to the care of the Lord's house and his ministers and services. This excellent order of religious life ought to be imitated by us, too, in a spiritual manner today, namely, that first the descendants of the exiles purified themselves from the pollution caused by the Gentiles, then they were sanctified by keeping the sabbath (which stood prominently among the first commandments of the Law)² and only then did they turn all their attention to carrying out the observance of divine worship in other respects, for we must first be cleansed from evils and only then equip ourselves for good works. However, it would take quite a long time to discuss allegorically in what order we must carry out each of these in a spiritual manner with respect to the worship of the Lord, and this should be done rather in the Book of the Law itself.³ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.30.⁴

¹TTH 47:202; PL 91:909. ²See Exod 20:8. ³The Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. ⁴TTH 47:203*; PL 91:909.



A NEW ARRANGEMENT IN
THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PEOPLE
NEHEMIAH 11:1-36

OVERVIEW: Those living in the remaining cities of Israel represent the devout lifestyle of the common people of God, whereas those settling in Jerusalem specifically signify the conduct of those who, having already overcome the struggle of the vices, draw near to the vision of heavenly peace. The fact that some of the people dwelled partly in Jerusalem and partly in cities given to them by God foreshadows the fact that the stages of progress of the Christian faithful will be many and diverse (BEDE).

11:1-19 *The Rest of the People Cast Lots*

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NEW DISTRIBUTION OF THE PEOPLE. BEDE: The arrangement was now completed. It was begun as soon as the city was made, but until the total number of the people had been counted and the feast of the seventh month had been completed, it was impossible to determine who should reside in the holy city itself and who in the other cities. Now it is consistent with the figures of the sacraments that the rulers of the people are reported to have settled in Jerusalem. For it is proper that those in charge of the holy church should surpass the common people in the merits of their life by as much as they surpass them in the greatness of their power. For the remaining cities of Israel represent the devout lifestyle of the common people of God, whereas the act of settling in Jerusalem specifically repre-

sents the conduct of those who, having already overcome the struggle of the vices, draw near to the vision of heavenly peace with an unimpeded mind according to the psalmist's saying: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion above all the tabernacles of Jacob."¹ Thus it follows that the reason that a tenth part of the people chosen by lot take their dwelling in Jerusalem but the remaining nine parts reside in their cities is doubtless that it is a mark of the perfect (namely, of those who wholly keep the precepts of the Decalogue in the love of God and neighbor) to draw near in mind to the heavenly secrets and, so to speak, to imitate the peace of the highest blessedness amid the whirlwinds of this transient life; and yet the door to eternal life also remains open to those who keep God's general commandments, according to what the Lord declares in the Gospel to the rich man who questioned him.² For such people dwell as it were in cities given to them by the Lord because by keeping the sacred law they remain constantly vigilant to defend themselves from the attacks of the ancient enemy. But those who wish to be perfect and follow the Lord by selling all their belongings and giving them as alms for the poor are those who dwell as it were "in the citadel of Jerusalem"³ and next to the temple of God and the ark of the covenant because they approach the grace of their Creator in a more sublime way. It is

¹Ps 87:2 (86:2 LXX, Vg). ²See Mt 19:17. ³1 Macc 13:49.

well said that their dwelling in the holy city was granted to them not by the foresight of human choice but by the outcome of a lot, just as during Joshua's time the ownership of the rest of the cities was given to the children of Israel by lot,⁴ no doubt because both the small things of the small man and the great things of the great man come about not through the freedom or industriousness of his own will but by the gift of the hidden judge and provider. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.31.⁵

11:20-36 *Living in Kiriath-arba*

THE STAGES OF PROGRESS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE MANY. BEDE: "Some of the children of Judah settled in Kiriath and its daughters," and so on until it says, "And they made their home in Beer-sheba as far as the Valley of Hinnom." For Beer-sheba was the boundary of Judah on the southern side, whereas the valley of the descendants of Hinnom was to the north next to Jerusalem on the east side. Finally, the cities of the descendants of Benjamin are recounted in a similar order, and the sentence that is added after they have been counted, "And of the Levites portions of Judah and Benjamin," means that the Levites according to the decree of the Law received a lot on the property of the descendants of Judah and Benjamin. Let this much be said briefly concerning the historical sense. Concerning all these matters, if it delights

you to hear also some allegorical meaning that is appropriate for our actions, Judah is interpreted as "he who confesses," Benjamin "the son of the right hand" and Levi "accepted."⁶ The reason that the tribes of all of these dwell partly in Jerusalem and partly in cities given to them by God is that the stages of progress of the faithful are many and diverse, and for them there are also many mansions in our Father's house in heaven, as we have taught above.⁷ Some are content to observe God's general commandments: not to commit murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to speak false testimony against a neighbor, to honor father and mother, and to love neighbors as themselves.⁸ Others try to lay hold of the narrower stronghold of the perfect life, yet they all, each person according to his own calling, praise and confess the grace of their Creator, and they are children of the everlasting kingdom that is in his right hand and are taken up by him to life when the moment of that separation will come in which "two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left behind. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other left behind."⁹ ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.31.¹⁰

⁴See Josh 1:6. ⁵TTH 47:203-4*; PL 91:909-10. ⁶Bede, as usual, takes these etymologies from Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72:152.15; 62.24; 68.7-8). ⁷See Bede *In Ezr.* (CCL 119A:3.755-66). ⁸See Mt 19:17-19. ⁹Mt 24:40-41. ¹⁰TTH 47:205-6; PL 91:911.



A COMPLETE LIST OF
PRIESTS AND LEVITES
NEHEMIAH 12:1-26

OVERVIEW: Jaddua, who was the last of the high priests, and lived at the time of Alexander the Great, could have been born when Nehemiah was still alive. It was not done without the understanding of a more sacred mystery that the rebuilt city of Jerusalem deserved a greater multitude of citizens, as in this aspect it foreshadowed the holy church (BEDE).

12:1-11 *The Priests Who Returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua*

FROM THE TIME OF EZRA TO THE BEGINNING OF THE KINGDOM OF THE MACEDONIANS.

BEDE: "Now these are the priests and Levites who went up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah," and so on. Here leaders of the priests are described together with their brothers (i.e., the lesser priests and Levites), those who came up from the Babylonian captivity

with Zerubbabel and Jeshua son of Jehozadak. Once these have been set forth, there are also added those who, from this time until the beginning of the kingdom of the Macedonians, succeeded each other in turn in the leadership of the priesthood. For there follows "Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Elijahhib, Elijahhib begot Joiada, Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua." In fact, Josephus writes that Jaddua, who was the last of these, was the high priest in the time of Alexander the Great, and when Jaddua with his brothers met him, Alexander received him humbly and with honor. Josephus, who spells his name Jaddus, says that he was the father of the high priest Onias,¹ who is mentioned in the book of Maccabees.² This not to say that Nehemiah, the author of this book, could have

¹Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.8.1-7. ²1 Macc 12:6-7.

lived right up to that time in the flesh but that he knew Jaddua when he was an infant, and Jaddua could have reached the rank of priesthood long after Nehemiah's death. For at the end of this book³ mention also is made of the sons of Joiada son of Elijahhib, to the effect that one of these was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, though the name of his son-in-law is not recorded. But because this Joiada is the grandfather of Jaddua, it is clear that the son-in-law who is mentioned was either Jaddua's father or parental uncle, and so he could have been born when Nehemiah was still alive. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.31-32.⁴

12:12-26 *In the Days of Joiakim*

A TYPOLOGICAL COMPARISON WITH THE HOLY CHURCH. BEDE: After the succession of the high priests has been described, a catalogue of the lesser priests and Levites who existed in their time is also added so that we may know that after a large number of citizens were gathered in Jerusalem, there was also an excellent and most noble assembly of priests and Levites sufficient to provide for the services of the temple and altar, to con-

fess and praise God, for the guardianship of the temple and city and to educate the people. And it was not done without the understanding of a more sacred mystery that the rebuilt city of Jerusalem deserved a greater multitude of citizens in every rank and order that it is ever said to have lost when the enemy was attacking and destroying it. For in the same way the holy church often receives greater gains from its losses when, by one person's lapse through carelessness into sin, many are frightened by his example and become more careful to continue steadfastly in the purity of faith; often these same people who have sinned begin, after they have done penance, to bear greater fruits of good works than they used to bear before the invasion of sin; often, when the church has been ravaged by heretics and after it recovers the light of truth through the perseverance of catholic teachers, it has given birth to more children in order that they might come to know and uphold the reason of this same truth that has been restored. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.32.⁵

³See Neh 13:28. ⁴TTH 47:206-7*; PL 91:911-12. ⁵TTH 47:207-8; PL 91:912.





THE DEDICATION
OF THE WALL OF JERUSALEM
NEHEMIAH 12:27-43

OVERVIEW: The holy city, after being built, is dedicated when, after the number of the elect is completed at the end of the world, the church in its entirety is introduced into heaven. The leaders of Judah foreshadow all those more perfect teachers who will be proven through their holy deeds to have risen above the ordinary life of the holy church. When Nehemiah walks with his choir of praisers over the Tower of the Ovens, in whose structure they once used to sweat, he symbolizes the teachers of the truth who rejoice over the sublime rewards of those whom they have taught. We pay our vows to the Lord in the midst of Jerusalem in the sight of all his people when, in the heavenly homeland, after the whole multitude of the saints has congregated, we offer those praises of thanksgiving to him (BEDE).

12:27-28 *The Levites in Their Places*

A TYPE OF THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE

WORLD. BEDE: The city had been built long before, but it was not proper that it be dedicated before the inhabitants had been gathered and ministers suitable for the temple and guardians for the gates and vestibules had been appointed. The holy city, after being built, is dedicated when, after the number of the elect is completed at the end of the world, the church in its entirety is introduced in heaven to the sight of its Creator, and whenever in this life we are uplifted with desire for that future life, it is as if we are rejoicing over the future dedication of our city. Thus this same dedication also can be interpreted in a twofold way, namely, at the present time the hope of those who desire and purify the eyes of their heart so that they can see God, but then in the reality of blessed persons in spiritual bodies who enjoy a vision of God amid hosts of angelic spirits. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.¹

¹TTH 47:209*; PL 91:913.

12:31 *The Leaders of Judah*

THE PERFECT TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH.

BEDE: The leaders of Judah (i.e., “confession” or “praise”)² are all those more perfect teachers of the holy church who at the dedication of the city go up on top of the wall because when the time of retribution appears, they will be proven to have risen above the ordinary life of the holy church by their more exalted manner of living. For they are the ones concerning whom the Lord promises this holy church through the prophet, saying, “I have posted guardians on your walls.”³ Thus it is just that those today who have been placed in the office of watchman over the holy church’s walls will at that time also be distinguished by the glory of this same reward. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.⁴

12:37 *The Company of Those Who Gave Thanks*

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE CHOIR AND THE TOWER OF THE OVENS.

BEDE: It would take a long time to discuss all the gates and towers individually. Let it suffice to have said that those who completed the gates, towers and city wall amid great toil, hardship, famine, cold and vigils by day and night while the tireless enemy fights against and assails them, afterwards, once the enemy has been beaten back and thrown into disarray, go walking together through the gates, towers and buildings of this city and rejoice with songs, hymns, harps, cymbals, lyres, and trumpets and thanksgivings together with those very teachers who were the authors of the project and the teachers of God’s law. No one can doubt that in the same sequence, this takes place in the spiritual building too when, as the hour of final retribution approaches as though it were the long-desired dedication of God’s city, the faithful obtain eternal rewards for their works when, much like Nehemiah and Ezra and the other priests and Levites as they each bring forth their workers, all the teachers of faithful peoples con-

duct their listeners whom they have acquired for the Lord into the fortifications of the heavenly homeland. Then, as well as the other fortifications of the holy city, Nehemiah also walks with his choir of praisers over the Tower of the Ovens in whose structure they once used to sweat, when teachers of the truth rejoice over the sublime rewards of those whom they have taught. For if the loaves of the furnace that are baked in secret signify the inward devotion of the mind of the faithful that is strengthened by the fire of love, which is why such loaves were also commanded by the Law to be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord,⁵ what could be more aptly figured by the ovens in which these loaves are baked than their very hearts that are accustomed always to burn with the flame of inner love and to beget deeds or words of the virtues? ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.⁶

12:43 *Sacrifices and Rejoicing*

THE ELECT SHALL OFFER SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO THE LORD.

