

SAINT JEROME

COMMENTARY ON EC-
CLESIASTES

Commentarius in Ecclesiasten

SABBATISMUS

Saint Jerome (347–420)

Commentarius in Ecclesiasten · Commentary on Ecclesiastes

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ST. EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS OF STRIDON,
PRESBYTER, COMMENTARY ON ECCLESIASTES,
TO PAULA AND EUSTOCHIUM.*PREFACE.*

I remember that nearly five years ago, while I was still in Rome and reading Ecclesiastes to Saint Blesilla, in order to provoke her to contempt for this world and to make her think that everything she saw in the world was as nothing; I was asked by her to discuss all the obscure points in the manner of a short Commentary, so that she might understand what she was reading without me. Therefore, since she was taken away by a sudden death at the start of our work, and we did not deserve, O Paula and Eustochium, to have such a companion in our life, and having been struck then by such a wound I fell silent: now established in Bethlehem, evidently in a more venerable city, I return what I owe both to her memory and to you. Briefly advising this, that I have followed the authority of no one; but translating from the Hebrew, I have more closely adapted myself to the custom of the Septuagint Translators: at least in those things which did not differ much from the Hebrew. At times I have also remembered Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, so as not to deter the reader's zeal by excessive novelty, nor again, against my conscience, to follow the streams of opinions while omitting the fountain of truth.

COMMENTARY.

(Chapter One.) The words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, King of Jerusalem. The Scriptures most clearly teach that Solomon was called by three names: the Peaceful (*Pacificus*), that is, SOLOMON; and JEDIDIAH (*IDIDIA*), that is, the Beloved of the Lord; and what is now called KOHELETH (*COELETH*), that is, Ecclesiastes. Now, he is called Ecclesiastes in the Greek language who gathers a group, that is, a Church (*Ecclesia*); whom we can call a Preacher (*Concionator*), because he speaks to the people, and his speech is directed not specifically to one, but generally to all. Furthermore, he was called Peaceful and Beloved of the Lord because there was peace in his kingdom and the Lord loved him. For even the forty-fourth and seventy-first psalms are marked beforehand with the title of the Beloved and the Peaceful. Although these, pertaining to the prophecy of Christ and the Church, exceed the happiness and strength of Solomon; nevertheless, according to history, they were written about Solomon.

He, therefore, according to the number of his names, published three volumes: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. In Proverbs, teaching the little one and instructing him as if by maxims about duties. Whence his speech is frequently repeated to his son. In Ecclesiastes, however, instructing a man of mature age, lest he think anything in worldly matters to be perpetual, but that all things we see are fleeting and brief. Finally, he joins the man now perfected and prepared, having trampled upon the world,

to the embraces of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs. For unless we first leave behind vices and, renouncing the pomps of the world, prepare ourselves unencumbered for the coming of Christ, we cannot say: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (Cant. I, 1). Not far from this order of doctrines do the followers of the philosophers also instruct their own: so that first they teach ethics, then they interpret physics; and him whom they perceive to have made progress in these, they lead as far as logic.

And this also must be observed more diligently, that through the three books of the author, the title is different. For in Proverbs it is noted: "The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel." But in Ecclesiastes: "The words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, king of Jerusalem." Indeed, "Israel" is superfluous here, which is wrongly found in the Greek and Latin codices. But in the Song of Songs, neither "son of David" nor "king of Israel" or "Jerusalem" is prescribed: but only "The Song of Songs of Solomon." For just as Proverbs and the rudimentary instruction pertain to the twelve tribes and to all Israel: and just as contempt for the world is appropriate only for the metropolitans, that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem: so the Song of Songs specifically concerns those who desire only heavenly things. For the beginners and those making progress, both paternal dignity and the authority of their own kingdom are rightfully claimed. But for the perfect, where the disciple is not instructed by fear but by love, the proper

name suffices; the master is an equal, and he does not know himself to be a king. These things for now according to the letter.

Furthermore, according to the spiritual understanding: our Peaceful and Beloved of God the Father, and Ecclesiastes, is Christ; who, having destroyed the middle wall of partition and having abolished the enmities in his flesh, made both one, saying: "Peace I give to you, my peace I leave to you" (John XIV, 27). Of whom the Father says to the disciples: "This is," he said (Matth. III, 17), "my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear him," who is the head of the whole Church: speaking by no means to the synagogue of the Jews, but to the multitude of the nations, the king of Jerusalem built with living stones: not that one of which he himself says: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the Prophets" (Matth. XXIII, 37); and: "Behold, your house is left to you desolate" (Ibid., 38): but that one by which he forbids to swear, because it is the city of the great king. This is the son of David, to whom the blind in the Gospel cried out: "Have mercy on us, son of David" (Matth. IX, 27); and the whole crowd resounded with a harmonious voice: "Hosanna to the son of David" (Matth. XXI, 9). Finally, the word of God does not come to him as it did to Jeremiah and to the other Prophets: but because he is rich and a king and powerful (for he himself is the Word and wisdom and the other virtues), he speaks words to the men of the Church: he suggests words to the Apostles, of whom it is sung in the Psalm: "Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and

their words to the ends of the world" (Psal. XVIII, 5). Wrongly, therefore, do some think that we are provoked by this book to pleasure and luxury: when, on the contrary, all things that we see in the world are taught to be vain: AND THAT WE OUGHT NOT studiously to desire those things which perish while they are held.

Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes: Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.

If all things which God made are very good, how is everything vanity, and not only vanity but even vanity of vanities? So that, just as in the Song of Songs among all songs an excellent song is shown: so in the vanity of vanities the magnitude of vanity is shown. Something of this sort is also written in the Psalm: "Nevertheless, every living man is altogether vanity" (Psal. XXXVIII, 6). If a living man is vanity, therefore a dead man is vanity of vanities. We read in Exodus that the face of Moses was glorified to such an extent that the children of Israel could not look at it. Which glory the Apostle Paul, in comparison with the Evangelical glory, says is not glory: "For neither was that which was glorified," he says, "glorified in this part, by reason of the glory that excels" (II Cor. III, 10). We also can in this manner say that the heaven, the earth, the seas, and all things contained in this circle are indeed good in themselves, but compared to God they are as nothing. And just as if, seeing a small flame of a lamp, I were content with its light, and afterwards, the sun having risen, I did not see what was shining, and I saw also the lights of the stars hidden by the

radiance of the sun: so looking upon the elements and the manifold variety of things, I indeed admire the magnitude of the works; but reflecting that all things pass away, and the world grows old at its end, and God alone is always that which he was, I am compelled to say not once but twice: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." In the Hebrew for "vanity of vanities," *HEBEL HEBELIM* (*ABAL ABALIM*) is written, which, except for the Septuagint translators, everyone translated similarly as *atmos atmidon* or *atmon*: which we can call the vapor of smoke and a thin breeze, which is quickly dissolved. Fleetness and the nothingness of the universe are shown by this word. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. Or because the creature is subject to vanity, and groans and travails and awaits the revelation of the sons of God, and now we know in part and we prophesy in part. So long as all things are vain, as long as they are contained in this world.

What remains for a man in all his labor, with which he labors under the sun? After the general sentence that all things are vain, he begins with men: that in vain do they sweat in the labor of this world; gathering riches, educating children, seeking honors, constructing buildings, and being snatched away by a sudden death in the midst of their work, they hear: "Fool, this night your soul will be taken from you: and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke XII, 20); especially since from all their labor they

carry nothing with them, but return naked to the earth from whence they were taken.

A generation goes, and a generation comes: and the earth stands forever (*in saeculum*). While others are dying, others are born; and not seeing those whom you had seen, you begin to see those whom you had not seen. What is more vain than this vanity, that the earth remains, which was made for the sake of men: and man himself, the lord of the earth, is suddenly dissolved into dust? Otherwise, the first generation of the Jews recedes, and the generation gathered from the nations succeeds: but the earth stands so long as, the Synagogue receding, the whole Church enters. For when the Gospel shall have been preached in the whole world, then will be the end. But the consummation being imminent, heaven and earth will pass away. And significantly he does not say: "The earth stands for ages (*in saeculis*)," but "for an age (*in saeculum*)." Furthermore, we praise the Lord not in one age, but for ages of ages.

The sun rises, and the sun sets, and leads to its place, and itself rises there. The sun itself, which was given for light to mortals, by its rising and setting daily indicates destruction. Which, after it has dipped its burning wheel into the Ocean, returns by ways unknown to us to the place from whence it had gone out: and the circle of the night being completed, it again breaks forth hastily from its chamber. Moreover, for that which we have put following the Vulgate edition, "leads to its place," in the Hebrew it has *SHO'EPH*

(*SOEPH*): which Aquila interprets as *eispnei*, that is, "breathes into" (*aspirat*). But Symmachus and Theodotion, "runs back," because evidently the sun returns to its place and there, from whence it had first gone out, it breathes (*aspiet*). Now all this is for the purpose of teaching that by the changes of the seasons and by the rising and setting of the stars, human age slips away and perishes while one does not know it. Otherwise, the Sun of justice, in whose wings is health, rises for those fearing God and sets at midday for the false prophets. But when it has risen, it draws us to its place. Whither? Evidently to the Father. For to this end he came, that he might lift us from the earth to heaven, and say: "When the Son of man shall be exalted, he will draw all things to himself" (John XII). Nor is it a wonder that the Son draws believers to himself, since the Father himself also draws to the Son: for "No one," he says, "comes to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John VI, 44). That sun, therefore, which we said sets for some and is born for others: both for Jacob the Patriarch formerly going out from the Holy Land it set, and again when he entered the land of promise from Syria, it rose for him (Gen. XXVIII). Lot also, when he went out from Sodom and came to the city to which he had been commanded to hasten, went up into the mountain, and the sun rose upon Zoar (Gen. XIX).

It goes to the south and circles to the north: the spirit goes circling round and round, and the spirit returns into its circles. Hence we can

estimate that in the winter time the sun runs to the southern region, and through the summer it is near the north, and does not have its beginning through the autumnal equinox: but first when the west wind (*favonius*) blows, when in the spring time all things burst forth into offspring. Moreover, when he says: "The spirit goes circling round and round, and returns into its circles," either he named the sun itself "spirit," because it animates and breathes and flourishes, and completes the annual orbits by its course, as the poet says (Aeneid III): *Meanwhile the sun revolves through the great year:* and elsewhere (Georgic II): *And the year rolls back into itself through its own footsteps;* or because "a spirit nourishes within" both the shining globe of the moon and the Titanian stars: *Mind agitates the whole mass infused through the limbs, and mingles itself with the great body;* he speaks not of the annual course of the sun, but of its daily paths. For it proceeds by an oblique and broken line through the south to the north, and thus returns to the east. Otherwise: When the sun runs through the south, it is nearer to the earth; when through the north, it is raised on high. Perhaps, therefore, for those who are constrained by the cold of winter and tribulations (for from the north, he says (Jerem. I, 14), evils burn over the earth) that sun of justice is nearer: but for those who dwell in the northern part and are deprived of summer heat, it goes far off, and returns through its circles from whence it had set out. For when it shall have drawn all things to

itself and illuminated everyone with its rays, the principal restoration takes place, and God is all in all. Symmachus translated this place thus: "It goes to the south, and goes around to the north; the wind goes traversing, and the wind returns through what it had gone around."

All torrents go into the sea, and the sea is not filled. To the place from whence the torrents go out, thither they themselves return, that they may depart. Some think that the sweet waters which flow into the sea are either consumed by the sun burning from above, or are food for the saltness of the sea. Behold our Ecclesiastes, and the founder of the waters themselves, says that they return through hidden veins to the heads of the fountains, and always bubble up from the mother abyss into their own beginnings. But the Hebrews better think that under the name of torrents and the sea, men are signified through a metaphor, because they return to the earth from whence they were taken: and they are called torrents, not rivers, because they quickly perish, nor yet is the earth filled by the multitude of the dead. Furthermore, if we ascend to higher things, the turbid waters rightly return into the sea from whence they had stood. And, unless I am mistaken, without an addition, "torrent" is nowhere read in a good sense. For "You will give them to drink of the torrent of your pleasure" is said with the addition of "pleasure" (Psal. XXXV, 9). And on the contrary, the Savior is betrayed at the torrent of Kidron (John XVIII, 1). And Elijah at the time of persecution lies hid at the torrent of

Cherith, which itself is dried up (III Kings XVII, 3). Now the insatiable sea is not filled, as also in the Proverbs the daughters of the horse-leech (Prov. XXX, 15).

All words are heavy; a man will not be able to speak them. The eye will not be satisfied with seeing, and the ear will not be filled with hearing. It is difficult to know not only about physics, but also about ethics. Neither is speech able to explain the causes and natures of things, nor the eye to look upon them as the dignity of the matter requires, nor the ear to arrive at the summit of knowledge while a teacher is instructing. For if we now see through a glass in a riddle, and we know in part and we prophesy in part, consequently neither can speech explain what it does not know; nor the eye look upon that in which it is blind; nor the ear be filled with that about which it doubts. At the same time this also must be noted, that all words are heavy and are learned with great labor, against those who think that the knowledge of the Scriptures comes to them while they are idle and making vows.

What is that which was? The same that will be. And what is that which was done? The same that will be done. And there is nothing at all new under the sun. It seems to me that he is now speaking in common about those things which he enumerated above—generation and generation, the mass of the earth, the rising and setting of the sun, the course of the rivers, the magnitude of the Ocean, and all things which we learn either by thought or by sight or by the ears—that there

is nothing in the nature of things which has not been already before. For from the beginning of the world men have both been born and have died, and the earth has stood poised over the waters, and the sun having risen has set. And lest I run through more things, both to fly for birds, and to swim for fish, and to walk for land animals, and to crawl for serpents, has been granted by God the artificer. What is similar to this sentence even the Comic poet says: *Nothing is said which has not been said before.* (Terence in the Prologue of the Eunuch).

Whence my teacher Donatus, when he was explaining that little verse, said: "Perish those who said our things before us." But if in speeches nothing new can be said, how much more in the administration of the world, which from the beginning was so perfected that God rested from his works on the seventh day! I read in a certain book: If everything which was done under the sun was in past ages before it was done, and man was made now the sun having been established: therefore man was, before he was made under the sun. But it is excluded because by this reasoning both beasts of burden and gnats and every small thing and great animals would be said to have been before the heaven. Unless perhaps he should answer that from the consequences it is shown that the speech of Ecclesiastes is not about the other animals but about man. For he says: "There is nothing at all new under the sun, which might speak and say: Behold this is new." But that animals do not speak, but only man: be-

cause if animals speak it is new, and the sentence is dissolved that nothing is new under the sun.

Is there a word of which it may be said, see this is new: it already was in the ages which were before us. Symmachus translated this more clearly: "Do you think there is one who can say: See, this is new, and it was already done in the age which was before us." Now it agrees with the above that nothing new happens in the world: nor is there anyone who can stand forth and say, behold this is new: since indeed everything which shall have thought to show itself new was already in former ages. Nor let us think that signs and wonders and many things which by the judgment of God happen as new in the world were already done in former ages: and that Epicurus finds a place, who asserts that through innumerable periods the same things happen in the same places and through the same persons. Otherwise both Judas frequently betrayed and Christ suffered often for us, and the other things which were done and are to be will similarly be revolved through the same periods. But it must be said that from the foreknowledge and predestination of God those things were already done which are to be. For those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world already were in former ages.

There is no memory for the first things, and indeed for the last things which are to be, there will be no memory for them among those who are to be in the last time. Just as oblivion hides past things from us, so those things which are either happening now or which are to be, those

who are yet to be born will not be able to know, and all things will pass away in silence and will be hidden as if they had not been: and that sentence will be fulfilled: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity." For also for this reason the Seraphim veil their face and their feet, because the first and last things are covered. But according to the Septuagint Translators, who said: "There is no memory for the first things, and indeed for the last who are to be, there will be no memory for them with those who are to be in the last time" (Matth. XX, 16): that meaning is from the Gospel, that those who are first in this world are the last of all. And because God, as kind and clement, remembers also the smallest and everyone, he will not give as great glory to those who because of their vice deserved to be last, as to those who humbling themselves wished to be last in the world. Therefore it is said also in the following: "There is no memory of the wise man with the fool forever."

"I, Ecclesiastes, was king over Israel in Jerusalem." Hitherto is the preface of one disputing generally about all things; now he returns to himself, and teaches who he was and how he learned all things by experience. The Hebrews say that this book is Solomon's, doing penance, because having trusted in wisdom and riches, he had offended God through women.

"And I gave my heart to seek and to consider in wisdom concerning all things which are done under the sun. This evil occupation God gave to the sons of men, that they might be occupied in it." The word *anian* (אַנִּיָּן) Aquila,

the Septuagint, and Theodotion translated similarly as *perispasmon* (περισπασμόν), which the Latin Translator expressed as "distention" (*distentionem*), for the reason that the mind of man, stretched out (*distenta*) into various solitudes, is torn apart. But Symmachus translated it as *ascholian* (ἀσχολίαν), that is, "occupation" (*occupationem*). Therefore, because it is named quite often in this volume, whether we call it "occupation," or "distention," or whatever else, let all things be referred to the above meaning. Ecclesiastes, then, first of all gave his mind to seeking wisdom, and extending himself beyond what is lawful, he wished to know the causes and reasons: why little children were seized by a demon, why shipwrecks swallowed up both the just and the impious alike. Whether these and similar things happened by chance, or by the judgment of God. And if by chance, where is providence? If by judgment, where is the justice of God? Desiring to know these things, he says, I understood that a superfluous care and a solicitude torturing through diverse things was given by God to men, so that they might desire to know what it is not lawful to know. Moreover, the cause having been beautifully sent before, the distention is given by God. For just as it is written in the Epistle to the Romans: "For which cause God delivered them up to passions of ignominy" (Rom. 1:26). And again: "For which cause God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient" (ibid., 28). And then: "Therefore God delivered them up to the desires

of their heart unto uncleanness" (ibid., 24). And to the Thessalonians: "Therefore God shall send them the operation of error" (2 Thess. 2:10). And first the causes are shown, why they are granted either to passions of ignominy, or to a reprobate sense, or to the desires of their heart, or what they have done to receive the operation of error. So also in the present case, for this reason God gave an evil distention to men, that they might be distended in it, because they first did this or that of their own accord and by their own will.

"I saw all the works which are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and presumption of spirit." We are compelled by necessity to discuss Hebrew words more frequently than we would wish. For we cannot know the meaning unless we learn it through the words. *Rooth* (רעות) Aquila and Theodotion translated as *nomen* (νομήν), Symmachus as *boskesin* (βόσκησιν). But the Septuagint Translators did not express the Hebrew speech, but the Syrian, saying *proairesin* (προαίρεσιν). Therefore, whether it be *nomen* or *boskesin*, the term is from "pasturing" (*pastione*); however, *proairesis* sounds more like "will" (*voluntatem*) than "presumption" (*praesumptionem*). But it is said that each one does what he wants, and it seems right to him, and men are carried by free will into diverse things, and all things under the sun are vain, while we are mutually displeased with one another in the ends of good and evil things. A Hebrew told me, under whose instruction I read through the Holy Scriptures, that

the word *rooth* written above signified in this place affliction and malice rather than pasturing and will: not from "evil" which is the contrary of "good," but from that which is written in the Gospel: "Sufficient for the day is the malice thereof" (Matt. 6:34). Which the Greeks more significantly call *kakouchian* (κακουχίαν), and the meaning is: I considered all things which happen in the world, and I apprehended nothing else than vanity and malices, that is, miseries of the spirit, by which the soul is afflicted with diverse thoughts.

"The perverse cannot be adorned, and the deficiency cannot be numbered." He who is perverse, unless he be first corrected, cannot be adorned. Straight things receive adornment, curved things receive correction. One is not called perverse unless he has been depraved from what is straight. This is against the heretics, who introduce certain natures which do not receive health. And because the deficiency—that is, what is lacking—cannot be numbered: for this reason only the firstborn of Israel were numbered. But the women, and servants, and little children, and the common crowd from Egypt, were by no means a fullness, but a deficiency of the army, and were passed over without a number. This sense can also be here: Such great malice dwells in the capacity of this world, that the world can scarcely return to a complete state of good, nor can it easily receive its order and perfection, in which it was first established. Otherwise: All things having been restored to wholeness through penance,

the devil alone will remain in his error. For all things which have been done under the sun were overturned by his judgment and spirit of malignity, while at his instinct sins are heaped upon sins. Finally: So great is the number of those seduced and of those who have been snatched by him from the flock of the Lord, that it cannot be comprehended by calculation.

"I spoke with my heart, saying: Behold, I have been magnified, and I have added wisdom above all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge." Solomon was wiser, not than Abraham and Moses and the other Saints, but than those who were before him in Jerusalem. We read also in the books of the Kingdoms that Solomon was of much wisdom, and that he asked for this gift from God above all others. Therefore the eye of a clean heart contemplates much wisdom and knowledge; for he does not say: I have spoken much wisdom and knowledge; but: My heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge. For we cannot speak all the things that we feel.

"And I gave my heart that I might know wisdom and knowledge, errors and folly: I knew that this also is the pasturing of the wind," or "presumption of spirit." Contraries are understood by contraries. And the first wisdom is to have been without folly. But one cannot be without folly unless he has understood it. Whence also many harmful things have been created in the world, so that while we avoid them, we may be instructed unto wisdom. Therefore it was of equal study for

Solomon to know wisdom and knowledge, and on the opposite side errors and folly: so that in seeking some and declining others, his true wisdom might be proved. But in this also, as in the rest, he says that he has pastured on winds, and has not been able to comprehend perfect truth. Concerning the "presumption of spirit," or "pasturing of the wind," which is said quite often in this book, let it suffice to have discussed it above.

"Because in the multitude of wisdom is a multitude of fury: and he who adds knowledge, adds sorrow." By how much more one shall have attained wisdom, by so much more is he indignant to be subject to vices, and to be far from the virtues which he seeks (Wisd. 6:7). But because the powerful will suffer torments powerfully, and to whom more is entrusted, more is required of him, for this reason he who adds knowledge adds sorrow, and is saddened with a grief according to God, and grieves over his own faults. Whence also the Apostle says: "And who is he that makes me glad, but he who is made sorrowful by me?" (2 Cor. 2:2). Unless perhaps this also is to be understood, that a wise man grieves that wisdom lies hidden in such secret and depth, and does not so offer itself to minds as light to the sight; but through certain torments and intolerable labor, it comes forth by perpetual meditation and study.

(Chap. 2) I said in my heart: Come now, I will try you with joy, and I will see in good: and behold, this also is vanity. After I found that in the multitude of wisdom and the addition of knowledge there is labor and sorrow, and nothing else

than a hollow and endless contest, I transferred myself to joy, so that I might flow in luxury, gather wealth, abound in riches, and take fleeting pleasures before I died. But in this also I myself perceived my vanity, since past pleasure does not help the present, and having been exhausted it does not satisfy. Moreover, not only is bodily joy a temptation to the possessor, but also spiritual, so that I need a sting to correct me, and an angel of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted (2 Cor. 12:7). Whence also Solomon: *Give me,* he says, *neither riches nor poverty* (Prov. 30:8). And immediately he added: *Lest being filled I should become a liar, and say: Who sees me?* (Ibid., 9). Since even the devil fell through the abundance of good things. Whence also in the Apostle it is written: *Lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the judgment of the devil* (1 Tim. 3:6), that is, into such a judgment into which also the devil fell. But we can also say this, that for this reason spiritual joy is now pronounced vanity, like the rest, because we see it through a mirror and in an enigma. But when it shall have been revealed face to face, then it shall by no means be called vanity, but truth.

I said to laughter: it is madness; and to mirth: why do you do this? Where we read *madness*, in the Hebrew it has *MOLAL* (מֹלַל), which Aquila translated as *planesin* (πλάνησιν), that is, 'error'; Symmachus as *thorybon* (θόρυβον), that is, 'tumult.' But the Septuagint and Theodotion, as in many places, so in this also agree, and translated *periphoran* (περιφορὰν), which we,

expressing word for word, can call 'circumlation' (carrying around). Just as, therefore, those who are carried around by every wind of doctrine are unstable and fluctuate into diverse things (Ephes. 4:14): so those who laugh with that laughter which the Lord in the Gospel (Luke 6:25) says must be changed into weeping, are snatched away by the error and whirlwind of the world, not understanding the ruin of their sins, nor bewailing their past vices; but thinking that brief goods are perpetual, and exulting in those things which are more worthy of wailing. This can also be taken concerning the heretics, who, acquiescing in false dogmas, promise themselves joyful and prosperous things.

I considered in my heart to draw my flesh in wine, and my heart led me into wisdom, and that I might take hold of folly, until I should see what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the sun in the number of the days of their life. I wished to deliver my life to delights, and to free my flesh from all cares, and to lull it as it were with wine, thus with pleasure; but my thought and natural reason, which God the author inserted even in sinners, drew me back, and led me to seeking wisdom and treading down folly, that I might see what that good was which men could do in the course of their life. Moreover, he elegantly compared pleasure to drunkenness. Since drunkenness overturns the vigor of the soul, which if anyone could change by wisdom and (as is had in some codices) *take hold of spiritual joy*, he will be able to arrive at the

knowledge of this matter: what is to be sought in this life, what is to be avoided.

(Chap. 2:4-14) I magnified my works: I built houses for myself: I planted vineyards for myself, and so forth until that place in which he says: *The eyes of the wise man are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness.* Before I discuss the individual points, it seems useful to me to comprehend all things in a brief discourse, and as if into one body to reduce the sense, so that the things which are said may be more easily understood. All things which are thought good in the world, I had as a king and a powerful man. I built palaces for myself on high, I planted mountains and hills with vines. And lest anything should be lacking for luxury, I planted gardens and orchards for myself, establishing diverse trees, which the waters collected into pools might irrigate from above, so that the greenery might be nourished longer by perpetual moisture. Also, of servants, whether bought or born in the house, I had an innumerable multitude, and many herds of four-footed animals, namely of oxen and sheep, as many as no king before me had in Jerusalem. But also innumerable treasures of silver and gold were stored up, which the gifts of various kings and the tributes of nations had brought to me. Whence also it happened, that by excessive wealth I was provoked to greater delights, and choirs of musical arts sang to me with flute, lyre, and voice, and each sex served in banquets: but as much as those things grew, so much was wisdom lacking. For into whatever pleasure desire had

drawn me, I was carried unbridled and headlong, and I thought this to be the fruit of my labors, if I myself were consumed in lust and luxury. At length returning into myself, and as if waking from a heavy sleep, I looked at [Al. and] my hands, and I gazed upon my works full of vanity, full of filth, full of the spirit of error. For nothing that was thought good in the world, could I find to be good. Considering therefore what were the goods of wisdom, and what the evils of folly, consequently I broke out into the praise of that man, who restraining himself after vices, can be a follower of virtues. For there is a great distance between wisdom and folly, and as much as day is distant from night, so much are virtues separated from vices. It seems to me therefore, that he who follows wisdom, always has his eyes in heaven...

I made for myself gardens and orchards: I planted in them every fruitful tree. In the house of a rich man there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth (2 Tim. 2:20). Gardens are made, therefore, on account of all the weaker and infirm. For he who is infirm eats vegetables (Rom. 14:2). Trees are planted, not all fruitful ones, as we have in the Latin codices: but all fruits, that is, of diverse fruits and apples, because there are diverse graces in the Church: and one is the eye, another the hand, another the foot, and those which are our more unseemly parts, upon these we bestow more abundant honor (1 Cor. 12:23). Among which fruitful trees I judge the tree of life, which is wisdom, to hold the primacy.

For unless that is planted in the middle, the rest of the trees will dry up.

I made for myself pools of waters, to irrigate from them the grove bringing forth wood. The wood of groves, the wood of forests, which are not fruitful, which do not bring forth apples, are not nourished by heavenly rain, nor by supernal waters, but by those which are collected in pools from streams. For Egypt, humble and lying low, like a garden of vegetables, is irrigated by earthly waters and those coming from Ethiopia. But the land of promise, which is mountainous and upright, expects early and late rain from heaven.