BEDE: For on that day of perpetual light about which Zechariah said, “And there shall be one day that is known to the Lord, not day or night”⁷ (that is, a day that is remote from the usual experience of passing time), the elect sacrifice great victims to the Lord, namely, those about which the psalmist, tasting them in the hope of things to come, said, “You have broken my bonds; I will offer to you the sacrifice of praise.”⁸ He properly also reveals where he was hoping that he would offer this sacrifice when he immediately adds, “I will pay my vows to the Lord in the courtyards of the Lord’s house, in the sight of all his people, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.”⁹ For we pay our vows to the Lord in the midst of Jerusalem in the sight of all his people when, in the heavenly homeland, after the whole multitude of the

²See Jerome *Nom. Hebr.* (CCL 72:67.19). ³Is 62:6. ⁴TTH 47:211; PL 91:914. ⁵See Lev 2:4. ⁶TTH 47:213-14*; PL 91:916. ⁷Zech 14:7. ⁸Ps 116:16-17 (115:7-8 LXX, Vg). ⁹Ps 116:18-19 (115:9-10 LXX, Vg).

saints has congregated, we offer those praises of thanksgiving to him whom in this present life we sigh for and thirst for with daily desire. ON

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.¹⁰

¹⁰TTH 47:216-17; PL 91:917-18.



JUDAH REJOICES OVER THE PRIESTS
AND LEVITES WHO MINISTER
NEHEMIAH 12:44-47

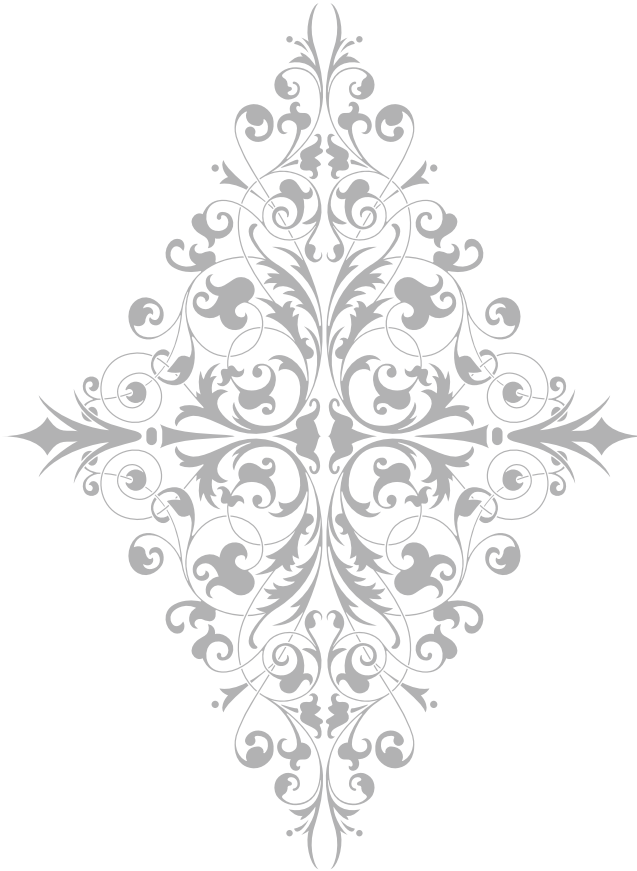
OVERVIEW: Woe to those priests and ministers who are happy to take from the people the payments due to their rank but are not eager to labor for the salvation of this same people or to offer them any holy guidance by living uprightly (BEDE).

12:44-47 People Appointed over the Chambers

A WARNING TO THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH. BEDE: The reason that the people liked the priests, Levites and other ministers of holy things to dwell in Jerusalem is that they rejoiced in the good works of those by whose God-devoted perseverance not only had the people been corrected from their sins but also the city rebuilt and dedicated with great praise and joy. The allegorical exposition of this chapter is clear to us because the Lord stated that those “who

preach the gospel should live by the gospel.”¹ But woe to those priests and ministers of holy things who are happy to take from the people the payments due to their rank but are not at all eager to labor for the salvation of this same people, not to offer them any holy guidance by living uprightly or to sing of the pleasantness of the heavenly kingdom by preaching something delightful to them; instead, so far from opening the doors of the heavenly city for them by having citizenship in heaven, they are proven rather to shut these doors by acting perversely, and so far from rejoicing in the works of these ministers when confessing or praising the Lord, the people are compelled to be all the more afflicted. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.²

¹1 Cor 9:14. ²TTH 47:218; PL 91:919.





NEHEMIAH COMPLETES
HIS RELIGIOUS REFORMS
NEHEMIAH 13:1-31

OVERVIEW: The Moabites and the Ammonites, because they were born from incest, figuratively represent heretics, whose authors corrupt the teaching of the Fathers through their faulty understanding. The zeal of Nehemiah in cleansing and purifying the temple can be compared with that of the Lord Savior, who made a whip from cords and drove all vendors and buyers outside the house of God. The spiritual meaning of the sabbath is that all the elect should labor for eternal rest but on a day that is to come should hope for that rest from the Lord. The citizens of the Holy City must be purified from all the filth of foreign pollution, which is alien to God (BEDE).

**13:1-3 Ammonites and Moabites Excluded
from the Assembly of God**

LIBERATION FROM HERESY AND NEW LIFE IN THE CHRISTIAN PEACE. BEDE: It is known that the Moabites and the Ammonites, because they were born from incest,¹ figuratively represent heretics, whose authors through their faulty understanding corrupt the teaching of the Fathers from which they themselves were instructed, just as the daughters of Lot secretly and in darkness and illegitimately use the seed of their father; and for this reason the offspring of such ones (i.e., adherents of heresies) can never have any part in the Lord's church. For those who are set straight from these heresies will no longer be the offspring of such mothers. Now they would meet the children of Israel with food and water as they are

¹See Gen 19:31-38.

coming from Egypt if they themselves, living well and dwelling in catholic peace, were to bestow the solace of God's Word on those who, recently rescued from the servitude of sins through the water of baptism as if through the waves of the sea, are panting for the freedom of the celestial homeland. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.33.²

13:4-9 *The Chambers Cleansed*

A TYPE OF THE TRUE CONSOLER AND CLEANSER. BEDE: You also, whatever infidelity and uncleanness you discover among the faithful, immediately cast it out so that after the hearts of believers (which are the Lord's store-rooms, since they are full of the riches of the virtues), have been purified, the vessels of the Lord may be brought in—that is to say, those same hearts that just before were vessels of error through sin may again become vessels of the Lord through correction, and there let the sacrifice of good works and the incense of pure prayer be found where before there was a den of thieves.³ But the vessels of Tobiah the Ammonite are also cast out from the temple storeroom, and God's vessels as well as the sacrifice and the incense are returned to that place by those who, after they have excommunicated or anathematized heretics and false catholics and expelled them from the church, substitute in their place catholic servants of Christ such as may serve him faithful deeds and prayers. Clearly, we ought to compare this zeal of Nehemiah with that of the Lord Savior, when finding vendors and buyers in the temple, he made a whip from cords and drove them all outside.⁴ Nehemiah, in this as in his other undertakings, aptly conveyed a type of true consoler and cleanser. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.35.⁵

13:15-22 *Treading Wine Presses on the Sabbath*

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE SABBATH. BEDE: We are commanded by the Law to do for

six days the things that are necessary and to rest on the seventh.⁶ The general mystery of this command is clear: namely, that in this world, which lasts for six ages,⁷ all the elect should labor for eternal rest, but on a day that is to come, as it were on the seventh, should hope for that rest itself from the Lord. But according to tropology (i.e., the moral sense), the elect even in this life keep the sabbath holy for the Lord when, having separated themselves at the appropriate time from worldly concerns, they make time for prayer and raise their minds, which have been purified, to the contemplation of heavenly things. For when we lawfully carry out those things that care for the body's demands with a sincere heart and not with desires contrary to the precept of the apostle,⁸ we are, so to speak, performing our necessary work in the six days, since we are occupied with those things that we have need of in this world. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.36.⁹

13:23-30 *Cleansed from Everything Foreign*

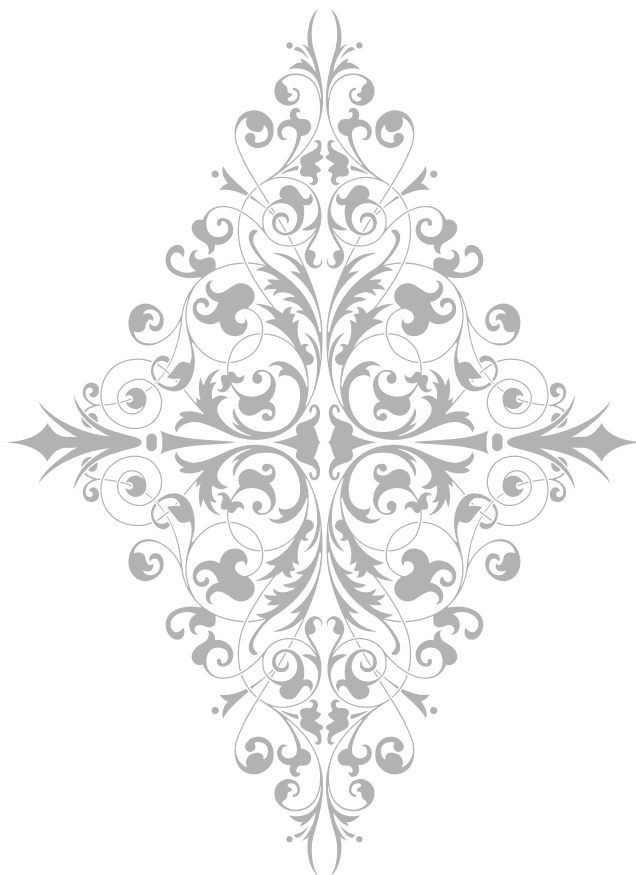
PURIFICATION FROM ALL THAT IS ALIEN TO GOD. BEDE: It is in all respects an apt and appropriate end to the work of building the holy city and the temple of the Lord that when the citizens have been purified by God from all the filth of foreign pollution, which is alien to God, the orders of the priests and the Levites should be duly preserved in their own ministry in order that the teachers of the church who have been instructed according to rule may continually exhort the people now cleansed from all sin to remain henceforth in goodness and to grow. Among other things, the people offer wood to the Lord to feed the fire of the altar when they perform works of virtues that are assuredly worthy of divine consecration. For if wood did not

²TTH 47:219-20; PL 91:919-20. ³See Jer 7:11. ⁴See Mt 21:12; Jn 2:14-15. ⁵TTH 47:222; PL 91:921. ⁶See Exod 20:9-10. ⁷For the theory of the six ages of the world, see Bede *In Ezr.* (CCL 119A:1.1201-28); *De Templ.* 66-71 (CCL 123B:445.1-544.98). ⁸See Rom 13:14. ⁹TTH 47:222-23*; PL 91:921.

sometimes symbolize something good, the prophet would not say, "Then shall all the wood of the forests rejoice in the presence of the Lord."¹⁰ Now the wood burns and is consumed in the altar of the burnt offering when in the hearts of the elect works of righteousness are

perfected in the flame of love. ON EZRA AND NEHEMIAH 3.37.¹¹

¹⁰Ps 96:12-13 (95:12-13 LXX, Vg). ¹¹TTH 47:225-26*; PL 91:924.



ESTHER



THE MAGNIFICENCE OF AHASUERUS'S REIGN ESTHER 1:1-8

OVERVIEW: Ahasuerus was called Artaxerxes and reigned after Darius for forty years. The city of Susa takes its name from the river Susis, along whose banks lies the royal palace of Cyrus. From the spiritual point of view, Ahasuerus's magnificent banquet signifies the greatness of the spiritual riches and the excellence of the living treasures given by Christ to humanity (RABANUS MAURUS).