(Chap. 2:7) I bought menservants and maid-servants, and had slaves born in my house, and indeed I had a great possession of herds and sheep. If we wish, as we said above, to refer Ecclesiastes even now to the person of Christ, we can call his servants those who have the spirit of fear in servitude, and desire spiritual things more than they possess them. But we can call maidservants those souls which are still devoted to the body and the earth. Also those born in the house, who are indeed of the Church, and precede the servants and maidservants of whom we spoke: yet they have not yet been gifted with liberty, nor with nobility from the Lord. But there are also others in the family of Ecclesiastes, like oxen and sheep, on account of their works and simplicity: who labor indeed in the Church without the reason and knowledge of the Scriptures, but have not yet arrived at this, that they should deserve to be men, and return to the image of their Creator.

Note more diligently that in the case of menservants, maidservants, and those born in the house, a multitude is not added, but in the case of oxen and sheep it is said, 'I had a great possession of herds and sheep.' For there are more herds in the Church than men; more sheep than menservants, maidservants, and those born in the house.

(Chap. 2:9) Above all who were before me in Jerusalem. It does not pertain to the great glory of Solomon, to have been richer than his one father the king, because under Saul there was not yet a kingdom in Jerusalem, and it was held by the Jebusites, who themselves had settled in the city. Therefore it must be treated more deeply, what Jerusalem is: and how Ecclesiastes was richer than all the kings who preceded him in Jerusalem.

(Chap. 2:8) I gathered for myself silver and gold, and the riches of kings and of provinces. I made for myself singers and songstresses, and the 400 delights of the sons of men, cup-bearers and handmaidens.

Divine Scripture always places silver and gold above speech and sense. Whence also in the sixty-seventh psalm, the dove, which is interpreted as the spirit, has its silvered wings more manifest and exposed to sight, but covers a more hidden sense within in the paleness of gold.

Moreover, he gathered the riches of kings, and of provinces or regions, into the Church of believers; of those kings of whom the Psalmist sings: 'The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together as one' (Ps. 2:2): and of those re-

gions toward which the Savior commanded eyes to be raised: 'for they are already white for the harvest' (John 4). The riches of kings can also be called the dogmas of philosophers and secular sciences, which the man of the Church, understanding diligently, 'catches the wise in their craftiness, and destroys the wisdom of the wise, and rejects the prudence of the prudent' (1 Cor. 1).

Singers and songstresses also are those men or women who sing psalms with the spirit and sing psalms with the mind. The male singer, as a man both robust and spiritual, sings of higher things. But the songstress is still occupied with matter, which the Greeks call 'hyle'; nor can she raise her voice to the sublime. Therefore, wherever in the Scriptures 'woman' and the 'weaker sex' is read, let us transfer it to the understanding of matter. Whence also Pharaoh does not wish the males to be kept alive, but only the females, who are close to matter (Exod. 1). And on the contrary, none of the Saints is narrated to have begotten females, except very rarely. And only Zelophehad, who died in his sins, begot all daughters (Num. 25). Jacob, among the twelve Patriarchs, is the father of one daughter, and is endangered on her account (Gen. 30).

The delights of the sons of men are also to be understood as wisdom, which like paradise has various orchards and manifold pleasures. And of it it is commanded: 'Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the petitions of thy heart' (Ps. 36:4). And in another place: 'Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure' (Ps. 38:2).

For concerning the pourers of wine and the female pourers of wine (to distinguish indeed the masculine, I wished to decline in the feminine gender, which the Latin language does not receive), Aquila interprets something much different than what is obvious. For he did not name men, namely males and 401 females, but types of small vessels, calling them 'kylikion' and 'kylikia', which in Hebrew is called 'SADDA' and 'SADDOTH'. Finally Symmachus, although he could not express word for word, is not far from this opinion, saying: 'Types of tables, and appositions.' Whether therefore it is believed that Solomon had pitchers, or cups, or bowls, which are ordered for services, distinguished with gold and gems: and that from one 'kylikion', that is, a bowl, it was drawn into other 'kylikia', namely smaller vessels: and the crowd of drinkers received the wine through the hands of the ministers.

Because therefore we interpret Ecclesiastes (the Preacher) in Christ: and wisdom in the mixed bowl in Proverbs calls those passing by to herself: we ought now to receive the Body of the Lord as the great bowl, in which not pure Divinity, as it was in the heavens, but for our sake it was tempered by the mediation of humanity, and through the Apostles, as smaller 'kylikia', small cups and bowls, wisdom has been poured out to believers in the whole world.

(Chap. 2:9) And I became great, and surpassed in wisdom all who were before me in Jerusalem: and indeed my wisdom remained with me.

That Ecclesiastes (the Preacher) was made great seems least to suit the Lord, unless perhaps we apply to him that saying: 'He advanced in wisdom and age and grace' (Luke 2:52). And: 'On account of which God has exalted him' (Phil. 2:9). But when he says: 'Those who were before me in Jerusalem,' he speaks of those who, before his coming, governed the assembly of the Saints and the Church. If we understand the Scriptures spiritually, Christ is richer than all [Other reading: by men]; if only carnally, the Synagogue is better understood than the Church. Therefore he took away the veil which was placed over the face of Moses (Exod. 34), and made us see his face in full light (2 Cor. 3).

Furthermore, that his wisdom 'remained with him,' the meaning is that wisdom remained with him even when placed in the flesh. For him who has progress in wisdom, wisdom does not stand still; but he who does not receive progress, nor grows by moments, but is always in fullness, he can say: 'And my wisdom remained with me.'

(Chap. 2:10) And all that my eyes asked for, I did not take away from them: nor did I keep my heart from all joy: because my heart rejoiced in all my labor. And this was my portion from all my labor.

The eyes of the soul and the gaze of the mind desire spiritual contemplation, which the sinner, being ignorant of, keeps his heart from true joy. Therefore Ecclesiastes (the Preacher) gave himself entirely to this, and compensated for the slighness of tribulation [Other reading: slight

tribulations] in the world with eternal glory. For this is our portion and perpetual reward, if we labor here for virtues.

(Chap. 2:11) And I looked back at all my works which my hands had done, and at the labor in which I had labored while doing them.

He who acts in all things with diligence and caution can say these things.

And behold, all is vanity and a striving after the spirit (wind). And there is no abundance under the sun. Just as in other things he considered as cheap all things which are under the sun, and diverse according to the variety of wills. 'And there is no abundance under the sun' (Ps. 18:6). Christ placed his tabernacle in the sun. Therefore he who has not yet arrived at the clarity, order, and constancy of the sun, in him Christ can neither dwell nor abound.

(Chap. 2:12) And I looked back to see wisdom, and errors, and folly: for who is the man who can go after the king and his maker?

Because in the preceding parts up to that place in which Scripture says: 'The eyes of the wise man are in his head,' I had comprehended all things in one discourse, wishing to indicate the sense briefly, and for that reason had again 403 touched upon some things according to 'anagoge' (spiritual interpretation), I ought now to explain according to what I had begun. For the sense in this place is much different from the Septuagint translation.

Moreover, he says that after condemning delights and pleasures, he returned to seeking out

wisdom, in which he found more of error and folly than of true and certain prudence. For a man cannot know the wisdom of his creator and king as clearly and purely as he knows it who is the founder. Therefore, even those things which we know, we rather opine than possess, and estimate more than know what is true.

(Chap. 2:13) And I saw that there is an abundance of wisdom over folly, as an abundance of light over darkness. Although, he says, I have perceived the wisdom of men itself to be mixed with error, and that it cannot glide into our minds as purely as it is in our king and founder; nevertheless I have recognized that even in that which is, there is a great difference between it and folly, as much as day can be distant from night, light from darkness.

(Chap. 2:14) The eyes of a wise man are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness. And I recognized that one event will happen to them all.

He who arrives at being a perfect man, and deserves that Christ be his head, will always have his eyes toward Christ, and raising them to the sublime, will never think of lower things. Since these things are so, and there is such a great distance between the wise man and the fool, that one is compared to day and the other to darkness, one raises his eyes to heaven and the other casts them down to the earth: suddenly this thought stole upon me, why the wise man and the fool should be ended by a common destruction, why the same plagues, the same event, the same

death, and equal angusties should press upon both.

(Chap. 2:15) And I said in my heart, as is the event of the fool, so it will happen also to me, and why then have I become wise? And I spoke in my heart, that this also is vanity.

(Chap. 2:16) For there will not be a memory of the wise man with the fool forever, because behold in the days which are to come, universal oblivion will cover all: and how does the wise man die along with the fool?

I said, the wise man and the fool, the just and the impious, will die with an equal lot, and will sustain all evils in this world with a similar event; what then does it profit me that I followed wisdom 404 and labored more than others? Again thinking and diligently treating it with my mind, I found my opinion to be vain. For the wise man and the foolish man will not similarly have memory in the future, when the consummation of the universe arrives: and by no means will they be held by an equal exit, because this one will go to refreshment, that one to punishment. The Septuagint translators translated the Hebrew sense more clearly in this place, although they did not follow the order of the words: 'And why then have I become wise?' 'Then I spoke abundantly in my heart, for the foolish man speaks from abundance: because this also is vanity, because there is no memory of the wise man with the fool forever,' and so forth. Namely, by convincing himself that his former opinion was foolish, he testified that

he had spoken foolishly and had erred because he had felt so before.

(Chap. 2:17) And I hated life, because the work which is done under the sun was evil upon me, because all is vanity and a pasturing on wind.

If the world is placed in the evil one, and in this tabernacle the Apostle groans, saying: 'Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. 7:24), he rightly holds in hatred everything that is done under the sun. For in comparison to paradise and the blessedness of that life in which we enjoyed spiritual fruits and the delights of virtues: now we are as if in a work-house and a prison and a valley of tears, eating bread in the sweat of our face.

(Chap. 2:18) And I hated all my labor which I labor under the sun, because I leave it to the man who will be after me.

(Chap. 2:19) And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? and he will have dominion over all my labor in which I have labored, and in which I have become wise under the sun: but this also is vanity.

It seems indeed that he is reconsidering riches and wealth, that according to the Gospel, being withdrawn by a sudden death, we do not know with what kind of heir we die: whether it is a fool or a wise man who is going to enjoy our labor. Which happened also to Solomon: for he did not have a son like himself in Rehoboam. From which we understand that not even a son is worthy of the inheritance of the father, if he is a fool.

But to me contemplating more deeply, it seems he speaks of spiritual labor, that days and 405 nights a wise man labors in the Scriptures, and composes books, so that he may leave a memory of himself to posterity, and nevertheless they fall into the hands of fools, who frequently, according to the perversity of their heart, take from there the seeds of heresies and calumniate the labors of others. For if the discourse of Ecclesiastes (the Preacher) were now about bodily riches, why was it necessary to say of labor and wealth: 'And he will have dominion over all my labor, in which I have labored, and in which I have become wise under the sun'? For what wisdom is it to gather earthly riches?

(Chap. 2:20-21) And I turned, that I might renounce in my heart all my labor in which I have labored under the sun, because there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and knowledge, and virtue, and to a man who has not labored, he will give his portion. And indeed this is vanity and a great evil.

(Chap. 2:22) For what does a man get from all his labor, and from the striving of his heart, in which he himself labors under the sun? (Chap. 2:23) For all his days are of sorrows and of anger and of cares, and indeed in the night his heart does not sleep; but this also is vanity.

Above he speaks of an uncertain heir, because it is unknown whether a fool or a wise man will be the future master of another's labors. Now he repeats the same things indeed, but in this the sense is different, that even if he leaves his sub-

stance and labors to a son, to a relative, or to some known person; nevertheless the matter recurs into the same circle, so that one enjoys the labor of another, and the sweat of the dead becomes the delight of the living.

Let each one consider himself, and he will see with how much labor he composes books, how 'he often turns his stylus again, who is about to write things worthy to be read' (From Horace, Sat. Bk. 1, Sat. 10). and to a man who has not labored, let him give his portion. For what, as I have already said before, do wisdom and knowledge and virtue pertain to the wealth of the earth, in which he testified that he had labored, since it is of wisdom, knowledge, and virtue to trample upon earthly things?

(Chap. 2:24) There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and show his soul good 406 in his labor. And indeed I saw this, that it is from the hand of God.

(Chap. 2:25) For who shall eat, and who shall enjoy (or spare) without him?

(Chap. 2:26) For to the man who is good in his sight he has given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner [Other reading: to the sinner] he has given affliction, that he may increase and gather together what is given to the good man before the face of God. But this also is vanity and a presumption of spirit.

After I have treated all things, and perceived that nothing is more unjust than that one should enjoy the labor of another, then it seemed to me that this is most just among things, and as if a gift

of God, that each one should enjoy his own labor, drinking and eating, and for a time enjoying the wealth gathered. Since it is a gift of God that such a mind be given to a just man, that he himself may consume those things which he sought with cares and vigils. Just as, on the contrary, it is of the wrath of God upon the sinner, that he should gather wealth days and nights, and not using it at all, leave it to those who are just in the sight of God. But this also, he says, looking diligently and seeing that all things are ended by death, I judged to be most vain.

These things meanwhile according to the letter, lest we should seem to pass over entirely the simple sense, and while we follow spiritual riches, to despise the poverty of history. For what good is it, or what kind of gift of God, either to gape at one's own wealth and as if to pluck a fleeing pleasure, or to turn another's labor into one's own delights: and to think this is a gift of God, if we enjoy the miseries and labors of others?

It is good therefore to take true foods and true drink, which we find from the Flesh and Blood of the Lamb in the divine Volumes. For who can either eat or, when there is need, enjoy (spare) without God? who commanded that the holy should not be cast to dogs (Matt. 7:6), and teaches how food should be given to fellow servants in due time (Matt. 24:45); and according to another sense, to eat only as much found honey as is sufficient (Prov. 25:16)?

Beautifully moreover God gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy to the good man: for unless

he is good, and 407 has corrected his manners beforehand by his own will, he does not deserve wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, according to that which is said elsewhere: 'Sow for yourselves in justice, reap in the fruit of life, illuminate for yourselves the light of knowledge' (Hos. 10:12, according to the LXX). For justice must be sown beforehand, and the fruit of life must be reaped, and afterwards the light of knowledge will be able to appear. As therefore God gave wisdom and the rest to the good man before him: so leaving the sinner to his own will, he made him gather riches, and from here and there sew together pil- lows of perverse dogmas. Which when the holy man pleasing to God sees, he understands [Other reading: will understand] that they are vain, and composed by the presumption of spirit. Nor is it to be wondered at that he said: 'To the sinner he has given affliction,' and the rest. For this must be referred to that sense of which I have often treated: that for this reason affliction or distention [Other reading: affliction] was given [Other reading: gives] to him, because he was a sinner, and that the cause of distention [Other reading: affliction] is not in God, but in him who of his own accord sinned beforehand.