1:1 *In the Days of Ahasuerus*

THE TIME OF AHASUERUS'S REIGN. RABANUS MAURUS: Not only the Holy Scriptures, but the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus as well contain the

story of Esther, although they differ in some of the historical details. Therefore, there is some question as to the actual identity of that Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Ethiopia over one hundred twenty-seven provinces. In fact, when Josephus mentions him, he relates that he was Cyrus son of King Xerxes who reigned over Persia after his father Darius. He also adds that this Cyrus was called Artaxerxes by the Greeks, having the nickname "Long-handed,"¹ and was in power for forty years. But I do not think that Esther lived at that time. Ezra writes that he had

¹"Longimanus" in the Latin text.

returned at that time from Babylonia, but he would never have omitted mentioning Esther if she had actually accomplished the things which are attributed to her. Therefore Eusebius, in his *Chronicles*, thinks that this Ahasuerus was called Artaxerxes and reigned after Darius for forty years, having the nickname Nothus as his father had. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER I.²

1:2 *In the Citadel of Susa*

THE CITY OF SUSA. RABANUS MAURUS: Susa is the metropolis of Persia which the historians say was founded by the brother of Memnon. It is called Susa because it lies along the river Susis where the royal palace of Cyrus was constructed with glittering white stone as well as other varieties. It is conspicuous for its golden columns and roofs and for its precious stones. It also contains the sculpture of a sky full of shining stars and other incredible things to the human mind. This is the place where it is said that the king gave a lavish banquet and displayed his great wealth to

his subjects. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER I.³

1:3-8 *Ahasuerus Displayed the Wealth of His Kingdom*

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE BANQUET. RABANUS MAURUS: Even though from the historical point of view it simply appears to show the abundance of riches and the luxury of delights of a powerful king, . . . according to the holier mystery of our most powerful king, namely, Our Lord Christ, this preparation of a most magnificent banquet signifies the greatness of the spiritual riches and the excellence of the living treasures that he distributes according to the measure of his dispensation to each of his faithful. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER I.⁴

²PL 109:636D-637A. ³PL 109:637A. ⁴PL 109:637.





QUEEN VASHTI'S OUTRAGE ESTHER 1:9-22

OVERVIEW: Rabanus Maurus provides a reading of Esther through the eyes of the later Christian teachers and the earlier prophets. Queen Vashti symbolizes the Jewish people. The seventh day of the banquet prefigures the beauty of the age in which the incarnate Lord manifested with more abundant grace all the mysteries of the Law and the Prophets. The sentence passed against Queen Vashti foreshadows the sentence passed by Christ against the arrogance of the Jews in favor of the Gentiles (RABANUS MAURUS).

1:9 Queen Vashti Gave a Banquet for the Women

QUEEN VASHTI REPRESENTS THE JEWISH PEOPLE. RABANUS MAURUS: The person of Queen Vashti provides a clear expression of the Jewish people who themselves appeared to reign as queen when they were found to prevail over all the other nations in the worship of the one God. Therefore when she gave a banquet for the women where the king used to linger, this symbolized the Jewish people who demonstrated

their observance of the law in the worship they performed in Jerusalem where the temple and the Holy of Holies used to be. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 2.¹

1:10-12 On the Seventh Day

THE FULLNESS OF TIME. RABANUS MAURUS: The seventh day of the banquet signifies the beauty of the time in which the incarnate Lord manifested with more abundant grace all the mysteries of the law and the prophets on which the pious minds of the faithful had until then pastured. And writing about that fullness to the Galatians, the apostle Paul says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father.'"²

¹PL 109:642B. ²Gal 4:4-6.

EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 2.³

1:13-22 *The King Consulted the Sages*

A FORESHADOWING OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIONS. RABANUS MAURUS: The advice which King Ahasuerus asks of his seven sages who were, according to royal custom always by his side, concerning the insolent Vashti—as well as the sentence he orders them to pass concerning her—undoubtedly signifies the sentence our Savior passes against the arrogance of the Jewish people. He passes this sentence through his teachers who are always in his presence and full of the grace of the Holy Spirit in their orthodox faith and good

works. The Jewish people themselves who incurred this judgment bear the responsibility for the punishment and condemnation they have received of being expelled from the royal bridal room,⁴ that is, from the congregation of God for which they had been ordained and elected, so that another, better bride, namely, the church of the nations, may take their place with sincere faith and full devotion. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 2.⁵

³PL 109:642C-D. ⁴Here Rabanus is seeing again Vashti as an allegorical figure of the Jewish people; see above comments on 1:9. ⁵PL 109:644B-C.





AHASUERUS MAKES ESTHER QUEEN

ESTHER 2:1-18

OVERVIEW: The seven princes of Persia subdue Ahasuerus's regret for Vashti by inducing him to love other maidens. The maidens represent the different nations gathered together through the doctrine of Christ. Esther symbolizes the holy church, while Mordecai foreshadows the teachers of the Gentiles who will convert the nations to the word of Christ. In not revealing her origin Esther represents the church of the Gentiles that did not want to disclose immediately the place of its homeland and people, because it was not able to bear the shame of its recently cleansed sin of impiety. The magnificent banquet for Esther's wedding, which was prepared for the princes and the people, represents the greatest bliss that is enjoyed by all human beings (RABANUS MAURUS).

2:1-4 Seeking a New Queen

THE PRINCIPLE FOLLOWED BY THE SEVEN SAGES. JEROME: The worldly philosophers drive

out an old passion by instilling a new one; they hammer out one nail by hammering in another. It was on this principle that the seven princes of Persia acted toward Ahasuerus, for they subdued his regret for Vashti by inducing him to love other maidens. But whereas they cured one fault by another fault and one sin by another sin, we must overcome our faults by learning to love the opposite virtues. "Depart from evil," says the psalmist, "and do good; seek peace and pursue it." LETTER 125.14.¹

THE NEW MARRIAGE WITH THE CHURCH.

RABANUS MAURUS: After Judea² had been expelled from the royal marriage, different peoples and different individuals from each nation from different parts of the world were led to the royal

¹NPNF 2 6:248. ²Rabanus identifies Vashti with Judea; see above: 1:9; 1:10-22.

congregation by the holy preachers who were ministers of the evangelical word. They were given into the custody of Hegai,³ whose name is interpreted as “celebration” or “solemnity.” He was the superintendent of the royal women. In other words, they⁴ were given to the care of the pastors and leaders of the church to whom the custody of the souls of the faithful was entrusted. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 3.⁵

2:5-9 Mordecai Had Brought Up Esther

MORDECAI SIGNIFIES THE GENTILE CHURCH AND ITS TEACHERS. RABANUS MAURUS: It is evident that Esther signifies the gentile church. Her name is interpreted as “hiding place,” and she also had the other name of Hadassah, that is, “mercy.” The church is pleasing to God in the hiding place of his heart because of the chastity of her faith and before the eyes of God it finds a greater mercy and grace than the synagogue of the Jews which with good reason the prophet Hosea calls merciless because of its impiety. Therefore the spiritual Mordecai adopted [Esther] as his own daughter because she had lost both her parents. And what is signified by Mordecai but the future teachers of the Gentiles? This is especially true of the blessed apostle Paul who also descended from the stock of Jemin, that is, he testified to be from the tribe of Benjamin. After Paul was transformed from persecutor into apostle, the gentile church was entrusted to him. And he himself, after her mother and father had died—namely, the errors and superstitions of the Gentiles—made her his own daughter when he regenerated her through the grace of baptism and the word of the gospel, making her also a daughter of the almighty Father, saved for all eternity. Therefore Paul said to them, “For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”⁶ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 3.⁷

2:10-11 Esther Did Not Reveal Her People

PRUDENCE OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIONS. RABANUS MAURUS: Indeed the church of the nations, being instructed with the precepts of the holy teachers, did not want to disclose the place of its homeland and people, because, after being purified through baptism from any corruption of sin or defilement of idolatry, it is no longer able to bear the shame of its former impiety. And the Lord taught [the church] through the prophet by saying, “Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house, because the king desired your beauty, as he is also the Lord your God.”⁸ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 3.⁹

2:15-18 The King Gave a Great Banquet

THE SPIRITUAL UNION OF CHRIST WITH THE CHURCH. RABANUS MAURUS: It is evident that the magnificent banquet for Esther’s wedding, prepared for both the princes and the people, represents the greatest bliss that is enjoyed by the entire human race, both great and small, for the spiritual union of Christ with the church. In this banquet, in fact, no carnal foods are consumed by those who are worthy to participate in it. Instead they consume a spiritual diet of wisdom and virtue. In this banquet, all the faithful receive the holy mysteries of the body and blood of the Lord as a remedy for their salvation. Here the meal of eternal life resides. And our king gives peace to all the provinces, and bestows abundant gifts in freeing those who believe in him from the weight of sins, and rewarding them with spiritual gifts. Therefore he himself says in the gospel, “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”¹⁰ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 4.¹¹

³See Esth 2:3. ⁴The royal women who symbolize the royal congregation. ⁵PL 109:646 B-C. ⁶1 Cor 4:15. ⁷PL 109:646B-C. ⁸Ps 45:10-11 (44:11-12 Vg). ⁹PL 109:646-47. ¹⁰Mt 11:28-29. ¹¹PL 109:649D-650A.

A PLOT THWARTED BY MORDECAI
ESTHER 2:19-23

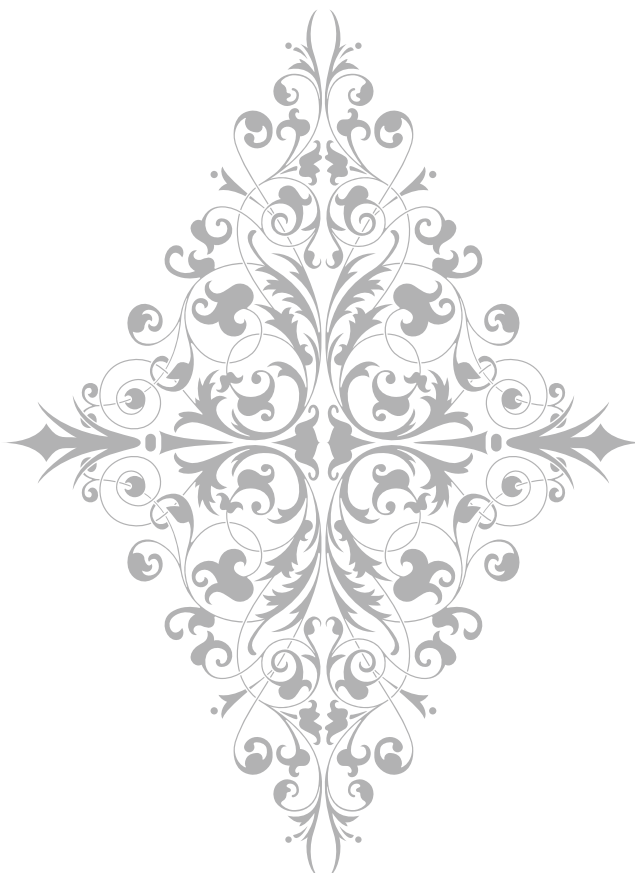
OVERVIEW: The two eunuchs who were the janitors of the royal house and conspired against Ahasuerus prefigure the Scribes and Pharisees (RABANUS MAURUS).

2:19-23 Knowledge of a Plot Came to Mordecai

A FIGURE OF THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES. RABANUS MAURUS: There is no doubt that the Scribes and Pharisees of the Jews are signified by the two eunuchs who were the caretakers of the royal house and guarded the threshold of the palace. Indeed it was said that even though they had the key to knowledge, they did not enter and did not let others enter. They wanted to rebel against the king and kill him because they were jealous of the teaching and virtue of the Savior. They constantly put him in danger and conspired with the ministers of Roman power to find a way to kill him. Therefore it is written in the gospel,

“Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’”¹ And in another passage it is read, “So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, ‘What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take our place and people.’”² And a bit further it is added, “So from that day on they planned to put him to death.”³
EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 5.⁴

¹Mt 22:16-17. ²Jn 11:47-48. ³Jn 11:53. ⁴PL 109:650D-651a.



HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST THE JEWS ESTHER 3:1-15

OVERVIEW: Haman symbolizes the arrogance of the powerful of this world, who take advantage of the benefits conceded to them by divine mercy.

Haman's actions and his plan to destroy the Jews foreshadow the different phases of Christ's passion (RABANUS MAURUS).

3:1-6 *Ahasuerus Promoted Haman*

A SYMBOL OF THE POWERFUL OF THIS WORLD. RABANUS MAURUS: Nothing else is symbolized by the arrogant Haman than the opulence of the powerful of this world who take advantage of the benefits conceded to them by divine mercy. They despise allowing their neighbors, who are given to them as companions by nature, to have as sharers of such grace. Therefore they are guilty of striving to transfer to themselves the honor and reverence that are rightly due to God alone. And so they pursue with hatred all those who do not want to act according to such behavior or comply with it. They persecute them with afflictions and endeavor to put them to death. But the heavenly judge, “who regards the lowly, and perceives the haughty from far away, who knows the deceiver and he, who is deceived, makes the pain return upon the heads of the sinful, and their iniquity descends on their head. The sinful are caught in their own traps: the righteous will be freed from their anguish, the impious will be handed over in their stead.”¹
EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 6.²

3:7-15 *A Decree Issued for the Destruction of the Jews*

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF HAMAN’S

ACTIONS. RABANUS MAURUS: The fact that the twelfth month, which is called Adar, was chosen for the destruction of Israel after casting lots is not with its own spiritual meaning. It is referring, in fact, to the grace of Christ which has been prepared for the faithful in the fullness of time when the faithful will undergo a fierce persecution in the world in the last days. And writing about this to Timothy, the teacher of the Gentiles says, “You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the outward form of godliness but denying its power.”³ And the Lord himself says in the Gospel, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.”⁴ And a bit further: “For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, and never will be.”⁵
EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 6.⁶

¹Ps 138:6 (137:6 Vg); Ps 7:15-16 (7:16-17 Vg). ²PL 109:652B-C.