(Chap. 3:1) To everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. He taught the uncertain and fluctuating state of the human condition in the preceding parts: now he wishes to show this, that all things in the world are contrary to each other, and nothing stands perpetual, at least of those things which are under

heaven and within time, because other spiritual substances are contained neither by heaven nor by time.

A time to give birth, and a time to die. A time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted. No one doubts that both the birth and death of men are known and foreordained by God, and that to give birth is the same as to plant, and to die is the same as to uproot what was planted. But because we read in Isaiah: 'From your fear, O Lord, we have conceived, and have been in labor, and have given birth': this must be said: that for the perfect man, this birth, which was born of fear, dies when he begins to love God. For 'perfect love casts out fear' (1 John 4:18). The Hebrews understand all this which is written about the opposition of times, up to that place where it says: 408 'A time of war, and a time of peace', as referring to Israel. And because it is not necessary to set down verse by verse what they interpret and feel, I will touch upon it briefly [Other reading: lightly], leaving a broader discussion on this to the reader's intellect. There was a time for generating and planting Israel, and a time for dying and being led into captivity. A time for killing them in Egypt, and a time for liberating them from Egypt. A time for destroying the temple under Nebuchadnezzar, and a time for building it under Darius. A time for mourning the destruction of the city, and a time for laughing and dancing under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. A time for dispersing Israel, and a time for gathering them into one. A time for the Jewish people

to be surrounded by God as a belt and a girdle, and a time for leading them into the Babylonian captivity, and for them to rot there across the Euphrates. Read the perizoma (loincloth) of Jeremiah (Jer. 13:1ff). A time for seeking them and saving them, and a time for losing them, and a time for casting them out. A time for tearing Israel, and a time for sewing them together again. A time for the Prophets to be silent, now in the Roman captivity, and a time for them to speak, back when even in a hostile land they did not lack the consolation and address of God. A time of love, with which he loved them before under the fathers, and a time of hatred, because they laid hands upon Christ. A time of battle, while they do not now perform repentance, and a time of peace in the future, when the fullness of the Gentiles having entered, all Israel shall be saved.

A time to kill, and a time to heal. And there is a time for killing and for healing by him who says: 'I will kill, and I will make alive' (Deut. 32:39). He heals by provoking to repentance. He kills, according to that sense: 'In the morning I killed all the sinners of the earth' (Ps. 101:8).

A time to destroy, and a time to build. We cannot build good things unless we have first destroyed bad things. Therefore the word of God was given to Jeremiah in such a way that he should first uproot, and pull down, and destroy; and afterwards build and plant (cf. Jer. 1).

A time to weep, and a time to laugh. Now is the time for weeping, and in the future for laughing:

'For blessed are those who weep, for they shall laugh' (Luke 6:21).

A time to mourn, and a time to dance. For this reason they are rebuked in the Gospel, to whom the Lord says: 'We have lamented for you, and you did not mourn; we have sung, and you did not dance' (Luke 7:32). We must mourn for the present, so that afterwards we may be able to dance with that dance with which David danced before the ark of the Testament: and displeasing the daughter of Saul, he pleased God more (cf. 2 Sam. 6).

A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather stones. I wonder how an eloquent man could have said something ridiculous in this place: saying that the speech is about the destruction and building of Solomon's houses, that men now destroy, now build; some gather stones to construct buildings, others destroy those that have been built, according to that Horatian line (Epist. 1.2): 'He pulls down, he builds up, he changes square for round.' He seethes, and is inconsistent in the whole order of life. Whether he said this rightly or wrongly, I leave to the reader's judgment. Let us follow the order of the previous explanation: saying that there is a time for scattering and gathering stones, according to that which is written in the Gospel: 'God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones' (Matt. 3:9). That there was a time for dispersing the Gentile people, and a time for gathering them again into the Church. I read in a certain book (according to the Septuagint translators, however, who said: 'A

time to cast stones, and a time to gather') that the severity of the ancient Law was tempered by the grace of the Gospel. For the Law, rigid, unkind, not sparing, kills the sinner. The grace of the Gospel has mercy and provokes to repentance. And that this is the time for casting stones or gathering them, because stones are cast in the Law, but gathered in the Gospel. Whether this was said truly or not, let it be attributed to its author.

A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embracing. According to simple understanding, the sense is clear, the Apostle agreeing in the same words: 'Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer' (1 Cor. 7:5), namely, for attending to children, and again for continence. Or that there was a time for embracing, when that sentence flourished: 'Increase, and multiply, and fill the earth' (Gen. 1:28). And a time to be far from embrace, when there followed: 'The time is short. It remains that even those who have wives should be as if they had none' (1 Cor. 7:29). But if we wish to ascend to higher things, we shall see wisdom embracing her lovers: for 'Honor her,' it says, 'and she will embrace you' (Prov. 4:8), and within her arms and bosom she will hold you with a closer embrace. Furthermore, because the human mind cannot always be stretched toward the sublime, and think about divine and higher things, nor continually be in the contemplation of heavenly matters, but must sometimes indulge the necessities of the body; therefore

there is a time for embracing wisdom and holding her more closely, and a time for relaxing the mind from the gaze and embrace of wisdom, so that we may serve the cares of the body and those things which our life needs without sin.

A time to gain, and a time to lose. A time to keep, and a time to cast away. Under different words, the sense now is the same as above and below, in that which he says: 'A time to destroy, and a time to build.' And then: 'A time to tear, and a time to sew.' For just as the Synagogue is destroyed so that the Church may be built, and a tearing is made from the Law so that the Gospels may be sewn together, which the individual Evangelists performed by sewing together testimonies of the Lord's advent from the Law and the Prophets: so also there was a time for seeking and keeping Israel, and a time for losing and casting him away. Or certainly a time for seeking a people from the Gentiles, and a time for losing the Jewish people. A time for keeping the believers from the nations, and a time for casting out the unbelievers from Israel.

A time to be silent, and a time to speak. I think the Pythagoreans, whose discipline is to be silent for five years and afterwards to speak once learned, drew the origin of their decree from here. Let us also learn first not to speak, so that afterwards we may open our mouths for speaking. Let us be silent for a certain time, and hang upon the words of the teacher; let nothing seem right to us except what we learn, so that after much silence, from being disciples we may be made

masters. But now, by the fault of the ages daily sliding into the worse, we teach in the Churches what we do not know. And if by a composition of words, or by the instinct of the devil, who is the promoter of errors, we have excited the applause of the people, we think that we know, against our own conscience, that which we were able to persuade others of. We do not learn all arts without a teacher: only this one is so cheap and easy that it does not need a preceptor.

A time to love, and a time to hate. A time to love, after God, children, wife, and relatives; and a time to hate them in martyrdom, when for the confession of Christ a hostile piety attacks those who are rigid. Or certainly a time to love the Law, and those things which had been commanded by the Law—circumcision, sacrifices, the Sabbath, the new moons—and a time to hate them when the grace of the Gospel succeeds. And this also can be said: that since now we see through a glass in a riddle (1 Cor. 13:12), it is a time for loving the present things; and in the future a time will come when, seeing face to face and progressing into better things, we shall begin to hate and despise what we loved.

A time of war, and a time of peace. As long as we are in the present age, it is a time of war; but when we have departed from this age, the time of peace will come. For in peace is the place of God, and our city Jerusalem has derived its name from peace (cf. Ps. 76:2). Therefore let no one now think himself to be secure: in the time of war one

must be girded and arms must be handled, so that being victors we may one day rest in peace.

What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the occupation which God has given to the sons of men, to be occupied in it. He has made all things good in their time, and indeed he has given the age into their hearts, so that man cannot find out the work which God has made from the beginning even to the end. It does not escape me what has been said by many in this place: 412 that for this reason God has granted occupation even to the teachers of perverse dogmas in the present age, lest the mind of man grow sluggish from idleness, and that this is the good which God made in his time; and nevertheless that they are unable to comprehend nature and the science of things. But to me it was explained thus by the Hebrew who instructed me in the Scriptures: Since all things slide away in their time, and there is a time for destroying and building, for weeping and laughing, for being silent and speaking, and the rest which were said about time, why do we strive and stretch ourselves in vain, and think the labors of a short life to be perpetual? Nor are we content, according to the Gospel, with the evil of the day; and let us think nothing for the morrow (cf. Matt. 6:34). For what can we have more in this age by laboring, in which only this much was given to men by God, that one by following one thing and another by following another might have things in which he could be instructed and exercise himself? For everything that God made is good, but good in its

time. It is good to be awake and to sleep; yet it is not always good to be awake or to sleep, because each thing is good in turn according to the disposition of God, when there is need. God also gave the world to men for inhabiting, that they might enjoy the varieties of times, and not seek about the causes of natural things how all things were created: why he made this or that to grow, to remain, to be changed from the beginning of the world until the consummation.

I have known that there is no good, except to be joyful, and to do good in his life. And indeed every man who eats and drinks and shows good in all his labor, it is from the gift of God. For this reason man was given as a tiller and a guest of the world, that he might enjoy the short time of his life, and having cut off the hope of a more prolonged age, he should look upon all things which he possesses as one about to set out for other things, and do what [Other reading: as much as] he can well in his life; nor should he be tortured by thoughts for the sake of gathering riches in vain. Nor should he think that he can gain more from his labor than food and drink, and if he should expend anything from his riches in good works, this alone is the gift 413 of God. By which things, we are not provoked [Other reading: let us not be provoked], like animals, to luxury and delights and to despair, according to that saying of Isaiah: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die' (Isa. 22:13); but according to the Apostle: 'Having food and clothing, with these we are content' (1 Tim. 6:8), so that [Other reading:

and] whatever we are able to have beyond that, we should consume in nourishing the poor and in the bounty for the needy. Furthermore, because the flesh of the Lord is true food, and his blood is true drink, according to the anagoge (spiritual interpretation), we have this alone as good in the present age: if we eat his flesh and are given to drink of his blood, not only in the mystery (the Eucharist) but also in the reading of the Scriptures. For the true food and drink which is taken from the word of God is the knowledge of the Scriptures. Nor should anyone think that what was prophesied by Balaam: 'There shall be no labor in Jacob, nor grief in Israel' (Num. 23:23). Is contrary to this which is said to be the gift of God: 'If anyone eats and drinks and shows good in all his labor.' For many are the tribulations of the just. And about these the Apostle complains, saying that he has sweated in labor and grief (cf. 2 Cor. 11:27). But when the Lord shall have liberated us from these in the future: 'There shall be no labor in Jacob, nor grief in Israel.' And as we read: 'Blessed are those who weep, for they shall laugh' (Luke 6:21); and our laughter shall follow the words of the prophesying Job: 'The mouth of the truthful shall be filled with joy' (Job 8:21); so now we enjoy our labor in good works, through which we are narrowed and pressed, so that afterwards we may cease to labor.

I have known that all things which God has made, they shall be forever; to them nothing can be added, and from them nothing can be taken away: and God has done it, so that they may

fear before his face. There is nothing in the world which is new. The course of the sun, and the phases of the moon, and the dryness or greenness of the earth and trees, were born and joined together with the world itself. And for that reason God has moderated all things by a certain reason, and commanded the elements to serve human uses, so that men seeing these things may understand that there is a providence [Other reading: prudence], and may fear before the face of God, while from the equality, course, order, and constancy of things they understand the Creator. 414 'For the invisible things of God are seen and understood through those things which have been made: his eternal power also and divinity' (Rom. 1:20). But if we should wish, the prior sense being finished, to read as if from the beginning: 'And God has done it, so that they may fear before his face,' this is the sense: God has made all things, so that men may fear to decline into anything other than what God once disposed. Moreover, he tempered it beautifully, saying: 'That they may fear before his face' (cf. Ps. 34:16). For the face of the Lord is upon those who do evil.

What is it that was? The same which is; and the things which are to be, have already been: and God will seek him who suffers persecution. Whether past, or present, or future, all things which we see have been, and are, and will be. The sun which now rises, both before we were in the world, it was; and after we have died, it is to rise. But we have named the sun, so that from this we may understand that other things are the same

as they were. But if they should seem to perish through the condition of death, they do not perish, because they grow up again renewed, and nothing perishes forever, but is reborn, and as if with a certain interest revives. For this is what he says: 'And God will seek him who suffers persecution'; which in Greek is better said: *kai ho Theos zetesei ton diokomenon*, that is, what has passed, what has been driven out, what has ceased to be. If this, however, is said about all things that are in the world, about man there is no doubt that being dead he is reborn. But if it pleases anyone to read as if from its own beginning: 'And God will seek him who suffers persecution,' let him use this testimony in the persecution of the Gentiles, for consoling him who perseveres in martyrdom. And because all, according to the Apostle (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12), who wish to live piously in this age, suffer persecution, let them have consolation, because God seeks the one suffering persecution, just as he requires the blood of the slain, and came to seek what had perished, and brought back the wandering sheep on his shoulders to the flock (cf. Luke 19:10; 15:5).

And yet I saw under the sun the place of judgment: there was impiety; and the place of justice: there was iniquity. 415 I said [Other reading: therefore] in my heart: 'God will judge the just and the impious: because there is a time for every will and over every deed there'. The sense is manifest, but is wrapped in the cloud of interpretation. Under this sun, he says, I sought truth and judgment, and I saw even among the seats

of the judges themselves, not truth to prevail, but bribes. Or otherwise: I thought that some justice was being carried out in the present age, and either the pious man received according to his merit now, or the impious was punished for his crime: and on the contrary, I found other than I thought. For I saw both the just man suffer many evils here, and the impious man reign for his crime. But afterwards, speaking and reflecting with my heart, I understood that God does not judge by parts and by individuals now, but reserves judgment for a future time so that all may be judged equally, and according to their will and works may receive there. For this is what he says: 'And a time for every will, and over every deed there', that is, in the judgment, when the Lord shall have begun to judge, then there shall be truth; now injustice dominates in the world. We read something like this also in Wisdom, which is inscribed as of the son of Sirach: 'Do not say: What is this, or what is that? For all things will be sought out in their time' (Sir. 39:21).