³2 Tim 3:1-5. ⁴Mt 24:14. ⁵Mt 24:21. ⁶PL 109:653A-D.



ESTHER AGREES
TO ENTREAT THE KING
ESTHER 4:1-17

OVERVIEW: The persecutions that the Jews suffered because of Haman are a figure of the persecutions that the holy church will suffer because of the evil of the world (RABANUS MAURUS). Friendship must always be combined with virtue, so that we may never commit a fault in order to favor a friend (AMBROSE). When the people were about to be destroyed because of Haman's plot, salvation was obtained through the prayer that Mordecai and Esther offered with fasting (ORIGEN). Esther shows how many women, fortified by the grace of God, have accomplished heroic actions (CLEMENT OF ROME).

4:1-4 Mordecai Wore Sackcloth

A TYPE OF THE PERSECUTIONS AGAINST THE

HOLY CHURCH. RABANUS MAURUS: When Mordecai heard about the destruction of the Jews which had been sanctioned with an imperial decree, he put on clothes for mourning and proceeded to the gates of the palace with bitterness in his soul and grief in his voice. In the same way, after the teachers of the church hear of the persecution which the princes of this world want to bring against the innocent servants of Christ, they come with their prayers and alms, with vigils and prayers, with tears and heavy hearts in view of what they know must happen. They give their all before the supreme judge, so that through the dignity and prayers of the true queen, namely, the holy church—which is still a stranger in this world even as it reigns in heaven together with the Lord—they might be heard by the king of the

universe. If someone, then, should ask how it might be fitting to a most just king to inflict torments on the innocent, let him know that this is not the result of an evil decision, but of the command of a supreme will. Indeed divine wisdom—a wisdom which defeats every wickedness and leads things from beginning to end with its power, and perfectly arranges everything—does whatever it wants in heaven and on earth, in the sea, and in every abyss. The events that occur, occur fairly so that (God's) faithful servant may be given into the hands of their persecutors both for the expiation of sin, and the correction of their habits . . . as the prophet testifies, "the Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. The Lord is near to all who call on him."¹ **EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 7.**²

4:5-17 *Gather All the Jews and Fast*

FRIENDSHIP MUST BE COMBINED WITH VIRTUE. AMBROSE: Why did Queen Esther expose herself to death and not fear the wrath of a fierce king? Was it not to save her people from death, an act both seemly and virtuous? The king of Persia himself also, though fierce and proud, yet thought it seemly to show honor to the man³ who had given information about a plot that had been laid against himself,⁴ to save a free people from slavery, to snatch them from death and not to spare him who had pressed on such unseemly plans. So finally he handed over to the gallows⁵ the man who stood second to himself and whom he counted chief among all his friends, because he considered that he had dishonored him with his false counsels. For that commendable friendship that maintains virtue is to be preferred most certainly to wealth, or honors or power. It is not accustomed to be preferred to virtue indeed, but to follow after it. So it was with Jonathan, who for his affection's sake avoided not his father's displeasure or the danger to his own safety.⁶ So, too, it was with Ahimelech, who, to preserve the duties of hospitality, though he must endure death rather than betray

his friends when fleeing.⁷ **DUTIES OF THE CLERGY 3.21.123-24.**⁸

THE POWER OF PRAYER. ORIGEN: But what use is there to recall all the examples of those who, because they prayed as they ought, received great favours from God? Everyone can choose for himself many examples from the Scriptures. Anna obtained the birth of Samuel, who was reckoned with Moses,⁹ because when she was barren she prayed to the Lord with faith.¹⁰ And Ezechias, being still childless and having learned from Isaiahs that he was about to die, prayed and was included in genealogy of the Saviour.¹¹ Again, when, as a result of a single order arising from the intrigues of Aman, the people were about to be destroyed, the prayer and fasting of Mardochai and Esther were heard, and hence there arose, in addition to the feasts ordained by Moses, the festival of Mardochai for the people.¹² **ON PRAYER 13.2.**¹³

ESTHER'S HEROISM. CLEMENT OF ROME: Many women, fortified by the grace of God, have accomplished many heroic actions. The blessed Judith,¹⁴ when the city was besieged, asked permission of the elders to be allowed to go into the foreigners' camp. By exposing herself to danger she went out for love of her country and of the people who were besieged, and the Lord delivered Holophernes into the hand of a woman. To no less danger did Esther, who was perfect in faith, expose herself, in order to save the twelve tribes of Israel that were to be destroyed. For by fasting and humiliation she begged the all-seeing Master of the ages, and he, seeing the meekness of her soul, rescued the people for whose sake she had faced danger. **I CLEMENT 55.3-6.**¹⁵

¹Ps 145:17-18 (144:17-18 Vg). ²PL 109:654A-C. ³See Esth 6:10.

⁴Esth 2:19-23. ⁵See Esth 7:9-10. ⁶See 1 Sam 23:16-18. ⁷See 1 Sam 22:17. ⁸NPNF 2 10:87. ⁹See Jer 15:1; Ps 99:6 (98:6 LXX). ¹⁰1 Sam 1:9-18. ¹¹See 2 Kings 20:1-6; Is 38:1; Mt 1:9. ¹²Esth 3; 4:16-17; 9:26-28. ¹³ACW 19:48-49. ¹⁴See Jdt 8. ¹⁵FC 1:51.



ESTHER PREPARES A BANQUET
FOR AHASUERUS AND HAMAN
ESTHER 5:1-14

OVERVIEW: The Lord places more importance on beauty of soul than on that of the body, and the only woman we know of who used ornaments without blame is Esther (CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA). The fact that Esther put on all her royal robes on the third day signifies that the church of the nations, in the third time of the world, that is, after the incarnation, passion and resurrection of

Christ, clothed itself with faith, hope and charity. The one who comes to the banquet of the Lord with an evil mind and, even though he has his heart defiled by hatred, is not ashamed to enter unworthily the banquet of the Lord will be condemned to the harshest punishment. Esther's postponement of the petition is not due to laziness but must be attributed to the virtue of pa-

tience, and this signifies that the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the sinners will be especially given in the future, that is, on judgment day (RABANUS MAURUS).

5:1-4 *Esther Wore Her Royal Robes*

ESTHER USES ORNAMENTS WITHOUT BLAME.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: If the Lord places more importance on beauty of soul than on that of the body, what must he think of artificial beautification when he abhors so thoroughly every sort of lie? "We walk by faith, not by sight."¹ As a matter of fact, it is the Lord who plainly teaches by the example of Abraham that one who obeys God will make small account of even father and relations and possessions and of his entire fortune. He made Abraham an exile, and then, because of that, gave him the name "friend," because he was so little attached to the things of his own home.² Yet, Abraham was of a noble family and had possessed a large fortune. A proof of this is that he overcame the four kings who had captured Lot, with 318 servants belonging to him.³ As for women, the only one we know of who used ornaments without blame is Esther. Her action in making herself beautiful had a mystical significance, however, for, as the wife of her king, she obtained deliverance for her people by her beauty when they were being slaughtered.

CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 3.2.12.⁴

CLOTHED WITH ALL VIRTUES. RABANUS MAURUS: The fact that Esther put on all her royal robes on the third day undoubtedly signifies that the church of the nations, in the third time of the world, that is, after the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Christ, clothed herself through the sacrament of baptism and the confession of the Holy Trinity with faith, hope and charity, and the ornament of every virtue so that she might become worthy of the royal marriage while the love of (the Lord) remained constantly fervent. She stood in the inner court of the royal palace, that is, in the pious actions of this life which look

at the future reward in heaven where the king himself sits on the supreme throne and fulfills the prayers of those who implore him piously. He, who held out to that queen the golden scepter that was in his hand, showed the power of his rule, that is, the cross of his passion through which he gained authority over heaven, earth and the underworld so that "at his name every knee shall bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth."⁵ And (the church) lovingly kissed it, that is, worshiped it with all her devotion. And with regard to her petition, the king answered that he would listen to it, as it is said in the gospel as well, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you."⁶ And again: "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."⁷ Indeed the full joy of the church is provided nowhere but in the perception of the heavenly kingdom where the queen will happily reign with the king Christ forever. But she, after choosing her petition, invited him to the banquet that she had prepared. This cannot be better interpreted than as the full and perfect devotion of her faith of which the supervisor and arbiter of all things himself nourishes in her. To that magnificent repast, that is, to the communion of wholesome faith, the church invites not only her friends but also her enemies and persecutors, namely the pagans, the Jews, and the heretics so that, after abandoning the wrong path of error, they may rejoice in the one house of universal confession for the common good. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 8.⁸

5:5-6 *The Banquet That Esther Prepared*

NO UNWORTHY PERSON IS RECEIVED.

RABANUS MAURUS: Notice how the will of the inviting queen and the order of the commanding king agree. But woe to the one who comes to the banquet of the Lord with an evil mind! Even

¹2 Cor 5:7. ²See Gen 12:1. ³See Gen 14:14. ⁴FC 23:208-9. ⁵Phil 2:10. ⁶Mt 7:7. ⁷Jn 16:24. ⁸PL 109:655C-656B.

though such a person has his heart defiled by hatred and a corrupt conscience, he is not ashamed to enter unworthily the banquet of the Lord. Even though he comes after being invited, he does not bask in the joy of the guests. But when the king comes and sees that he sits there without wearing a wedding robe, he will rebuke his temerity and will order him to be bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness⁹ where he will be forced to suffer the evil of his deception which he was wickedly preparing against the innocent, as Solomon says, “The wicked will be caught in his snares.” EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 8.¹⁰

5:6-7 *The King and Haman Invited to the Banquet*

A FIGURE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT. RABANUS MAURUS: This postponement of the petition is not due to a fault of laziness but must be attributed to the virtue of patience, clearly indicating that the reward of the righteous and the punish-

ment of the sinners are reserved for the future. “Tomorrow,” in fact, must be interpreted as “the future,” as in that comforting sentence, “Do not worry about tomorrow.”¹¹ And in Genesis Jacob says to Laban, “My justice will answer for me tomorrow.”¹² And in Exodus, when the rules about the eating of the Passover lamb are given, it is added, “You shall let none of it remain until the morning.”¹³ Therefore when the day of future judgment comes and the entire human race, both righteous and sinners, is brought before the supreme Judge, then it will be revealed with which mind each person lived in this world. The righteous will be invited to reach the kingdom of the heavenly homeland through the sentence of this judge, and the sinners will be punished and expelled together with the devil into the torments of hell. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 8.¹⁴

⁹Cf. Mt 22:11-14. ¹⁰PL 109:656B. ¹¹Mt 6:34. ¹²Gen 30:33. ¹³Ex 12:10. ¹⁴PL 109:656C-D.





MORDECAI RECEIVES THE
HONOR HE DESERVES
ESTHER 6:1-13

OVERVIEW: God removes sleep from the eyes of Ahasuerus, so that he might turn over the memoirs of his faithful ministers and come on Mordecai, by whose evidence he had been delivered from a conspiracy (JEROME). Ahasuerus's thoughts were inspired by the Lord, when he was moved to examine the annals and remember the good deeds of Mordecai (CASSIAN). Mordecai's persecution under Haman foreshadows the different phases of Christ's persecution (APHRAHAT). The change in Haman's behavior is caused by the right hand of the Highest, so that he, who had been arrogant toward everybody, might become viler and weaker than anybody else (RABANUS MAURUS).

6:1-3 *The King Could Not Sleep*

GOD PREVENTS AHASUERUS FROM SLEEPING.

JEROME: Sleep was removed from the eyes of Ahasuerus, whom the Seventy call Artaxerxes, that he might turn over the memoirs of his faithful ministers and come on Mordecai, by whose evidence he was delivered from a conspiracy; and

that thus Esther might be more acceptable and the whole people of the Jews escape imminent death. There is no doubt that the mighty sovereign to whom belonged the whole East, from India to the north and to Ethiopia, after feasting sumptuously on delicacies gathered from every part of the world would have desired to sleep, and to take his rest and to gratify his free choice of sleep, had not the Lord, the provider of all good things, hindered the course of nature, so that in defiance of nature the tyrant's cruelty might be overcome. If I were to attempt to produce all the instance of the holy Scripture, I should be tedious. All that the saints say is a prayer to God; their whole prayer and supplication is a strong wrestling for the pity of God, so that we, who by our own strength and zeal cannot be saved, may be preserved by his mercy. But when we are concerned with grace and mercy, free will is in part void; in part, I say, for so much as this depends on it, that we wish and desire and give assent to the course we choose. But it depends on God whether we have the power in his strength and with his help to perform what we desire and to

bring to effect our toil and effort. *AGAINST THE PELAGIANS* 3.10.¹

6:4-11 *Let Haman Robe the Man*

THOUGHTS INSPIRED BY GOD. JOHN CASSIAN: Above all we should at least know that there are three origins of our thoughts, that is, from God, from the devil and from ourselves. They come from God when he deigns to visit us with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, lifting us up to a higher state of progress; or when we have made but little progress or through sloth have been overcome, he chastens us with most salutary compunction; or when he discloses to us heavenly mysteries or turns our purpose and will to better actions. This was the case of king Ahasuerus when, chastened by the Lord, he was prompted to ask for the books of the annals, by which he was reminded of the good deeds of Mordecai and promoted him to a position of the highest honor and at once recalled his most cruel sentence concerning the slaughter of the Jews. *CONFERENCE* 1.19.²

MORDECAI AS A FIGURE OF CHRIST THE SAVIOR. APHRAHAT: Mordecai was also persecuted as Jesus was persecuted. Mordecai was persecuted by the wicked Haman; and Jesus was persecuted by the rebellious people. Mordecai by his prayer delivered his people from the hands of Haman; and Jesus by his prayer delivered his people from the hands of Satan. Mordecai was delivered from the hands of his persecutor; and Jesus was rescued from the hands of his persecutors. Because Mordecai sat and clothed himself with sackcloth, he saved Esther and his people from the sword; and because Jesus clothed himself with a body and was illuminated, he saved the church and its children from death. Because of Mordecai, Esther was well pleasing to the king and went in and sat instead of Vashti, who did not do his will; and because of Jesus, the church is well pleasing to God and has gone in to the king, instead of the congregation that did not his will. Mordecai

admonished Esther that she should fast with her maidens, that she and her people might be delivered from the hands of Haman; and Jesus admonished the church and its children [to fast], that it and its children might be delivered from the wrath. Mordecai received the honor of Haman, his persecutor; and Jesus received great glory from his Father, instead of his persecutors who were of the foolish people. Mordecai trod on the neck of Haman, his persecutor; and as for Jesus, his enemies shall be put under his feet. Before Mordecai, Haman proclaimed, "Thus shall it be done to the man, in honoring whom the king is pleased"; as for Jesus, his preachers came out of the people who persecuted him, and they said, "This is Jesus the Son of God."³ The blood of Mordecai was required at the hand of Haman and his sons;⁴ and "the blood of Jesus," his persecutors took "on themselves and on their children."⁵ *DEMONSTRATIONS* 21.20.⁶

6:12-13 *Haman Hurried to His House*

CHANGES CAUSED BY THE POWER OF THE LORD. RABANUS MAURUS: This is the change caused by the right hand of the Highest: the one who had just boasted about his power and was arrogant towards everyone else becomes viler and weaker than anyone else. When Mary the mother of our Lord considered the greatness of this divine ordering, she sang in her song of praise, "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty."⁷ And through Isaiah it is said about this same power, "Shall not Lebanon be transformed into Carmel, and Carmel be regarded as a forest?"⁸ *EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER* 9.⁹

¹NPNF 2 6:477. ²NPNF 2 11:304*.. ³Mt 27:54. ⁴See Esth 7:10; 9:10. ⁵Mt 27:25. ⁶NPNF 2 13:400. ⁷Lk 1:51-53. ⁸Is 29:17 (Vg). ⁹PL 109:658C.



HAMAN IS CONDEMNED AND EXECUTED

ESTHER 6:14–7:10

OVERVIEW: Haman represents the spiritual enemy of the people of God, because he does not have the robe of charity and cannot be worthy of the royal banquet. He tries to entreat the queen for his salvation, but to no avail because he is not able to find the right time for that. Haman's appeal to Queen Esther is considered by King Ahasuerus to be an act of trickery (RABANUS MAURUS).

6:14–7:7 *A Foe and an Enemy*

HAMAN CANNOT BE FORGIVEN. RABANUS MAURUS: The second day of the banquet arrives

to which Haman is invited like before. However, after Esther reveals her petition, he is condemned and brought to his place of execution. The gospel mentions this as a noonday meal in one passage and as an evening meal in another. For it designates the noonday meal of the present church but also the eternal supper and final banquet where only the righteous will rejoice before their creator after sinners have been separated out. Therefore Haman, the spiritual enemy of the people of God, realized that the king was angry because he did not have the robe of charity that would make him worthy of the royal banquet. And while he was hurrying to the palace gardens, that is, while he

invited his elect to the delights of paradise, he tried to entreat the queen for his salvation. It was to no avail, however, because he was not able to find the right time for this. It is already too late to ask for the remedies of salvation when revenge and punishment are near.

In the parable of the gospel concerning the coming bridegroom, the foolish virgins also ask the wise for oil to fill their lamps, but do not receive any. And after the bridegroom has entered the wedding banquet with the wise virgins, the door is closed. And because they are left outside, they ask to be admitted. They are no longer able to incur this favor, however, because the time for mercy which they neglected to ask for previously with their good works is now past.¹

One who has no desire to hear what the Lord has commanded cannot receive from him what he asks for. And one who has neglected the time for appropriate repentance comes in vain to the door of the kingdom with his prayers. And indeed the Lord says through Solomon, "I called you and you refused. I stretched out my arms and no one heeded. And because you ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me."² EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 10.³

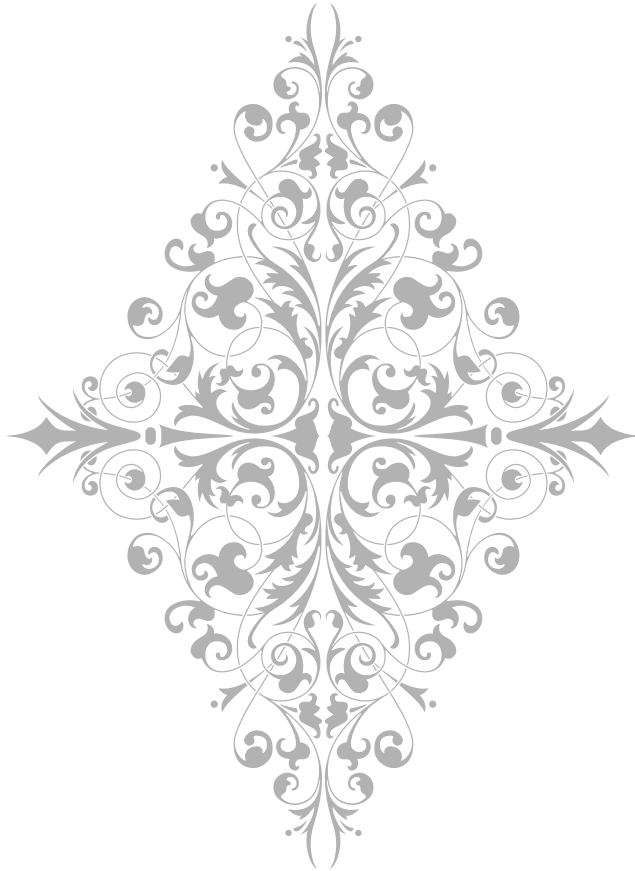
7:8 *Haman's Face Covered*

THE TIME OF RETRIBUTION. RABANUS MAURUS: Haman's appeal to Queen Esther was considered by King Ahasuerus to be an act of deceit. Indeed, when the day of judgment is about to come, the petition of the wicked is no longer a prayer but a source of irritation. This is what is written in the psalm: "When he is tried, let him be found guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin."⁴ Therefore the request is made for the oppression of those who previously oppressed the humble because the time of retribution has come. Then, after they are condemned, they are covered with the shame of their sins, as is written, "The confusion of their face will cover them,"⁵ when they are dragged to the darkness of hell to be rewarded with retribution suitable to their works. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 10.⁶

7:9-10 *Haman Hanged*

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LAW. RABANUS MAURUS: It is written in the book of Proverbs: "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling."⁷ So also Haman was forced to support the cross⁸ that he had prepared for Mordecai. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 10.⁹

¹See Mt 25:1-13. ²Prov 1:24-28. ³PL 109:659B-D. ⁴Ps 109:7 (108:7 Vg). ⁵See Ezek 7:18. ⁶PL 109:660A. ⁷Prov 26:27. ⁸The text of the Vulgate reads "wood," which is identified by Rabanus with the cross. ⁹PL 109:660 B-D.



A NEW DECREE IN
FAVOR OF THE JEWS
ESTHER 8:1-17

OVERVIEW: The fact that Ahasuerus gives Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, signifies that our Lord would have transferred to

the holy church the dignity and honor that the Jews derived from their knowledge of the Law, the Prophets and the worship of the true religion

of God. As Esther falls at the feet of the king and entreats him for the salvation of the people, so the holy church humbly implores the almighty Lord every day for the rescue of its children through faith. The new letters written and sent by Ahasuerus foreshadow the word of Christ written in the holy Gospels. The king's permission given to the Jews to defend themselves symbolizes God's invitation to all Christians to defend their souls against all their enemies. The words "Many of the peoples of the country professed to be Jews" refer to the future conversion of the Gentiles (RABANUS MAURUS).

8:1-2 Ahasuerus Gave the House of Haman to Esther

HONOR AND GLORY GIVEN TO THE CHURCH.

RABANUS MAURUS: The fact that King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, clearly signifies that the true king who is our Lord transferred to the holy church all the dignity and honor which the people previously possessed because of their knowledge of the law and the prophets and because of their holy and religious worship. This happened because they despised the advent in flesh of the Mediator between God and humanity and because they had no desire to receive his gospel. And so the church was able to possess all the spiritual riches and become the sincere guardian of all virtue. Therefore it is written in the book of Proverbs, "The sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous."¹ And the Lord says to the Jews themselves in the gospel, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom."² And again it is said through Solomon, "The good obtain favor from the Lord."³ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER II.⁴

8:3-8 Esther Fell at the Feet of Ahasuerus

THE CHURCH AT THE FEET OF THE LORD.

RABANUS MAURUS: The fact that Esther falls at

the feet of the king and entreats him for the salvation of the people plainly symbolizes the holy church that humbly implores the almighty Lord every day for the rescue of her children through the faith and the mystery of the incarnation of the only begotten Son, so that the arrogance of her enemies may be restrained by the (Lord's) grace, and the innocence of the faithful may be freed from the clutches of the (wicked). The heavenly king holds out his golden scepter to the pleading queen because he abundantly bestows the clemency of his mercy upon her. She asks that the old decree of the most wicked Haman may be changed into a new decree. Indeed this is the interest of the true queen,⁵ namely that any sect that is in error, any hostile plot which the ancient enemy prepares through his ministers for the extinction of the people of God, may be repelled and destroyed through the saving documents of the gospel. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER II.⁶

8:9-10 An Edict Written

A FORESHADOWING OF THE GOSPEL.

RABANUS MAURUS: The month of Sivan, which is the third after Nisan among the Jews, and is called Thessari among the Greeks, is named June among Latin peoples. On the twenty-third day of this month new letters were written according to Mordecai's dictation in order to invalidate the old letters of Haman. And the meaning of this event is quite clear, because the doctrine of the gospel was founded by the writers of the New Testament through our Lord Jesus Christ so that the faith of the Holy Trinity might be contained in it in its fullest form, and the supreme perfection might be shown to lie in two principles of charity that encompass the entire Decalogue. And the Scripture itself, through mounted couriers, that is the holy preachers, was provided to the whole

¹Prov 13:22. ²Mt 21:43. ³Prov 12:2. ⁴PL 109:661A-B. ⁵Here there is a plain and constant identification of Queen Esther with the Christian church. ⁶PL 109:662B-C.

world, which is signified by the one hundred twenty provinces that constituted the kingdom of Ahasuerus. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER II.⁷

8:11-14 *The Jews Allowed to Defend Themselves*

A FIGHT FOR OUR SOUL. RABANUS MAURUS: The fact that this earthly king sends his couriers to gather the Jews in each place and to assemble them in a single location so that they may fight for their lives and destroy all their enemies with their children and women and houses signifies that through his preachers our king, the absolute ruler of heaven and earth, orders the true Jews and his confessors among all the Gentiles, after they have gathered in the unity of society and peace, to fight for the salvation of their souls and to condemn their enemies both visible and invisible, namely the false Jews, who belong to the synagogue of Satan, and the unredeemed pagan and heretics, and the unclean spirits with all their impieties. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER II.⁸

8:15-16 *Mordecai Wore Royal Robes*

THE GLORY OF THE HOLY TEACHERS.