I said in my heart concerning the speech of the sons of men, that God separates them, and that he might show that they themselves are as beasts to themselves; because the event of the sons of men, and the event of the cattle, is one event for them. As is the death of this one, so also is the death of that one, and there is one spirit in all, and man has nothing more than the cattle, because all is vanity. All go to one place, all were made of the ground, and all will return to the ground. And who knows if the spirit of the

sons of men ascends upward, and if the spirit of the cattle descends downward into the earth? It is not to be wondered at that in the present life there is no distance between the just and the impious, nor do virtues avail anything, but all things are tossed about by an uncertain event, when even between beasts and man, according to the meanness of the body, nothing seems to differ, and there is the same condition of being born, one lot of dying: similarly let us proceed to the light, equally let us be dissolved into dust. But if this distance seems to be, that the spirit of man ascends into heaven, and the spirit of cattle descends into the earth, by what certain author have we known this? Who can know whether what is hoped for is true or false? But he says this, not because he thinks the soul perishes with the body, or that one place is prepared for beasts and man, but because before the coming of Christ all were led equally to the underworld. Whence also Jacob says that he will descend to the underworld (Gen. 37:35, and 44:29). And Job complains that the pious and the impious are retained in hell (Job 7:9 and 17:13). And the Gospel testifies that a great chaos is interposed in the underworld, and that Abraham is with Lazarus, and the rich man is in torments (Luke 16:23-26). And indeed, before Christ with the thief unlocked that flaming wheel, and the fiery sword, and the gates of paradise, the heavenly things were closed, and an equal meanness constrained the spirit of cattle and of man. And although one thing seemed to be dissolved, another to be reserved; nevertheless, it

did not matter much to perish with the body, or to be detained in the darkness of hell.

Let us return to the individual points, and in a commatic style of speaking, let us briefly discuss [Other reading: let us dissolve] according to their order. I said in my heart concerning the speech of the sons of men, that God might choose them. This alone, he says, God willed to be between men and beasts, because we speak, they are mute; we bring forth our will by speech, they are numb in silence. And although we differ from the beasts only by speech, nevertheless it is shown to us that according to the fragility of the body we are cattle. As the beast dies, so also dies man, and there is one breath for all, and this air by which we are nourished. For this he says: 'And there is one spirit in all, and man has nothing more than the cattle.' Lest we should think this is said also of the soul, he added: 'All were made of the earth, and will return to the earth.' But from the earth nothing else was made except the body. And significantly it is said of the body: 'Dust you are, and to dust you shall return' (Gen. 3:19). But as for what seems to be blasphemous: 'Who knows if the spirit of the sons of men ascends upward, and the spirit of the beast descends downward into the earth?' he does not contend that there is no difference between beasts and man according to the dignity of the soul, but by adding 'who,' he wished to demonstrate the difficulty of the matter. For the pronoun 'who' in the Holy Scriptures is always taken not for the impossible, but for the difficult. As there: 'His generation who

shall declare?' (Isa. 53:8). And in the fourteenth psalm: 'Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle, and on your holy mountain' (Ps. 14:1), and the rest which follow. And in Jeremiah, although it is otherwise in the Hebrew: 'And he is a man, and who shall know him?' (Jer. 17:9). Between men, therefore, and beasts, this is the only difference, that the spirit of man ascends into heaven, and the spirit of the beast descends into the earth, and is dissolved with the flesh: if, however, some ecclesiastical man and one learned in heavenly disciplines, and as a certain assertor of a doubtful matter, be here. These things meanwhile according to the letter.

As far as pertains to spiritual understanding: "Since men and beasts you will save, O Lord" (Ps. 35:7); and in another place: "As a beast was I," he says, "before you, and I am always with you" (Ps. 72:23): and in all the prophets men and cattle are said to be saved [Other reading: saved] in Jerusalem, and the land of promise is to be filled with cattle and herds; who knows whether the saint, who is worthy of the name of man, ascends into heaven, and whether the sinner, who is called a beast, descends into the earth? For it can happen, on account of the uncertainty of this life and its slippery state, that both the just man falls and the sinner rises, and it sometimes happens that one more rational and learned in the Scriptures, that is, a man, does not live circumspectly and as is worthy of his knowledge, and is led down to the underworld, and some simpler and more rustic person, who might be called a

beast in comparison to a man, lives better, and is crowned with martyrdom, and becomes an inhabitant of paradise.

And I saw that there is nothing good except that a man should rejoice in his work, because this is his portion. For who shall bring him to see that which is to be after him? 418 For that which we have put: "To see that which is to be after him," Symmachus interpreted more clearly, saying: "To see those things which are to be after these." Therefore, nothing is good in this life except that a man should rejoice in his work, performing almsgiving, and preparing for himself future treasures in the kingdom of heaven. This alone is the portion we have, which neither thief nor robber, nor tyrant is able to take away, and which follows us after death. For we cannot, when this life has been dissolved, again enjoy our labors, or know what things are to be in the world afterwards. Otherwise: Disturbed by the previous error, that I thought there was no difference between men and beasts, I was led into this sentence by a perverse opinion, so that I would say nothing else was good except to pluck present pleasure. Nor, once destruction had dissolved us, could we enjoy those things from which we would depart ungrateful. Others have referred this which he says: "For who shall bring him to see those things which are to be after him," to that understanding, so as to say: It is better for a man to enjoy his own labors, because this alone he could take away from his substance. When death comes, he does not know for what

kind of heir he is about to die, whether a worthy or an unworthy person will enjoy his wealth.

(Chap. 4). "And I turned myself, and I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and behold the tears of those who sustain oppression, and there is no one who may comfort them, and in the hands of those oppressing them is strength: and there is no comforter for them." After this thought, I turned my mind and eyes there, that I might see the oppressors and those sustaining oppression. And behold these, who are unjustly oppressed by the more powerful, protesting the envy of the matter with tears, which alone it is permitted to have in calamities, are unable to find a comforter. And by which the misery is greater and the grief inconsolable, they see the oppressors stronger in their iniquities. And this is the cause that they are not able to be comforted. David more fully in the seventy-second psalm, and Jeremiah in his volume, follow up on this place.

419 And I praised the dead, who are already dead, above the living, whoever of them live until now. And better than both of these is he who is not yet born, who has not yet seen the evil work that is done under the sun. In comparison to the miseries which press upon mortals in this age, I judged the dead more fortunate than the living, according to that of Job disputing about the underworld. "There the weary in body have rested, with those who had been bound, now secure, not hearing the voice of the exactor" (Job 3:17-18). But better than these two, namely the living and

the deceased, is he who is not yet born. For the one still suffers evils, the other has escaped as if naked from a shipwreck. Furthermore, he who is not yet born is more fortunate in this, that he has not yet experienced the evils of the world. But he says this, not because he who is not yet born exists before he is born, and is more fortunate in this because he is not yet weighed down by a body: but because it is better not to be at all, nor to have a sense of substance, than to be or to live unhappily. Just as the Lord also speaks concerning Judas, signifying his future torments: "It was better for that man not to be born" (Matt. 26:24): because it would have been better for him not to be at all than to suffer eternal tortures. Others, however, understand this place thus: saying that those who are dead are better than those who live, even though they were formerly sinners. For those living are still in the battle, and are retained as if closed in the prison of the body; but those who have undergone death are now secure, and have ceased to sin. Just as also John, than whom there was no greater among those born of women (Matt. 11:11), is less than he who is least in the kingdom of heaven, and being freed from the burden of the body, does not know how to say with the Apostle: "Miserable man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). But better than these two is he who is not yet born, nor has seen the evils by which men are depressed in the world. For our souls, before they descend to these bodies, dwell among the inhabitants of heaven, and are blessed for as

long as they are held in the heavenly Jerusalem and the angelic choir.

420 And I saw all labor, and likewise every skill of work: because the envy of a man is from his companion; and indeed this is vanity and presumption of spirit. I turned myself again to other things, and I saw all the strength and glory of those laboring, and I discovered that the good of one is the evil of another, while the envious man is tortured by another's happiness, and the glorious man lies open to snares. For what is vainer, what more unstable, and thus so nothing, than for men not to weep for their own miseries, or mourn their own sins, but to envy those who are better?

The fool has folded his hands, and eats his own flesh (Prov. 24:33). This is he who is also described in the Proverbs as lazy, holding his chest with his hands. To whom, like a swift runner, poverty comes, and who on account of excessive hunger (let it be said hyperbolically) eats his own flesh. Who thinks it is better to have one handful of grain and live idle and numb, than to fill both hands while laboring. But the whole of what he discusses is this, that he may show that both he who labors and has something is open to envy in the world, and again he who wishes to live quiet is oppressed by poverty, and that both are miserable, while one is endangered on account of wealth, the other is consumed by want on account of poverty. Or certainly thus: He who envies another's happiness, and is as it were snatched by the fury of spirit, and has received

envy into his bosom, and has nourished it in his chest: he eats his own soul and his own flesh. For the more fortunate he sees him whom he envies, the more he himself wastes away and perishes, and gradually trickles away with zeal and spite. Otherwise: Hands are frequently taken for works, just as there: "The word of the Lord which was made in the hand of Haggai" (Hag. 1:1), whether of that or of this prophet, because he performed such works that he existed worthy, in whose work the word of the Lord might be made. To this also agrees that of David: "Who teaches my hands for battle" (Ps. 143:1). The fool therefore has folded his hands, that is, he has contracted them, and was unwilling to extend them, whence he does not eat the labors of his hands 421 which he does not even have; but his own flesh, living according to the wisdom of the flesh, and feeding on the works of the flesh.

Better is a full handful with rest, than a fullness of hands of labor and presumption of spirit. Better is a little which the just man has, than the great riches of sinners. And in the Proverbs: "Better is a small acceptance with justice, than many fruits with iniquity" (Prov. 16:8). Elegantly justice has rest, iniquity has labor. And because the singular number is always taken for good, the double for evil: therefore one handful has rest, and two hands are full of labor.

And I turned myself, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one, and there is not a second, and indeed a son and a brother he has not: and there is no end to all his labor. And indeed his

eye is not satisfied [Other reading: will be satisfied] with riches: and for whom do I labor, and defraud [Other reading: will defraud] my soul of goodness? But this also is vanity, and a most evil distraction. I turned to others, and I saw them laboring more than is necessary, gathering wealth by right and wrong, and not using what was gathered, having all things, brooding over riches, keeping them for another, and not enjoying their own labor: especially when they have neither son, nor brother, nor relative, so that the labor might seem to be piously reserved for those in need. Therefore, I discovered nothing to be vainer than that man who gathers riches, not knowing to whom he leaves them. Which indeed we are able, according to the former interpretation, to understand also concerning those who write books and leave them behind for fastidious readers. Some interpret this place from that which he says: "There is one, and there is not a second," concerning the Savior, because he alone and without any companion descended to save the world. And although many are the sons of God, and are called his brothers by adoption: nevertheless, no one existed worthy who might be joined to him in this work. To whose labor there is no end, carrying our vices and sins, and grieving for us: and his eye will not be satisfied with riches, always desiring our salvation, and as much as 422 he sees anyone sin, so much more exhorting him to repentance.

Two are better than one, for whom there is a good reward in their labor: because if one should

fall, he will raise up his companion. And woe to the one when he falls, and there is not a second to raise him up. And indeed, if two should sleep [Other reading: shall have slept], there will also be warmth for them; and one, how shall he be warmed? And if one should prevail over him, two will stand against him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. After the solitudes and miseries in which that man was caught who, in acquiring wealth, tortures himself without a certain heir; now the speech is brought to fellowship. And it is said what good the companionship of friends has, and for common solace, because both the ruin of one is lifted up by the help of another, and domestic cares, and also the rest of the night itself, he who has a faithful friend passes better than he who broods over acquired riches alone. And that if some stronger enemy has risen against one, the weakness is sustained by the solace of the other friend. And by as much as two differ from one, if they are joined by love, so much also the companionship of three prevails more. For true charity, violated by no spite, as much as it is increased in number, so much will it grow also in strength. And let these things meanwhile be said simply.

Moreover, because in the former place we have put the understanding of some concerning Christ, also the remaining things are to be discussed in the same order. "It is better for two to be together than one." For it is better to have Christ dwelling in oneself than to dwell alone and lie open to the snares of the adversary. Indeed, the

reward of companionship is immediately shown in the utility of the society itself. For if one should fall, Christ will raise up his companion. For woe to him who, when he has fallen, does not have Christ in himself raising him up. But if also one should sleep, that is, if he should be dissolved by death, and has had Christ with him, being warmed and vivified he more quickly revives. And if the devil should stand more robust in attacking against a man, the man will stand, and Christ will stand for his man, for his companion. Not because the virtue of Christ alone is weak against the devil, 423 but because free will is left to man, and as we strive, he himself becomes stronger in battling. But if also the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit should arrive, that fellowship is not quickly broken [Other reading: will be broken]. But that which is not quickly broken, yet is broken sometimes. For also in Judas the apostle there was this threefold cord: but because after the morsel Satan entered into him, this cord was broken. Furthermore, as for what he says above: "And indeed if two sleep, there will also be warmth for them: and one, how shall he be warmed?" let us take an example from Elisha, that he contracted himself with the boy, and slept, and warmed his little body, and thus vivified him as he rose again (2 Kings 4:34). Unless, therefore, Christ has slept with us and rested in death, we are not able to receive the warmth of eternal life.

"Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who knows not how to provide

for the future." "For out of the prison house he comes forth as king, because also in his kingdom he was born poor." "I saw all the living who walk under the sun with the second youth, who shall rise up in his place." "There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them." "And indeed, those who come last shall not rejoice in him: but this also is vanity and presumption of spirit."

Symmachus translated this passage thus: "Better is a poor man with wisdom than an old and foolish king who knows not how to guard against change." "For the one goes out from prison to reign: while the other, although he was a born king, is oppressed by poverty." "I saw all the living who walk under the sun with the second youth, who rose up for him." "Infinite is all the people who were before both: and posterity shall not rejoice in him." "But this also is a breeze and a feeding on the wind."

My Hebrew mentor, whom I often mention, when he read Ecclesiastes with me, testified that Baraciba—whom they admire especially—had handed down these things concerning the present passage. The interior man is better, who arises in us after the fourteenth year of puberty, than the exterior man who was born from the mother's womb, who knows not how to recede from vice, and who from the house of prisoners—namely, from the maternal womb—went out to this end, that he might reign in vices. Who also in his own power was made poor by perpetrating all evils. I saw those who lived in the former man,

and afterwards were conversant with the second man—him, namely, who was generated for the former predecessor: and I understood that all had sinned in the former man before, with the birth of the second, they became two men. But because they turned to better things, and after the letter Y of the philosophers, having left the left path, they contended toward the right apex, and followed the second, that is, the last man, they shall not rejoice in him, that is, in the former. The Apostle also bears witness to these two men (2 Thess. 2), and Leviticus is not silent: "A man, a man, if he should wish" this or that (Lev. 17:2).

The holy man Gregory, Bishop of Pontus, a hearer of Origen, in the *Metaphrasis* of Ecclesiastes, understood this passage thus: "But I prefer a poor and wise youth to an old and foolish king, to whom it never came into mind that it is possible for any of those whom he had bound to go out from prison to the kingdom, and that he himself should thereafter fall from his own unjust power. For it happens sometimes that those who have been under the wise youth are without sorrow: yet so that they were previously conversant under the old king. For those who were born afterwards, because they did not know past evils, are not able to praise the youth who rose up afterwards, being led away by a perverse opinion and the impulse of an opposing spirit."

The Laodicean Interpreter, striving to express great things in a brief discourse, spoke here also in his usual manner: "The discourse of Ecclesiastes," he says, "is now concerning the change of

good things into evil, attempting to express the foolish man, who, not thinking of future things, is delighted with present and falling things as if they were great and perpetual. And after diverse things which are accustomed to happen to men in their life and to be changed, he brings in a general sentence as it were concerning death, that an innumerable multitude perishes, and gradually is consumed and passes away, each one leaving another in his place, and again another, the successor dying."

Origen and Victorinus did not feel very differently from each other. For after that general sentence which is open to all: that a poor and wise youth is better than an old and foolish king, and that it frequently happens that he, even coming out from the king's prison through his wisdom, commands in place of a perverse ruler, and the foolish king loses the empire which he held: they interpreted this passage concerning Christ and the devil, in that they wish the poor and wise youth to be Christ. A youth, according to that: "It is a great thing for thee to be called my child" (Isa. 49:6). Poor, indeed, because "he was made poor, though he was rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). And wise, because "he increased in age and wisdom and grace before God and men" (Luke 2:52). This one was born in the kingdom of the old man. And therefore he says: "If my kingdom were of this world, my ministers would surely strive for me, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). In the kingdom of that foolish old man, therefore, who

showed him all the kingdoms of the world and his glory, the best youth was born; and from the house of those bound, of whom Jeremiah speaks in Lamentations, saying: "That he might humble under his feet all the prisoners of the earth" (Lam. 3:34), he proceeded to the kingdom, and went into a far country, and against those who did not wish him to reign over them, after some time he returned as king. Therefore, with a presaging spirit, Ecclesiastes saw all the living who are able to be partakers of the youth saying: "I am the life" (John 14:6), and having dismissed the old foolish king, follow Christ. At the same time, two peoples from Israel are signified. The former who was before the advent of the Lord, and the posterior who is to receive the Antichrist instead of Christ: that the former is not entirely cast away (for the first Church was gathered from the Jews and the Apostles) and in the end the Jews, who are to receive the Antichrist instead of Christ, shall not rejoice in Christ.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and draw near to hear." "For the gift of fools is a sacrifice; because they know not the evil they do." He gives precepts of life, and does not wish us to stumble as we go to the Church. For it is not entering the house of God, but entering without offense, that is of praise. And if it were for all who are in the Church of God to hear the word, he would never have added: "draw near, that thou mayest hear" (Exod. 24:2 et seq.). Finally, Moses alone drew near to hear God: the others were not able to draw near. That fools, not know-

ing the remedy of sin, estimate that they are able to satisfy God by the offering of gifts, and they are ignorant that this also is an evil and a sin: to wish to amend what they have done not by obedience and good works, but by gifts and victims. To this agrees that which is said elsewhere: "Obedience above sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:21). And: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6).

(Chapter 5.) "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth." "Therefore let thy words be few, for a dream shall come in the multitude of care, and the voice of a fool in the multiplication of words." Most people think that this is commanded in the present passage: lest we easily promise anything before God, and without consideration of our strength we vow those things which we are not able to fulfill. For God is present, and although He is in heaven and we seem to be on earth, yet He hears what we speak, and our foolishness is argued from the multiplication of words. But others, understanding better, affirm that this is commanded: lest either speaking or thinking more about God than we are able, we should form an opinion; but that we should know our own weakness, because as much as heaven is distant from the earth, so much is our opinion separated from His nature: and therefore our words ought to be moderate. For just as one who is in many thoughts frequently dreams of those things which he thinks about: so he who wishes to discuss more about the divinity, falls into foolishness. Or certainly

thus: our words ought to be few for this reason, that even those things which we think we know, we see through a glass and in an enigma, and we comprehend as a dream what we estimate that we hold. And when we have said more things (as it seemed to us), the end of our disputation is foolishness. For from multiloquio we do not escape sin.

"When thou hast made a vow to God, delay not to render it, for there is no will in fools." "Whatever thou hast vowed, render." "It is better not to vow, than to vow, and not to render." Simple understanding does not need interpretation. It is better not to promise than not to perform promises, because they displease God, and those who do not fulfill vows are computed among the fools. But as for what he says: "There is no will in fools," "of God" is understood, according to that of the Apostle (1 Cor. 16:22): "And indeed it was not the will, that I should come to you now." But if we wish also to say something more curiously, it is commanded to the Christian that he complete faith with work, and be not similar to the Jews, who, promising and saying: "All things whatsoever the Lord has commanded, we will do" (Exod. 24:3), adored idols. And after the servants were beaten and oppressed with stones, they finally slaughtered the son of the master of the house himself. It is better, therefore, to weigh a doubtful sentence for a long time, than to be easy in words and difficult in work. "For the servant who knows the will of his Lord, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47).

"Give not thy mouth to make thy flesh to sin."
 "And say not before the angel that it is ignorance; lest God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thy hands." The Hebrew felt thus: What thou art not able to do, do not promise. For words do not pass into the wind, but are immediately carried to the Lord by the present angel, who adheres to each one as a companion. And thou, who thinkest that God is ignorant of what thou hast promised, provokest Him to wrath, so that all thy works may be dissipated. But in that which he says: "That thou shouldst not make thy flesh to sin," not diligently sifting it, he understood it as if he had said: Give not thy mouth, that thou shouldst not sin. But to us another sense seems: that those are argued who complain about the vice of the flesh and say that they are compelled by the necessity of the body to do those things which they would not, according to that of the Apostle (Rom. 7:15): "For what I wish, that I do not; but what I hate," and the rest. Do not, therefore, he says, seek vain excuses, and give an occasion to thy flesh for sinning, and say: It is not I who sin, but the sin that dwells in my flesh. Finally, in that place where he says: "Say not before the angel that it is ignorance," Aquila, interpreting the Hebrew word SEGAGA for "ignorance," translated it akousion, that is, "not spontaneous." For if, he says, thou shalt say this, thou provokest God as if the author of evil and sin, so that being angry, if thou shouldst seem to have anything of good, He may take it from thy hands. Or certainly, Him being handed over to such a

sentiment, He may deliver him into a reprobate sense, that he may do those things which are not convenient.

"For in the multitude of dreams there are also vanities, and very many words. But fear thou God." The Hebrews also explain this passage thus: Do not do those former things of which it has already been said, lest thou easily believe in dreams. For when thou shalt see diverse things through the quiet of the night, and thy soul shall have been agitated by various terrors, or incited by promises, thou despise those things which belong to the dream. And only fear God. For he who shall believe in dreams shall deliver himself to vanities and follies. Otherwise: Because I have said and commanded: "Give not thy mouth to make thy flesh to sin," and that thou shouldst seek various excuses: I now bring this in, since in the sleep of this life, and in the image of the shadow of a cloud in which we live, we are able to find many things which may seem probable to us and excuse our sins. Therefore I admonish that thou shouldst beware of this alone, that thou think not God to be absent, but that thou shouldst fear Him, and know that He is present to all thy works: and that thou, being created with free will, art not compelled, but wilt what thou doest.

"If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the robbery of judgment, and injustices in the region, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there is a higher one over them, and moreover the king

of the earth is over all in the cultivated field." Christ's tunic was woven from the top (John 19:23, Luke 8:44), nor could it be rent by those crucifying him: and he whom the Savior had cast out demons, he commanded to go away clothed in the garments of the Apostles. Therefore let us also strive not to rend the garments of our Ecclesiastes, nor to sew together on this side and that rags of opinions for our own will, but to preserve one text of disputation, and to follow the same sense and order. Above he had said: "Say not before the angel that it is ignorance, lest God be angry at thy voice," and the rest: and he had spoken against those who denied that human affairs were ruled by providence. Because, therefore, against this precept a question arose as to why the just sustained oppression, and why unjust judgments are made in all the world, and God is not an avenger; now he brings in and solves what could be opposed, saying: If thou seest the oppression of the poor, who is proclaimed blessed in the Gospel, and things carried on by force, not by justice, marvel not, and let it not seem to be anything new to thee. For God, higher than the highest, beholds these things, who set His angels over the judges and kings of the earth, who are able to prohibit injustice, and to prevail more on earth than any powers of men. But because He preserves judgment for the end, and for the consummation of the world, when the harvest shall be ripe and the reapers shall come, He shall command that the wheat be separated and the cockle delivered to the burning: therefore now He

expects and defers the sentence as long as the field of this world is cultivated. But that the world is interpreted as the field, the Lord exposed in the parable of the tares and the wheat (Matt. 13).

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; and he that loveth riches shall not enjoy them. But this also is vanity." "For in the multitude of goods there are many who eat them; and what is the strength to him who has them, except that he sees them with his eyes?" Wherever we put "silver," according to the ambiguity of the Greek speech, "money" can also be translated: for *argyron* signifies both. Furthermore, Tullius refers that those were first called "moneyed" (*pecuniosos*) who had more *peculia*, that is, cattle (*pecora*). For thus they called them anciently. Gradually, however, through abuse, the name devolved to another thing. The greedy man is described, therefore, as never being filled with wealth, and the more he has, the more he desires. The sentence of Flaccus also concurs with this, who says (Horace, Book 1, Epist. 2, to Lollius): "The greedy man is always in want," and that of a noble historian, that avarice is diminished neither by want nor by plenty. Nothing, therefore, says Ecclesiastes, do riches profit the possessor, except this alone, that he sees what he possesses. For the greater the substance shall be, the more ministers he shall have who devour the gathered wealth. But he may see only what he has, and he is not able to take more than the food of one man.

"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he has eaten little or much. But the satiety of

the rich will not suffer him to sleep." Still the discourse is concerning the rich and the greedy man, and he is compared to the laboring man, who sleeps without care, whether he has eaten little or much, because he digests any kind of food by the labor of work and sweat, and enjoys sweet sleep. But the rich man, distended with feasts and torn in diverse directions by thoughts, is not able to sleep, with surfeit overflowing and undigested food seething in the narrow passages of the stomach. Furthermore, because sleep is also called the common exit from this life, better will be the rest of him who works in the present and is conversant in good works according to his strength, than their riches, concerning whom it is written: "Woe to you rich, for you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24).

"There is a most evil languor which I have seen under the sun, riches kept by the lord to his own evil." "And those riches perished in a most evil distention." "And he begat a son, and there is nothing in his hands." "As he came out of his mother's womb, naked he shall return as he came, and he shall take nothing of his labor that he may carry in his hands." "But this also is a most evil languor, that as he came, so he goes." "What then shall he have more, because he has labored for the wind?" "And all his days he shall eat in darkness, and in very much indignation, and in infirmity, and in wrath." Join what follows with the above: Ecclesiastes describing the rich man, who is neither able himself to enjoy his riches and frequently comes into danger because of them,

nor leaves to his heir what he has gathered; but both he and his son, as they came naked, so naked they return to the earth, and nothing of their labors accompanies them. For is it not a most evil languor to be tortured by thought for riches, and to seek with vain labor wealth that will perish, which we are not able to carry away with us when we die, in sadness, in groaning, in indignation, in strifes? And these things according to the simple sense. But that we may be elevated higher, he seems to me to speak concerning philosophers or heretics, who gather the riches of dogmas to their own evil, and neither the inventors are able to follow any utility, nor leave perpetual fruit to their followers. But both they and their disciples return to the earth, and lose their riches by Him who said: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject" (1 Cor. 1:19). Truly indeed, as they have gone out from their mother's womb—from the perverse Church, namely, and its contrary, concerning which it is written: "But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26)—so naked they shall go into the wind, and laboring into nothing. Who "failed searching with a search" (Psalm 63:7 [Heb 64:6]), and are carried about by every wind of doctrine, nor have they light, but eat their sacraments in darkness. They are always in infirmity, always in wrath, treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath, nor having God propitious.

"Behold what I have seen to be good, which is best: to eat and to drink, and to see the joy in

all his labor which he has labored under the sun, for the number of the days of his life, which God has given him, for this indeed is his portion." "But also every man to whom God has given riches and substance, and has granted to him that he should eat from them and take his portion and rejoice from his labor, this is the gift of God." "For he shall not much remember the days of his life, because God occupies his heart in joy." In comparison to him who eats in the darkness of cares with his wealth and gathers things that will perish with great weariness of life, he says that he who enjoys present things is better. For here there is at least a little pleasure in enjoying: there, however, the greatness brings only care. And he renders the causes why it is a gift of God to be able to enjoy riches. Since "he shall not much remember the days of his life." For God calls him away in the joy of his heart: he will not be in sadness, he will not be vexed by thought, being led away by present joy and pleasure. But it is better, according to the Apostle (1 Cor. 10:3), to understand spiritual food and spiritual drink given by God, and to see goodness in all one's labor, because with great labor and study we are able to contemplate true goods. And this is our portion, that we should rejoice in our study and labor. Which although it is good, yet until Christ, our life, be manifested, it is not yet fully good. And therefore God will not much remember the days of our life. It is also to be noted that here *perispasmos* (occupation) is taken in a better part for the occupation of spiritual and true joy.