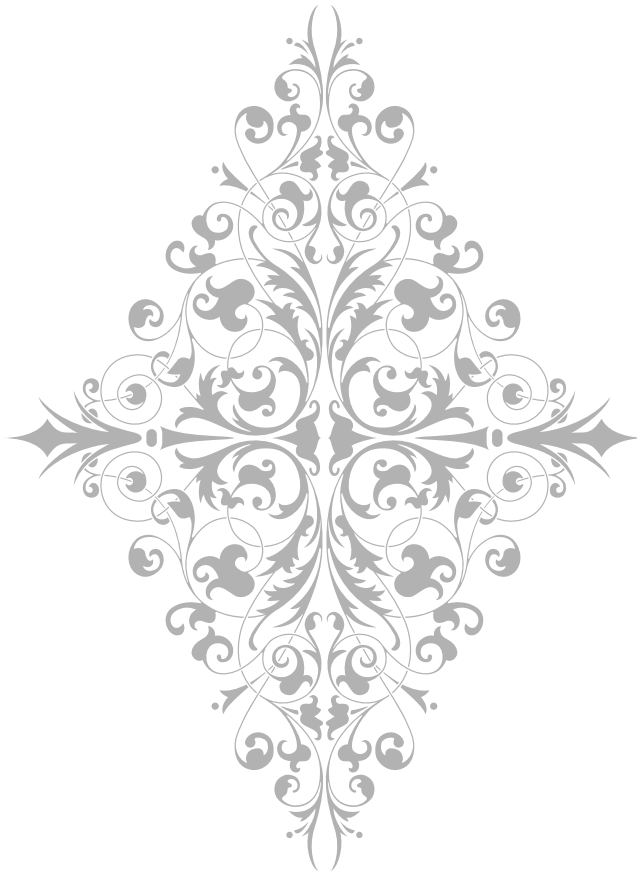
RABANUS MAURUS: The glory of the holy teachers is exalted because it is through their doctrine and exhortation that the faithful defeat the cru-

elty of their most evil enemy with the help and strength of their heavenly king. And their reward remains with them in the heavenly kingdom of eternal blessedness and perpetual splendor, which appears to be signified by the colors of blue and white and the brightness of gold. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER I2.⁹

8:17 *Many People Professed to Be Jews*

A REFERENCE TO THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES. RABANUS MAURUS: Thanks to the strength, wisdom and constancy of the holy martyrs—and to the virtue of Christ which shines among them—many among the Gentiles and the enemies of the church abandoned their idolatry and their pagan superstitions and were converted to the Christian faith because it does not hide the suffering of the saints and the triumphs of the martyrs from those it encounters. And therefore, through God's mercy, the number of the faithful increases daily and the flocks of the church are filled. The power of the Christian name causes terror among infidels and joy among believers the world over. The psalmist also wrote about this: "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him."¹⁰ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER I2.¹¹

⁷PL 109:662D–663A. ⁸PL 109:663C-D. ⁹PL 109:664C-D. ¹⁰Ps 33:8 (32:8 Vg). ¹¹PL 109:665A-B.





THE FEAST OF PURIM ESTHER 9:1-32

OVERVIEW: In a mystical sense the thirteenth day proclaims the light of faith and good works that is produced by the preaching of the gospel in the church through the faithful. The honor given to the Jews foreshadows that given to the multitude of the faithful thanks to the holiness of their teachers. Esther's zeal against her enemies reveals the zeal of a true queen, namely, that of the holy church that constantly combats its enemies and fights to defeat them (RABANUS MAURUS). The Jews call a feast, thanking and praising the Lord because he had changed the situation for them. Our feast does not relate only to time, as the one celebrated at the time of Esther, but to eternity: we do not announce the victory on our enemy as a shadow or a picture or a type but as the real thing (ATHANASIUS). Haman, who prefigures the enemies of the church, had to suffer the death that he had prepared for Mordecai, because God can always overturn human schemes. While we are on this earth, the fateful days in which God gave us victory over our enemies, will not be forgotten and will be celebrated all over the world by each single generation (RABANUS MAURUS).

9:1-2 *The Twelfth Month, the Thirteenth Day*

A FIGURE OF THE VICTORY OF THE CHURCH.

RABANUS MAURUS: The twelfth month, as we have said above, signifies the last age of the world when our Redeemer became incarnate and the preaching of the gospel spread over the entire world. In a similar way, the thirteenth day proclaims the light of faith and good works which is produced by the preaching of the gospel in the church through the faithful. Indeed, in the twelfth month on the thirteenth day when the destruction of all the Jews was being prepared and their enemies longed for their blood, the Jews, on the contrary, began to triumph and started taking revenge on their adversaries because they [represent] the assembly of the faithful where the true confession of the right faith resides who are helped by the grace of God and comforted by the shield of faith and the weapons of justice in the face of the enemies and persecutors of the name of Christ who persecute and oppress them wherever they are. The assembly of the faithful is thus able to defeat its enemies and to gain the triumph of glory over them. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 12.¹

¹PL 109:665C-D.

9:3-4 *Officials and Governors Supported the Jews*

THE HONOR OF THE TEACHERS OF FAITH.

RABANUS MAURUS: "All the officials of the provinces, the satraps and the governors, and the royal officials were supporting the Jews." Certainly the praiseworthy action of the holy teachers and the strength of their virtue have contributed great honor and respect to the multitude of the faithful. Therefore, in the Acts of the Apostles, in which we read how the first preachers of the gospel labored to teach the word of God and cared for it, it is written, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles."² EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 12.³

9:5-14 *The Jews Defend Themselves*

THE INTENTION OF A TRUE QUEEN. RABANUS MAURUS: Queen Esther's endeavor to successfully crush her enemies and root them out reveals the eagerness and zeal of a true queen, namely, of the holy church that constantly fights against her enemies and strives to defeat them completely and subdue them. And it is her voice the psalmist uses when he says, "I pursued my enemies and overtook them; and did not turn back until they were consumed. I struck them down so that they were unable to rise."⁴ And when she first kills five hundred people in Susa, and then three hundred, she shows that eternal death awaits not only those who do not want to repent of their sins, but also those who neglect to adorn the faith of the Holy Trinity with good works. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 12.⁵

9:15-23 *A Day of Feasting*

A FEAST FOR THE LORD. ATHANASIUS: In the face of all this, brothers and sisters, what should we do but give thanks to God, the king of all? Let

us start by crying out the words of the psalm, "Blessed is the Lord, who has not let them eat us up."⁶ Let us keep the feast in that way that he has established for our salvation—the holy day of Easter—so that we, along with the angels, may celebrate the heavenly feast. Remember that Israel, coming out of affliction to a state of rest, sang a song of praise for the victory as they kept the feast. And in the time of Esther the people kept a feast to the Lord because they had been delivered from a deadly decree. They called a feast, thanking and praising the Lord because he had changed the situation for them. Therefore, let us keep our promises to the Lord, confess our sins, and keep the feast to him—in behavior, moral conduct, and way of life. Let us keep it by praising the Lord, who has disciplined us so lightly but has never failed us nor forsaken us nor stopped speaking to us. FESTAL LETTERS 8.⁷

CELEBRATION OF THE VICTORY. ATHANASIUS: When the whole nation of Israel was about to perish, blessed Esther defeated the tyrant's anger simply by fasting and praying to God. By faith she changed the ruin of her people into safety.⁸ Those days are feast days for Israel; they used to call a feast when an enemy was slain or a conspiracy against the people was broken up and Israel was delivered. That is why Moses established the Feast of the Passover: because Pharaoh was killed and the people were delivered from bondage. So then, especially when tyrants were slain, temporal feasts and holidays were established in Judea. Now, however, the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain. Therefore, our feast does not relate only to time but to eternity. It is a heavenly feast! We do not announce it as a shadow or a picture or a type but as the real thing. FESTAL LETTERS 4.⁹

9:24-27 *The Plot Overturned*

²Acts 2:42-43. ³PL 109:666A. ⁴Ps 18:37-38 (17:37-38 Vg). ⁵PL 109:666D-667A. ⁶Ps 124:6 (123:6 Vg). ⁷ARL 141. ⁸See the commentary on Esth 4:16. ⁹ARL 82.

THE EVIL SCHEMES OVERTURNED. RABANUS MAURUS: Very often people's evil schemes turn out differently than they had hoped and the trap they had placed to capture others ensnares them, as the Scripture confirms, "The wicked are ensnared in their traps. And whoever digs a pit will fall into it."¹⁰ Therefore also Haman, who prefigures the enemies of the church, was obligated to suffer the death that he had prepared for Mordecai. The lot cast into the urn represents the machinations of the human mind; but the result of such machinations entirely depends on divine judgment. Therefore it is said through Solomon, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone."¹¹ EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 13.¹²

9:28-32 *The Deliverance to Be Remembered*

CELEBRATIONS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN.

RABANUS MAURUS: The fateful days in which God gives the victory over the enemies to his true confessors must never be forgotten but must be

celebrated all over the world by every generation, because the remembrance of the future rest of souls and of the resurrection of the bodies on the day of judgment must be kept alive with firm hope among all the faithful. And no church of Christ in the whole world must be deprived of this religious celebration but, always remembering this truly saving rite, must be ready at any moment and make herself worthy of receiving future blessings so that what she now celebrates in this world with faith and hope she may possess there forever in true reality and eternal blessedness. In the meantime, while we journey as pilgrims, the zeal of the teachers and the admonishment of the church must lead us to follow the example of Esther and Mordecai in doctrine and zeal so that we may be always devout in observing this rite which is to be celebrated and performed. EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 13.¹³

¹⁰Prov 26:27 (Vg). ¹¹Prov 16:33. ¹²PL 109:668D-669A. ¹³PL 109:669B-C.



THE POWER OF
AHASUERUS AND MORDECAI
ESTHER 10:1-3

OVERVIEW: The words “King Ahasuerus laid tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea” do not refer to the historical king of the Persians but to the true king and our Lord Jesus Christ (RABANUS MAURUS).

10:1-3 *Tribute on the Land and on the Islands*

A FORESHADOWING OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. RABANUS MAURUS: What does the text mean when it says that King Ahasuerus made all lands and all islands of the sea subject to his tributes? Since the historical king of the Persians and Medes did not have all lands under his rule, nor was he able to make all the islands of the sea subject to his tributes since the fame of his name could not even reach some of those islands or parts of the world, this sentence more truly applies to our king and Lord Christ whose power is in heaven, on earth, over the sea and every abyss. And he called himself “door,” because through him we have access to eternal life, according to the testimony of the psalmist, “And

the kings of the entire universe adore him. And all the kings of the earth serve him, the kings of Tharsis and the islands offer gifts, the kings of Arabia and Sheba bring gifts.”¹ Therefore not only the voices and the writings of the Jewish people alone, but also those of all the nations testify how the power of this king, his authority, dignity and preeminence advanced the true Mordecai, that is, the assembly of the holy teachers and masters of the church who lead the Christian people. Those whom he made his elect at the beginning through the gift of grace, those whom he made glorious and honorable before all the nations are the ones who look out for the good of his people and speak the words which concern the peace of his seed, according to the prediction of Isaiah: “Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices; together they sing your praises.”² EXPLANATION ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER 14.³

¹Ps 72:10 (71:10 Vg). ²Is 52:8. ³PL 109:670B-D.