(Chapter 6.) "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is frequent among men." "A man to whom God has given riches, and substance, and glory, and nothing is wanting to his soul of all that he has desired, and God has not given him power that he should eat from it, but a stranger eats it." "This is vanity, and a most evil languor." "If a man should beget a hundred, and should live many years, and the days of his years should be more, and his soul should not be filled with good things, nor should he have a burial: I said that an untimely birth is better than he." "For in vanity he comes, and in darkness he goes, and in darkness his name shall be hidden." "And indeed he saw not the sun, nor knew it: rest is for this one more than for that." "And if he should live a thousand years twice told, and saw not goodness, do not all hasten to one place?" He describes the greedy rich man, and asserts that this evil is frequent among men: that nothing of those things which are thought good in the world should be wanting to him, and nonetheless he tortures himself with the most foolish parsimony, preserving things to be devoured by others. And he also adds that hyperbolically: that even if he should procreate a hundred children, and not, like Adam, live nearly a thousand years, but should live for two thousand years, and his soul should waste away with desire and avarice: he would be of a much worse condition than the untimely birth, who, as soon as he is seen to be born, perished. For the latter saw neither evil nor good: but the

former, although he possessed good things, was always tortured by sadness and thought: and the untimely birth should have more rest than that long-lived greedy man: and yet both are snatched away by an equal end, while both this one and that one are withdrawn by a similar death. This can also be taken concerning Israel: that God had given to them the Law, and the Prophets, the Testament, and the promise, the Savior saying: "Because the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). All these things were transferred to a strange and foreign people from the Gentiles, and they saw their goods and did not enjoy them. And that we are of a much better condition, who as it were were thought untimely and new by those who applauded themselves in antiquity, glorying in their fathers and saying: "Our father is Abraham" (John 8:39): and yet both we and they hasten to one place, that is, to the judgment of God. But as for what he says in the middle: "And indeed he had no burial"; either this signifies that that rich man does not think of his death, and although he possesses all things, even in the construction of a burial he is greedy; or that often killed by snares on account of those riches, he is cast away unburied; or, which I think better, that he has done nothing of a good deed, from which he could compare a memory for himself among posterity, and not pass life in silence, as the cattle, although he had the material through which it could have appeared that he lived.

"All the labor of man is in his mouth, and indeed the soul shall not be filled." "For what is more to the wise than to the fool, what to the poor, except to know that he may go against life?" Everything for which men labor in this world is consumed by the mouth, and being ground by the teeth is handed over to the belly to be digested. And when it has delighted the throat a little, it seems to attribute pleasure so long as it is contained in the throat. But when it has passed into the stomach, the difference between foods ceases. And after all these things, the soul of the eater is not filled: either because he desires again what he ate, and both the wise and the fool are unable to live without food, and the poor man seeks nothing else except how [Other reading: that] he may sustain the organ of his little body, and not perish of starvation: or because the soul takes no utility from the refreshment of the little body, and food is common to both the wise and the fool, and the poor man goes thither where he has perceived riches to be. But it is better that this should be understood concerning the Ecclesiastical man, who being erudite in the celestial Scriptures, has all labor in his mouth, and his soul is not filled, while he always desires to learn. And in this the wise man has more than the foolish: because since he feels himself to be poor (that poor man, however, who is called blessed in the Gospel) he hastens to those things which are of life, and walks the steep and narrow way which leads to life, and is poor from evil works, and knows where Christ, who is the life, dwells.

"Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering in the soul." "But this also is vanity and presumption of spirit." Symmachus interpreted this clearly, saying: "It is better to provide than to walk as one pleases"; that is, it is better to do all things according to the sense, which is the eye of the soul, than to follow the will of the heart. For this is to walk in the soul, as Ezekiel says: "Who walk in the will of their heart" (Ezek. 11:21). Or certainly he argues against the proud man and him who pleases himself, and says that he is better who provides all things than him to whom nothing pleases except what he himself has done: than which nothing is worse, and more empty than any wind. Again, here too for "presumption of spirit," Aquila and Theodotion interpreted "feeding of the wind": Symmachus indeed, "affliction of spirit." Furthermore, it is to be known that among the Hebrews both "spirit" and "wind" are called similarly, that is, RUHA.

"What is that which is to be: its name has already been called, and it is known that it is man, and he will not be able to be judged with one stronger than himself." It is openly predicated concerning the advent of the Savior, that he who is to be, before he was seen in the body, his name was already called in the Scriptures and known to the prophets and the saints of God: because he is man, and according to this that he is man, he is not able to confer himself with the Father, and in the Gospel he says: "The Father who sent me is greater than I" (John 14:28). Whence also in the following things it is commanded that we

seek not beyond what is written concerning him, lest man should wish to know more than the Scripture has testified. For since we are ignorant concerning our state, and our life passes through as a shadow, and future things are uncertain, it is not expedient for us that we should inquire into greater things than we are able. Some think that it is signified in this place that God already knew the name of all who are to be and of men to be surrounded by a body: nor is man able to respond against his Maker, why he was made thus or thus. For the more we shall have sought, the more our vanity and superfluous words are shown: and that free will is not taken away from the prescience of God, but causes precede before, why each thing was made thus.

"Since there are many words multiplying vanity. What is more for man?" "For who has known what is good for man in life, in the number of the days of the life of his vanity? and he shall make them as a shadow, because who shall announce to man what shall be after him under the sun?" Since, he says, man is ignorant concerning his state, and whatever he seems to know and see, he sees not as the truth of the thing holds itself, but through a glass and a shadow and an image, nor does he know future things, and in multiloquio he does not escape sin; let him put silence to his mouth, and believe that He has come who was written, not inquiring how, and how great, and of what kind He came.

(Chapter 7.) "A good name is above good oil, and the day of death above the day of his birth."

Consider, he says, O man, thy days are short, and because thou shalt soon cease to be, the flesh being dissolved: make for thyself a longer fame, so that just as ointment delights the nostrils with its odor, so all posterity may be delighted at thy name. Which Symmachus interpreted clearly, saying: "A good name is better than sweet-smelling ointment." Since it is the custom of the Hebrews to call good ointment "oil." But as for what he says: "And the day of death above the day of his birth," either he shows this, that it is better to go out from the world and be without tribulations and the uncertain state of life, than entering the world to sustain all these things. Or certainly that in death, what kind we are is known: but in the beginning of being born, what kind we are to be is ignored. Or that nativity binds the liberty of the soul to the body, and death resolves it.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, in which is the end of every man: and he who lives shall give to his heart." It is more useful to go to the obsequies of a funeral than to go to a house of feasting, because there we are reminded of our condition and human fragility from the present corpse. In the joy of feasting, however, even if we seemed to have any fear, we lose it. Symmachus interpreted the last verse more clearly, saying: "And he who lives shall look back to the mind." From which things it is approved, in that which above he was seen to approve food and drink, that he does not prefer pleasure to all things, as most people badly estimate: but in comparison to avarice and

excessive parsimony, although it be brief, it is more if one should enjoy his riches even for a moment. For he never would have preferred the sadness of mourning to the festivity of feasting if he had thought that eating and drinking were of any moment.

"Sorrow is better than laughter, because in the sadness of the countenance the heart shall be amended." Laughter dissolves the one laughing: wrath corrects and amends. Let us be angry also at ourselves, if whenever we sin, let us be angry also at others. For through the sadness of the countenance, the mind shall be made better, as Symmachus interpreted. And therefore: "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn" (Luke 6:25).

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, and the heart of fools in the house of joy." "Blessed," says the Savior, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:5). Samuel also mourned king Saul all the days of his life (1 Sam. 16). And Paul says that he mourns over those who after various sins had not wished to do penance (2 Cor. 12). Let the heart of the wise, therefore, go to the house of such a man who may rebuke him when he is delinquent, so that he may lead him to tears, who may provoke him to weep for his own sins; and let him not go to the house of joy, where the teacher flatters and deceives, where he seeks not the conversion of the hearers, but both applause and praise. Such a preceptor is bewailed, rich in discourse, rich in words, who because he is satiated, therefore receives his con-

solation. Finally, also the following verses concur with this exposition. For he says:

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." "Because as the voice of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool." "But this also is vanity." For it is better to be rebuked by a wise man than to be deceived by flattering adulation. To which that is similar: "Better are the wounds of a friend than the voluntary kisses of an enemy" (Prov. 27:6). For just as the voice of burning thorns under a pot renders an unpleasant sound: so also the words of a stroking master will not profit, either exhorting his hearers to the cares of the world, which are interpreted as thorns, or preparing them for the future fire. Symmachus, instead of what we have put: "Because as the voice of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool," interpreting this sense which we have discussed above, says: "For through the voice of the unskilled someone may be bound in chains," that is, the hearer is more entangled in the voice of such preceptors, while each one is constricted by the chains of his own sins.

"Oppression disturbs the wise man, and shall destroy the heart of his strength" (Prov. 9:8). Now take the wise man placed in progress, according to that: "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." For the perfect wise man needs no rebuking, he is disturbed by no calumny. Let us use this verse if whenever we see a just and wise man sustain calumny, and be disturbed by the iniquity of judgment, and God not immedi-

ately succor him present. But for that which the Seventy, and Aquila, and Theodotion interpreted, "destroys the heart" eutonias autou, that is, "of his strength" or "of his vigor"; Symmachus says, "and destroys the heart" MATTHANA, that is, "the gift": joining both the Hebrew word and the interpretation of it, and making that sense which is written elsewhere: "Gifts blind even the eyes of the wise" (Deut. 16:19).

"Better is the end of a discourse than the beginning thereof." Epilogues are better in speaking than the exordium. For in these the care of the speaker is finished, in the latter it begins. Or certainly thus: He who begins to hear a discourse and goes to a teacher, is in the beginning; but he who hears the end, is consummated and perfect. But also it can be understood in this way: While we are in this world, what we know is all a beginning: but when that which is perfect shall come, we shall be in the last and consummated things. The Hebrew discussed this passage with the following verse thus: It is better for thee to consider the end of a business than the beginning, and to be patient than to be snatched away by the fury of impatience. We learn also from this little sentence that there is no wisdom in men, since it is better to be silent than to speak; and because when the oration shall have been finished, the hearer thinks within himself what was said: but when we have begun to speak, he has not yet received any utility.

"The patient is better than the proud in spirit." Because above he had conceded wrath, saying:

"Wrath is better than laughter," lest we should think that wrath which is in passion is praised, he now commands that wrath is to be taken away entirely. For there he put wrath for rebuke toward those sinning, and for erudition toward minors: but here he has restrained impatience. But patience is necessary not only in straits, but also in more joyful things, lest we be exalted more than is becoming. It seems me also that he who is now called proud in spirit is contrary to the poor in spirit in the Gospel, who also is placed in beatitude.

"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, because anger rests in the bosom of fools." Not that he concedes that one should be angry more slowly, does he therefore now say: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry"; but because when anger shall have been raging and recent, it is more easily settled if delayed, and is able to be taken away. And because anger is always joined to pride, desiring vengeance, he said above that the patient man is better than him who is proud in spirit, and now he gave a sign of foolishness: because although someone should be estimated powerful and wise, if he be wrathful, he is argued as a fool: "For anger rests in the bosom of fools."

"Say not: what has happened: because the former days were better than these; for thou hast not wisely interrogated concerning this." Do not prefer the old world to the present, because God is the one founder of both. Virtues make good days for the one living, vices, bad ones. Say not therefore that the days were better under Moses,

and under Christ, than they are now. For also in that time many were incredulous, and their days were made bad, and now many believers are found, concerning whom the Savior says: "Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29). Otherwise: Thou oughtest so to live that always the present days may be better to thee than the past, lest when thou shalt have begun gradually to decrease, it be said to thee: "You were running well, who hindered you from not obeying the truth" (Gal. 5:7)? And again: "Beginning in the spirit, now you are consummated in the flesh" (Ibid. 3:3). Otherwise: Say not that the times formerly of Moses were better than now of Christ, of the Law than of Grace. For if thou shouldst wish to seek this, thou doest imprudently, not seeing how much the Gospel is distant from the Old Testament.

"Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and more to those seeing the sun, because as the shadow of wisdom, so is the shadow of silver: and what is more, the science of wisdom shall vivify him who has it." A wise man with riches is of greater glory than only a wise man. For some need wisdom, others wealth, and he who is wise and not rich, can indeed teach what is good, but sometimes he is not able to furnish what is sought. And therefore he says: Since just as the shadow of wisdom, so is the shadow of money, that is, just as wisdom protects, so sometimes money also protects. And lest he should be seen to have detracted from wisdom while he subjected it to a fortuitous good (for it is not

in our power to have riches, which the unjust often possess more), therefore he demonstrates wisdom to be greater, saying: "And more the science of wisdom shall vivify him who has it." In this, he says, wisdom is greater than riches, that without any wealth it vivifies him who shall have had it.

Some interpret this passage thus: "inheritance," they say, he put for good conduct, through which we are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ. Ecclesiastes wishes to teach, therefore, how much these differ, who deserve to see the Sun of justice and have wisdom with good conduct, from those who, without wisdom, have bestowed the study only of life and conduct. Which indeed Daniel also shows, saying: "Those who understand my words shall shine as the lights of heaven" (Dan. 12:3). Or as Theodotion interpreted: "As the brightness of the firmament." But those who shall have done my words, as the stars of heaven." But the "shadow of silver," or of money, we ought to receive according to the anagoge (spiritual interpretation), from which the talents and minae in the parables of the Gospel are collected (Matt. 25, Luke 19), so that when we shall have been under the shadow of wisdom, and under the shadow of such silver: "The sun shall not burn us by day, nor the moon by night" (Ps. 120). But this also can be said, because our life upon earth is a shadow: "And the spirit of our countenance, Christ the Lord, to whom we said: In His shadow we shall live among the nations" (Lam. 4:20). All our protection in this earth is like

a shadow, whether of wisdom or of the aforesaid silver, until the day breathes and the shadows are moved away. Symmachus, in his manner, interpreted even in this place more clearly, saying: "Just as wisdom protects, similarly money protects." But the following verse clearly exhorts to the study of science.