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

Cain and Abel (<i>De Cain et Abel</i>)	Cetedoc 0125
Concerning Virgins (<i>De virginibus</i>)	Cetedoc 0145
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
Jacob and the Happy Life (<i>De Jacob et vita beata</i>)	Cetedoc 0130
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0160
On Elijah and Fasting (<i>De Helia et jejunio</i>)	Cetedoc 0137
On Naboth (<i>De Nabuthae</i>)	Cetedoc 0138
On Theodosius (<i>De obitu Theodosii</i>)	Cetedoc 0159
The Prayer of Job and David (<i>De interpellatione Job et David</i>)	Cetedoc 0134

Aphrahat

Demonstrations (*Demonstrationes*)

Athanasius

Defense Before Constantius (<i>Apologia ad Constantium imperatorem</i>)	TLG 2035.011
Discourses Against the Arians (<i>Orationes tres contra Arianos</i>)	TLG 2035.042
Festal Letters (<i>Epistulae festales</i>)	
Life of St. Anthony (<i>Vita sancti Antonii</i>)	TLG 2035.047

Augustine

Admonition and Grace (<i>De corruptione et gratia</i>)	Cetedoc 0353
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Against Julian (<i>Contra Julianum</i>)	Cetedoc 0351
Against Lying (<i>Contra mendacium</i>)	Cetedoc 0304
Against Two Letters of the Pelagians (<i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0346
The Care to Be Taken for the Dead (<i>De cura pro mortuis gerenda</i>)	Cetedoc 0307
Christian Instruction (<i>De doctrina Christiana</i>)	Cetedoc 0263
City of God (<i>De civitate Dei</i>)	Cetedoc 0313
Eight Questions of Dulcitus (<i>De octo Dulciti quaestionibus</i>)	Cetedoc 0291
Expositions of the Psalms (<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>)	Cetedoc 0283
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0262
The Nature and Origin of the Soul (<i>De natura et origine animae</i>)	Cetedoc 0345
On Grace and Free Will (<i>De gratia et libero arbitrio</i>)	Cetedoc 0352
Predestination of the Saints (<i>De praedestinatione sanctorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0354
Sermons (<i>Sermones</i>)	Cetedoc 0284
Augustine (Caesarius of Arles)	
Sermons (<i>Sermones Caesarii vel ex aliis fontibus hausti</i>)	Cetedoc 1008
Basil the Great	
Homilies on the Psalms (<i>Homiliae super Psalmos</i>)	TLG 2040.018
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	TLG 2040.004
On Humility (<i>De humilitate</i>)	TLG 2040.036
Bede	
Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (<i>Expositio actuum apostolorum</i>)	Cetedoc 1357
Homilies on the Gospels (<i>Homiliarum evangelii libri ii</i>)	Cetedoc 1367
On Ezra and Nehemiah (<i>In Ezram et Neemiam libri iii</i>)	Cetedoc 1349
On the Temple (<i>De templo libri ii</i>)	Cetedoc 1348
Caesarius of Arles	
Sermons (<i>Sermones</i>)	Cetedoc 1008
Cassian, John	
Conferences (<i>Collationes</i>)	Cetedoc 0512
Institutes (<i>De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis</i>)	Cetedoc 0513
Cassiodorus	
Explanation of the Psalms (<i>Expositio psalmorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0900
Clement of Alexandria	
Christ the Educator (<i>Paedagogus</i>)	TLG 0555.002
Fragments (<i>Fragmenta</i>)	TLG 0555.008
Stromateis (<i>Stromata</i>)	TLG 0555.004
Clement of Rome	
1 Clement (<i>Epistula i ad Corinthios</i>)	TLG 1271.001

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (<i>Constitutiones apostolorum</i>)	TLG 2894.001
Cyprian	
Exhortation to Martyrdom (<i>Ad Fortunatum [De exhortatione martyrii]</i>)	Cetedoc 0045
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0050
The Lord's Prayer (<i>De dominica oratione</i>)	Cetedoc 0043
The Unity of the Church (<i>De ecclesiae catholicae unitate</i>)	Cetedoc 0041
Cyril of Jerusalem	
Catechetical Lectures (<i>Catecheses ad illuminandos</i>)	TLG 2110.003
Mystagogical Lectures (<i>Mystagogiae [sp.]</i>)	TLG 2110.002
Ephrem the Syrian	
Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron (<i>In Tatiani Diatessaron</i>)	
Homily on the Solitaries	
Hymns on Paradise (<i>Hymni de paradiso</i>)	
Hymns on the Nativity (<i>Hymni de nativitate</i>)	
On the First Book of Kings (<i>In Primum Librum Regnorum</i>)	
On the Second Book of Kings (<i>In Secundum Librum Regnorum</i>)	
The Pearl: Seven Hymns on the Faith (<i>Hymni de Fidei</i>)	
Eusebius of Caesarea	
Proof of the Gospel (<i>Demonstratio evangelica</i>)	TLG 2018.005
Fulgentius of Ruspe	
Letter to Scarila (<i>Liber ad Scarilam de incarnatione filii dei et vilium animalium auctore</i>)	Cetedoc 0822
Gregory of Nazianzus	
The Last Farewell, Oration 42 (<i>Supremum vale</i>)	TLG 2022.050
On the Holy Lights, Oration 39 (<i>In sancta lumina</i>)	TLG 2022.047
On Theology, Theological Oration 2(28) (<i>De theologia</i>)	TLG 2022.008
Gregory the Great	
Dialogues (<i>Dialogorum libri iv libri duo</i>)	Cetedoc 1713
Letters (<i>Registrum epistularum</i>)	Cetedoc 1714
Morals on the Book of Job (<i>Moralia in Job</i>)	Cetedoc 1708
Hippolytus	
Fragments on Proverbs (<i>Fragmenta in Proverbia [Sp.]</i>)	TLG 2115.015
Isaac of Nineveh	
Mystical Treatise (<i>De perfectione religiosa</i>)	
Isho'dad of Merv	
Books of Sessions 1 Kings	

Books of Sessions 2 Kings

Jerome

Against Jovinianus (<i>Adversus Jovinianum</i>)	Cetedoc 0610
Against the Pelagians (<i>Dialogi contra Pelagianos libri iii</i>)	Cetedoc 0615
Homilies on the Psalms (<i>Tractatus lix in psalmos</i>)	Cetedoc 0592
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	Cetedoc 0620

John Chrysostom

Against the Anomoeans (<i>Contra Anomoeos</i>)	
1-5 (<i>Contra Anomoeos homiliae 1-5=De incomprehensibili dei natura</i>)	TLG 2062.012
Discourses Against Judaizing Christians (<i>Adversus Iudaeos [orationes 1-8]</i>)	TLG 2062.021
Homilies on Genesis (<i>In Genesim [homiliae 1-67]</i>)	TLG 2062.112
Homilies on St. Ignatius and St. Babylas (<i>In sanctum Ignatium martyrem</i>)	TLG 2062.044
Homilies on the Gospel of John (<i>In Joannem [homiliae 1-88]</i>)	TLG 2062.153
Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew (<i>In Matthaicum [homiliae 1-90]</i>)	TLG 2062.152
Letter to the Fallen Theodore (<i>Ad Theodorum lapsum [lib. 1]</i>)	TLG 2062.002
On the Epistle to the Hebrews (<i>In epistulam ad Hebraeos</i>)	TLG 2062.168

John of Damascus

On Divine Images (<i>Orationes de imaginibus tres</i>)	TLG 2934.005
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John the Monk

Canons for the Month of June (<i>Analecta Hymnica Graeca, Canones Junii</i>)	TLG 4354.010
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Justin Martyr

Dialogue with Trypho (<i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>)	TLG 0645.003
First Apology (<i>Apologia</i>)	TLG 0645.001

Lactantius

Epitome of the Divine Institutes (<i>Epitome divinarum institutionum</i>)	Cetedoc 0086
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Maximus of Turin

Sermons (<i>Collectio sermonum antiqua</i>)	Cetedoc 0219a
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Methodius

Symposium or Banquet of the Ten Virgins (<i>Symposium sive Convivium decem virginum</i>)	TLG 2959.001
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Novatian

On the Trinity (<i>De Trinitate</i>)	Cetedoc 0071
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Origen

Against Celsus (<i>Contra Celsum</i>)	TLG 2042.001
Commentary on the Gospel of John	

(<i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i> [lib. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13])	TLG 2042.005
(<i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i> [lib. 19, 20, 28, 32])	TLG 2042.079
Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew	
(<i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i> [lib. 10-11])	TLG 2042.029
(<i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i> [lib. 12-17])	TLG 2042.030
Commentary on the Song of Songs (<i>Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum</i>)	Cetedoc 0198
	TLG 2042.026
Fragments on Jeremiah (<i>Fragmenta in Jeremiam</i> [in catenis])	TLG 2042.010
Homilies on Genesis (<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>)	TLG 2042.022
Homilies on Jeremiah (<i>In Jeremiam</i> [homiliae 1-11])	TLG 2042.009
(<i>In Jeremiam</i> [homiliae 12-20])	TLG 2042.021
Homilies on Leviticus (<i>Homiliae in Leviticum</i>)	TLG 2042.024
Homilies on the Gospel of Luke (<i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>)	TLG 2042.016
Letter to Julius Africanus (<i>Epistula ad Africanum</i>)	TLG 2042.045
On First Principles (<i>De principiis</i>)	TLG 2042.002
(<i>Fragmenta de principiis</i>)	TLG 2042.003
On Prayer (<i>De oratione</i>)	TLG 2042.008
Paulinus of Nola	
Poems (<i>Carmina</i>)	Cetedoc 0203
Peter Chrysologus	
Sermons (<i>Collectio sermonum</i>)	Cetedoc 0227+
Procopius of Gaza	
Commentary on 1 Chronicles (<i>In Librum Tertium Regum</i>)	
Prudentius	
The Spiritual Combat (<i>Psychomachia</i>)	Cetedoc 1441
Pseudo-Dionysius	
Letters (<i>Epistulae</i>)	TLG 2798.006-015
Pseudo-Tertullian	
Five Books in Reply to Marcion (<i>Carmen adversus Marcionem</i>)	Cetedoc 0036
Rabanus Maurus	
Commentary on the Third Book of Kings (<i>Commentaria in Libros IV Regum</i>)	
Explanation on the Book of Esther (<i>Expositio in Librum Esther</i>)	
Sahdona	
Book of Perfection	
Salvian the Presbyter	
The Governance of God (<i>De gubernatione Dei</i>)	Cetedoc 0485

TertullianAn Answer to the Jews (*Adversus Judaeos*)

Cetedoc 0033

On Fasting (*De jejunio adversus psychicos*)

Cetedoc 0029

Theodoret of CyrCommentary on the Song of Songs (*Explanatio in Canticum canticorum*)

TLG 4089.025

Questions on the Books of Kings and Chronicles

(De quaestionibus ambiguis in Libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon)

TLG 4089.023

Walafrius StraboGlossa Ordinaria, Third Book of Kings (*Glossa Ordinaria-Liber Regnum Tertius et Quartus*)

**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 An-

tony the Great and member of a colony of anchorite 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 Messalians.

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*.

Apringius of Beja (mid sixth century). Iberian bishop and exegete. Heavily influenced by Tyconius, 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 *Confliktus 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). Antimono-physite 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 catechumens.

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 monastic 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. Frumen-

tius 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.

Eznik 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 monothelism.

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 "Doctors 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 century). 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 Christian 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 to 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 of 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 intimately involved 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 uniqueness 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 exten-

sive 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 Hadrumetum 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 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 master-

pieces 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 convened 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 eccle-

siastical 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.

Syncretica (fifth century). Egyptian nun known from collected sayings and a fifth-century *Life*. Syncretica 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 Christian 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 strengthening 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 Eutychemet* 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 2nd century				Clement of Rome, fl. c. 92-101 (Greek)	
				<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> , c. 140 (Greek)	
				Justin Martyr (Ephesus, Rome), c. 100/110-165 (Greek)	
				Tatian (Rome/Syria), 2nd cent. (Greek)	
				<i>Muratorian Fragment</i> , 2nd cent. (Latin [orig. Greek])	
				Valentinus the Gnostic (Rome), fl. c. 140 (Greek)	
				Hegesippus, 2nd cent. (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)
3rd century				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)
					Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian, 256 (Latin)
				<i>Treatise on Rebaptism</i> , 3rd cent. (Latin)	
				Victorinus of Petovium, 230-304 (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
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>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i> , c. 160 (Greek)	Ignatius of Antioch, c. 35-107/112 (Greek) <i>Didache</i> (Egypt?), c. 100 (Greek)			
<i>Letter of Barnabas</i> (Syria?), c. 130 (Greek)	Aristides, 2nd cent. (Greek)	<i>Odes of Solomon</i> (perhaps also Palestine or Egypt), early 2nd cent. (Syriac/Aramaic)			
<i>Gospel of Truth</i> (Egypt?), 2nd cent. (Coptic/Greek)	Papias of Hierapolis, c. early 2nd cent. (Greek)				<i>Second Letter of Clement</i> (spurious; Corinth, Rome, Alexandria?) c. 150, (Greek)
Valentinian Exposition, 2nd cent. (Greek)					
Theodotus the Valentinian, 2nd cent. (Greek)	Athenagoras (Greece), fl. 176-180 (Greek)				
<i>Epistula Apostolorum</i> , mid 2nd cent. (Greek [Coptic/Ethiopic])	Melito of Sardis, d. c. 190 (Greek)			Julius Africanus, c. 160-c. 240 (Greek)	
	<i>Acts of Paul and Thecla</i> , 2nd cent. (Greek)	<i>Gospel of Peter</i> , late 2nd cent. (Greek)			
	<i>Acts of Peter</i> , c. 190 (Greek)	Theophilus of Antioch, c. late 2nd cent. (Greek)			
Clement of Alexandria, c. 150-215 (Greek)	<i>Montanist Oracles</i> , late 2nd cent. (Greek)				
Sabellius (Egypt), 2nd-3rd cent. (Greek)		<i>Gospel of Philip</i> (Syria, Egypt?) 2nd or 3rd cent. (Coptic/Greek)			
<i>Letter to Diognetus</i> , 3rd cent. (Greek)		Bardesanes, 154-222 (Syriac)			
		<i>Acts of Thomas</i> , c. 225 (Syriac)	Mani (Manichaeans), c. 216-276 (Persian/Syriac)		Pseudo-Clementines 3rd cent. (Greek)
Origen (Alexandria, Caesarea of Palestine), 185-254 (Greek)	Firmilian of Caesarea, fl. c. 230-c. 268 (Greek)	<i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i> , early 3rd cent. (Syriac)			
	Gregory Thaumaturgus (Neo-caesarea), fl. c. 248-264 (Greek)				
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
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)	
				Damasus of Rome, c. 304-384 (Latin)	Optatus of Milevis, 4th cent. (Latin)
				Ambrosiaster (Italy?), fl. c. 366-384 (Latin)	
				Filastrius of Brescia, fl. 380 (Latin)	
			Pacian of Barcelona, 4th cent. (Latin)	Faustinus (Rome), fl. 380 (Latin)	
			Prudentius, c. 348-c. 410 (Latin)	Faustus of Riez, fl. c. 380 (Latin)	Isaiah of Scete, late 4th cent. (Greek)
	5th century		Egeria, 4th cent. (Latin)		Gaudentius of Brescia, fl. 395 (Latin)
		Phoebadius of Agen, d. c. 395 (Latin)		Ambrose of Milan, c. 333-397; fl. 374-397 (Latin)	Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 (Latin)
		<i>Athanasian Creed</i> , c. 4th or 5th cent. (Latin)		Paulinus of Milan, late 4th-early 5th cent. (Latin)	Synesios of Cyrene (Alexandria, Cyrene), c. 370-c. 413 (Greek)
Fastidius (Britain), c. 4th-5th cent. (Latin)		<i>Joseph's Bible Notes</i> , 4th or 5th cent. (Latin)		Rufinus (Aquilaia, Rome), c. 345-411 (Latin)	Possidius, late 4th-5th cent. (Latin)
		Sulpicius Severus (Bordeaux), c. 360-c. 420/425 (Latin)		Chromatius (Aquilaia), fl. 400 (Latin)	
		John Cassian (Palestine, Egypt, Constantinople, Rome, Marseilles), 360-432 (Latin)		Aponius, fl. 405-415 (Latin)	Luculentius, 5th cent. (Latin)
Sedulius, Coelius, fl. 425-450 (Latin)		Vincent of Lérins, d. 435 (Latin)		Pelagius (Britain, Rome), c. 354-c. 420 (Greek)	Quodvultdeus (Carthage), fl. 430 (Latin)
		Valerian of Cimiez, fl. c. 422-449 (Latin)		Maximus of Turin, d. 408/423 (Latin)	
		Eucherius of Lyons, fl. 420-449 (Latin)		Paulinus of Nola, 355-431 (Latin)	
		Hilary of Arles, c. 401-449 (Latin)		Peter Chrysologus (Ravenna), c. 380-450 (Latin)	Dracontius, 5th cent. (Latin)
			Julian of Eclanum, 386-454 (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
	Constantine, d. 337 (Greek)		Hegemonius, fl. early 4th cent. (Greek)		
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)	Commodian, 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. 4th cent. (Greek)			
Pachomius, c. 292-347 (Coptic/Greek?)	Macrina the Younger, c. 327-379 (Greek)	First Creed of the Council of Antioch, 341 (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)
Abba Pior, d. 373 (Coptic/Greek)	Gregory of Nyssa, c. 335-394 (Greek)	Diodore of Tarsus, d. c. 394 (Greek)		Acacius of Caesarea (Palestine), d. c. 365 (Greek)	
Horsiesi, c. 305-390 (Coptic/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)	
Macarius of Egypt, c. 300-c. 390 (Greek)	Evagrius of Pontus, 345-399 (Greek)	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> , c. 375-400 (Greek)		John (II) of Jerusalem, late 4th-early 5th cent. (Greek)	
Abba John, date unknown (Coptic/Greek)		<i>Didascalia</i> , 4th cent. (Syriac)			
Didymus (the Blind) of Alexandria, 313-398 (Greek)	Eunomius of Cyzicus, fl. 360-394 (Greek)	Theodore of Mopsuestia, c. 350-428 (Greek)			
Tyconius, c. 330-390 (Latin)	Pseudo-Macarius (Mesopotamia?), late 4th cent. (Greek)	Acacius of Beroea, c. 340-c. 436 (Greek)		Diodore of Tarsus, d. c. 394 (Greek)	
Joseph of Thebes, 4th cent. (Coptic/Greek)	Nicetas of Remesiana, d. c. 414 (Latin)	Asterius the Homilist (Antioch), late 4th- early 5th (Greek)		Jerome (Rome, Antioch, Bethlehem), c. 347-420 (Latin)	
Ammonas, 4th cent. (Syriac)		<i>Book of Steps</i> , c. 400 (Syriac)			
Abba Moses, c. 332-407 (Coptic/Greek)	Socrates (Scholasticus), c. 380-450 (Greek)	Severian of Gabala, fl. c. 400 (Greek)			
Theophilus of Alexandria, d. 412 (Greek)	Theodotus of Ancyra, d. before 446 (Greek)				
Palladius of Helenopolis (Egypt), c. 365-425 (Greek)	Proclus of Constantinople, c. 390-446 (Greek)		Eznik of Kolb, fl. 430-450 (Armenian)	Philip the Priest (d. 455/56)	
Cyril of Alexandria, 375-444 (Greek)	Nestorius (Constantinople), c. 381-c. 451 (Greek)			Hesychius of Jerusalem, fl. 412-450 (Greek)	
Isidore of Pelusium, d. c. 440 (Greek)	Basil of Seleucia, fl. 440-468 (Greek)	Nilus of Ancyra, d. c. 430 (Greek)		Euthymius (Palestine), 377-473 (Greek)	
Hyperichius, c. 5th cent. (Coptic/Greek)	Diadochus of Photice (Macedonia), 400-474 (Greek)	John of Antioch, d. 441/2 (Greek)			

Timeline of Writers of the Patristic Period

Location	British Isles	Gaul	Spain, Portugal	Rome* and Italy	Carthage and Northern Africa
Period		Eusebius of Gaul, 5th cent. (Latin)			Victor of Cartenna, 5th cent. (Latin)
	5th century (cont.)		Prosper of Aquitaine, c. 390-c. 463 (Latin)		Leo the Great (Rome), regn. 440-461 (Latin)
		Salvian the Presbyter of Marseilles, c. 400-c. 480 (Latin)		Arnobius the Younger (Rome), fl. c. 450 (Latin)	
		Gennadius of Marseilles, d. after 496 (Latin)		Ennodius (Arles, Milan, Pavia) c. 473-521 (Latin)	Victor of Vita, fl. 480/481-484 (Latin)
		Julian Pomerius, late 5th-early 6th cent. (Latin)		Epiphanius the Latin, late 5th-early 6th cent. (Latin)	Vigilius of Thapsus, fl. c. 484 (Latin)
6th century			Caesarius of Arles, c. 470-543 (Latin)	Paschasius of Dumium (Portugal), c. 515-c. 580 (Latin)	Eugippius, c. 460- c. 533 (Latin)
	Gildas, 6th cent. (Latin)		Apringius of Beja, mid-6th cent. (Latin)	Benedict of Nursia, c. 480-547 (Latin)	Fastidiosus, late 5th-early 6th cent. (Latin)
			Leander of Seville, c. 545-c. 600 (Latin)	Cassiodorus (Calabria), c. 485-c. 540 (Latin)	Verecundus, d. 552 (Latin)
		Gregory of Tours, c. 538-594 (Latin)	Martin of Braga, fl. 568-579 (Latin)	Arator, c. 490-550 (Latin)	Primasius, fl. 550-560 (Latin)
	7th century		Flavian of Chalon-sur-Saône, fl. 580-600 (Latin)	Isidore of Seville, c. 560-636 (Latin)	Gregory of Agrigentium, d. 592 (Greek)
			Braulio of Saragossa, c. 585-651 (Latin)	Gregory the Great (Rome), c. 540-604 (Latin)	
			Ildefonsus of Toledo, mid 7th cent. (Latin)	Paterius, 6th/7th cent. (Latin)	
		Venantius Fortunatus (Gaul, Italy), c. 530-c. 610 (Latin)	Fructuosus of Braga, d. c. 665 (Latin)		
8th-12th century		Adamnan, c. 624-704 (Latin)			
	Bede the Venerable, c. 672/673-735 (Latin)	Rabanus Maurus (Frankish), c. 780-856 (Latin)			
	<i>Riddles in the Apocalypse</i> , 8th cent. (Latin)	Walafridius Strabo (Frankish), 808-849 (Latin)			
	Dhuoda, 9th cent. (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
Syncretica, 5th cent. (Coptic/Greek)	Callinicus, mid 5th cent. (Greek)				
Poemen, 5th cent. (Greek)	Gennadius of Constantinople, d. 471 (Greek)	Theodoret of Cyr, c. 393-466 (Greek)		Gerontius of Petra c. 395-c. 480 (Syriac)	
Besa the Copt, 5th cent. (Sahidic)		Pseudo-Victor of Antioch, 5th cent. (Greek)			
Shenoute, c. 350-466 (Coptic)		John of Apamea, 5th cent. (Syriac)			
Ammonius of Alexandria, late 5th-early 6th cent. (Greek)				Barsanuphius and John, 5th/6th cent. (Greek)	
Olympiodorus, early 6th cent. (Greek)	Andrew of Caesarea (Cappadocia), early 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)
	Oecumenius (Isauria), 6th cent. (Greek)	Severus of Antioch, c. 465-538 (Greek)	Babai, early 6th cent. (Syriac)	Dorotheus of Gaza, fl. 525-540 (Greek)	
	Romanus Melodus, fl. c. 536-556 (Greek)	Mark the Hermit (Tarsus), c. 6th cent. (4th cent.?) (Greek)		Cyril of Scythopolis, b. c. 525; d. after 557 (Greek)	
	Justinian the Emperor, 482-565 (Greek)	Anastasius I of Antioch, d. 598/599 (Latin)	Abraham of Nathpar, fl. 6th-7th cent. (Syriac)		(Pseudo-) Constantius, before 7th cent.? (Greek)
	Maximus the Confessor (Constantinople), c. 580-662 (Greek)		Babai the Great, c. 550-628 (Syriac)		
Anastasius of Sinai (Egypt, Syria), d. c. 700 (Greek)	Germanus of Constantinople, c. 640-c. 733 (Greek)	Sahdona/Martyrius, fl. 635-640 (Syriac)	Isaac of Nineveh, d. c. 700 (Syriac)	Sophronius of Jerusalem, c. 550-638 (Greek)	Andreas, c. 7th cent. (Greek)
	Andrew of Crete, c. 660-740 (Greek)	John of Damascus (John the Monk), c. 650-750 (Greek)		Cosmas Melodus, c. 675-751 (Greek)	
Stephen of Hnes, 7th cent. (Coptic)	John of Carpathus, 7th-8th cent. (Greek)		John the Elder of Qardu (north Iraq), 8th cent. (Syriac)		
	Tarasius of Constantinople, d. 806 (Greek)				
	Theophanes (Nicaea), 775-845 (Greek)	Theodore bar Koni, d. 845 (Syriac)			
	Cassia (Constantinople), c. 805-c. 848/867 (Greek)		Isho'dad of Merv, d. after 852 (Syriac)		
	Photius (Constantinople), c. 820-891 (Greek)				
	Arethas of Caesarea (Constantinople/Caesarea), c. 860-940 (Greek)				
	Gregory of Narek, 950-1003 (Armenian)				
	Symeon the New Theologian (Constantinople), 949-1022 (Greek)				
	Theophylact of Ohrid (Bulgaria), 1050-1126 (Greek)				

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