"See the works of God, because who will be able to adorn him whom God has perverted?" And in this place Symmachus thus translated: "Learn the works of God, because no one will be able to correct what He has diminished," that is, let it suffice for thee from the holy Scriptures, or from the very contemplation of the elements, to know and understand what things have been made: not however to search out the causes and reasons why each thing was so made, or should have been made otherwise than it was made. For example, if someone wishes to ask why God speaks thus to Moses: "Who made the mute and the deaf, the seeing and the blind, was it not I, the Lord God?" (Exod. 4:12). And should say: Why were the blind and the deaf and the mute so created, and other things similar to these? The testimony of the seventeenth psalm is to be taken in this place, in which it is said to the Lord: "With the holy thou shalt be holy, and with the perverse thou shalt be perverted." And it is to be said that the Lord is holy with him who is holy, and is perverted among him who of his own will shall have been previously perverse. According to that also which is written in Leviticus: "If they shall walk perverse toward Me, I also will walk

perverse toward them in My fury" (Lev. 26:27). Which indeed could also explain that: why the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh. For just as one and the same operation of the sun melts wax and dries mud, and for its own substance the wax melts and the mud is dried: so the one operation of God in the signs in Egypt softened the hearts of believers and hardened the incredulous, who according to their hardness and impenitent heart treasured up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath from these wonders, which when they saw them being done, they did not believe.

"In the day of goodness be in good, and in the evil day see." And indeed God made this agreeable to that for speaking, so that man may not find anything after Him." And indeed I know that I heard in the Church from him who was thought to have knowledge of the Scriptures, these verses thus explained: "While thou art in the present world, and art able to do anything of good work, labor, so that afterwards thou thyself secure in the evil day, that is, in the day of judgment, mayest see others tortured. For just as God made the present world, in which we are able to prepare for ourselves the fruit of good works; so also the future, in which no faculty of good work is given." He seemed indeed to persuade while he said it to the hearers: but it seems to me there is another sense, which Symmachus also translated, saying: "In the good day be in good; but behold the evil day. Since God made this similar to that, so that man might not find what he might complain against Him." And both good and evil things, he

says, sustain as they shall have happened to thee. Nor think that there is a nature of only good or only evil things in the world, since this world consists of diverse contraries: hot and cold, dry and moist, hard and soft, dark and bright, evil and good. But God made this so that wisdom might have a place in choosing the good and avoiding the evil, and free will might be left to man, lest he should say that he was generated insensitive and stupid by God; but that He made diverse things for this reason, so that man could not complain about his condition. And at the same time this testimony will be coupled consequently to the preceding ones, in which he said: "Who will be able to adorn what God has perverted?"

"I have seen all things in the days of my vanity. There is a just man perishing in his justice, and there is an impious man long-lived in his malice." The Savior says something similar to this in the Gospel: "He who finds his soul shall lose it, and he who shall have lost his soul for my sake, shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). The Maccabees for the law of God and justice seemed to perish in their justice, and the martyrs who shed their blood for Christ. On the contrary, those who even at that time ate swine's flesh, and after the coming of the Lord sacrificed to idols, these seemed to live in this world, and because of their malice to persevere long-lived. But God's patience is in secret, both to trouble the saints now, that they may receive evils in their life, and not to visit the sinners for their crime, and to reserve them as if for a victim, so that He may be able to restore eternal

goods to the former, and to bring perpetual evils upon the latter. The Hebrews suspect the just perishing in their justice to be the sons of Aaron, because while they think they act justly, they offered strange fire. And they say the impious man long-lived in his malice is Manasseh, who after captivity, being restored to the kingdom, lived thereafter for a long time.

"Be not just overmuch, and do not seek more, lest thou be astonished." If thou shalt have beheld anyone rigid and fierce toward all the sins of the brothers, so that he gives no pardon either to one sinning in speech or lingering sometimes because of natural sloth, know this man to be more just than is just. For since the Savior commands, saying: "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Luke 6:37); and no one is without sin, not even if his life shall have been of one day, it is an inhumane justice not forgiving the fragility of the condition of men. Be not therefore just overmuch, because a great weight and a small weight are an abomination before the Lord. Whence also among the philosophers virtues are placed in the middle, and everything that is too much, whether upward or downward, is reputed as a vice. But as for what he says: "Do not seek more, lest thou be troubled," or "lest thou be astonished"; he knows our mind is not able to comprehend perfect wisdom, and he commands us that we ought to know the measure of our fragility. Finally, Paul also to him who wished to know more than a man was able, seeking and saying: "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" answered:

"O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9:19), and the rest. For if he who is introduced questioning had heard the causes of the question from the Apostle, he would perhaps have grown numb with astonishment, and would have felt the grace to be useless. Because there is also a gift, according to the same Apostle, which may not profit him to whom it is given. The Hebrews interpret this command, that is: "Be not just overmuch," concerning Saul, who had mercy on Agag, whom the Lord had commanded to be killed (1 Sam. 15). But also that servant in the Gospel (Matt. 18), to whom the Lord had forgiven, and he himself would not forgive his fellow-servant, can be fitted to this verse, because he was just overmuch.

"Do not act impiously overmuch, and do not be a fool; why wilt thou die in a time not thine own?" Since the Lord speaks: "I do not wish the death of him who dies, only let him return and live" (Ezek. 18:32): let it suffice to have sinned once; we ought to raise ourselves up after a ruin. For if according to those who dispute concerning physics, the swallow knows how to heal the eyes of its chicks from its own celandine, and wounded goats seek after dittany; why should we be ignorant that the medicine of penance has been proposed to sinners? But as for what he says: "Lest thou die in a time not thine own" (Num. 16); we know Korah and Dathan and Abiram because of the sedition against Moses and Aaron, were devoured by a sudden opening of the earth, and for the emendation of others, very many were judged

even in this life before the day of judgment. What he says therefore is such: Do not add sins to sins, lest thou provoke God to bring punishment upon thee even here.

"It is good that thou shouldst retain this. And indeed from this do not let go thy hand; since he who fears God shall come forth to all things." It is good to do good to the just, but also to do good to sinners is not unjust. It is good to sustain the domestics of the faith, but also to give to everyone who asks is a command. For he who fears God, and is an imitator of his Creator, who rains upon the just and the unjust, hastens to do good to all without respect of persons. Otherwise: Because this miserable life is varied daily by diverse events, both toward adverse and toward prosperous things, let the mind of the just man be prepared, and let him ask the mercy of the Lord, so that whatever shall have happened, he may sustain it with a balanced mind. For he who fears God is neither elevated by prosperous things nor oppressed by adverse ones.

"Wisdom shall strengthen the wise above ten having power who are in the city: because there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin." Therefore wisdom strengthens the just man, and the help of all the princes of the city exceeds over him, because although someone may be just, yet while he is established in this flesh, he is subject to vices and sins, and needs a greater protection. Otherwise: The ten who have power and consist in the city are angels, who have arrived at the perfect denary number and

help the human race. But if anyone considers all helps, the help of wisdom is greater, that is, of our Lord Jesus Christ. For after the angels said: "We have cured Babylon, and she is not cured, let us leave her, and let each one go into his own land" (Jer. 51:9), then the Master of physicians Himself descended, and healed by the touch of His hem us sprinkled with blood and dripping with the gore of sins, who had spent all our substance upon physicians (Luke 8). But He healed in the city, that is, in this world, and "strengthened the wise," or as the Seventy translated, "helped." For to everyone who has, it shall be given to him, and it shall be added to him. But because man placed in sins and fixed in the mud of the deep needed a greater help, therefore Wisdom herself came. Otherwise: Above he had said that good was to be done both to domestics and to strangers. Someone therefore could answer: If I wish to do good to all, I do not have whence I may do it. Nor can a just man have such great riches, which are accustomed to abound more to sinners; therefore he now says: Those whom thou art not able to help in fact, help by counsel, cherish by consolation. For wisdom is able to furnish more to one established in distress than any greatest powers. And do this very thing with prudence. For great is the scale of justice, and to whom, and how much, and for how long, and what kind, whether in fact or in counsel, one should give.

"And indeed to all words which they shall speak, do not give thy heart: because thou shalt not hear thy servant cursing thee. For thy heart

frequently knows that thou also hast cursed others." Do what is commanded, and strengthened by the help of wisdom, prepare thy heart for either good or evil things, and do not care what enemies speak of thee, what kind of opinion there is abroad. For just as it is of a prudent man not to hear a murmuring servant, nor to apply a curious ear to what he speaks of him in his absence: for if he shall have done this, he will always be in tribulation, and his wrath will be moved at the muttering of a servant; so also it is of a wise man to follow wisdom leading the way, and not to consider vain rumors. But also by another example he teaches that it is to be cared for not at all by a just man what men speak, saying: Just as thy conscience knows that thou hast spoken of many, and hast often detracted from others: so also thou oughtest to forgive others detracting. And at the same time he teaches that one is not easily to be judged, and he who has a beam in his eye should not speak of the mote of another.

"All these things I have tested in wisdom, and I said: I will become wise, and it was made further from me, more than it was: and a high depth, who shall find it?" He says of himself, as the books of the Kingdoms also testify (1 Kings 3 and 4), that he sought wisdom beyond all men and tested to arrive at the end of it, but the more he sought, the less he found, and was submerged in the midst of a mist, surrounded by the darkness of ignorance. Otherwise: A man who shall have been learned in the Scriptures, the more he shall have begun to know, the more a greater obscurity daily arises

to him in these. Otherwise: The contemplation of wisdom in this life is seen in a mirror and in an image: when therefore I shall have reflected upon her knowledge to be revealed face to face in the future, then I shall clearly recognize that I now differ far from her knowledge.

"I have gone round, and my heart, to know and consider and seek wisdom and reason, and to know the impiety of the fool and the error of the imprudent." And I find a woman more bitter than death, who is a snare, and her heart is nets, her hands are chains." He who is good before God shall be delivered from her, but the sinner shall be caught in her." For that which the Seventy put: "I have gone round, and my heart, to know," Symmachus interpreted, saying: "I passed through all things in my sense, to know and to learn and to investigate." Since therefore above Ecclesiastes had said that he had tested all things in wisdom, and the more he sought her, the further she had fled from him; he now says also another thing he sought in his wisdom, what among human affairs precedes all evils, and what thing holds the principality in impiety, foolishness, error, and madness. And he says he found woman to be the head of all evils: because also through her death entered into the world, and she captures the precious souls of men. For the hearts of all committing adultery are like an oven: which made the hearts of youths fly away. And when she has fallen into the mind of a wretched lover, she draws him headlong: nor does she allow him to look back before his feet, but like a snare and a

net she entangles the heart of the youth. For her hands are chains. For which Aquila interpreted: "Her hands are bound," which in the Hebrew language is said ASSURIM. For she is able to persuade, she is not able to use force: nor to draw to herself those unwilling. He who shall have been just and good before God shall be delivered from her: but the sinner being caught shall be led down to death. Let us not think Solomon brought forth this sentence about the race of women rashly: he speaks what he has experienced. For he offended God for this reason, because he was caught by women. And these things according to the letter. But according to the spiritual understanding, we either name all sin in general and iniquity a woman, who under the appearance of a woman sits in Zechariah upon the talent of lead (Zech. 5:7): or we receive the devil figuratively as a woman, because of effeminated strengths: or certainly idolatry, and that we may approach more closely, the Church of heretics, which calls him who is foolish in sense to herself, so that being led in he may receive stolen bread and stolen water, that is, a false sacrament and a polluted baptism.

"Behold this I have found, said Ecclesiastes, one to one, that I might find the number, which my soul has still sought, and I have not found." One man of a thousand I have found, and a woman in all these I have not found." Only this I have found: that God made man upright; and they themselves sought many thoughts."

This, he says, I have found, diligently fanning all things: that by sinning little by little, and

by adding one fault to another, we make for ourselves a great sum of sins. For "Esebon," which all with one voice have translated "logismon" (logic/reasoning), according to the ambiguity of the Hebrew speech, we are able to call both "number," and "sum," and "reason," and "thought." But also this, he says, my soul has sought, whether a righteous woman may be found. And since I have scarcely found a few good ones among men, so that one of a thousand could have been found, I have not been able to find a good woman at all. For all have led me not to virtue, but to luxury. And because the heart of man is diligently set toward malice from youth (Gen. 8:21), and almost all have offended God: in this ruin of the human race, woman is easier to fall. Concerning whom also the gentile poet says: ". . . . A woman is always a varying and changeable thing. . ." (Virgil, Aeneid IV, 569). And the Apostle: "Always learning," he says, "and never arriving at the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). And lest he should seem to damn the common nature of men and make God the author of evil, while He is the founder of such who are not able to avoid evil, he shrewdly took precaution and said that we were created good by God: but because we have been left to our free will, by our own vice we slide into worse things, while we seek greater things and think various things beyond our strengths.

Otherwise: Daily placing the reason of each thing with myself, I have been able to find no thought which was not troubled from without

by a perverse thought. But in a thousand men I have found a man who was founded according to the image of the Founder: and in a thousand not just any men, but in a thousand "men": whose number woman has not been able to fill. And in a thousand who have not approached a woman, and for that reason have remained most pure. But all these things are to be taken tropologically. For in many studious ones, and those sweating in daily meditation, scarcely is a thought found pure and worthy of the name of a man. We can also take thoughts for men, women for works, and say that it can with difficulty be found that the thought of anyone is pure. But works, because they are administered through the body, are always mixed with some error. But for that which we said above, interpreting the Hebrew speech: "One to one, that the number might be found," or "sum," or "reason," or "thought": Symmachus interpreted more clearly, "to find the reason one to one." For that which we are accustomed to call absolutely and neutrally, that is, "this I sought, that I wished to find," the Hebrews pronounce in the feminine gender, just as in the psalm: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek" (Ps. 26:4), for that which is "one."

(Chapter 8) "Who is as the wise man? and who knows the solution of a word? The wisdom of a man shall enlighten his countenance: and the strong shall change his face." Above he had taught that a good man is found with difficulty, and he had struck down the question coming against it: that good men were founded by God,

but of their own will they slipped into sins. Now he enumerates, as if boastful, what good things God gave to man, namely wisdom and reason and providence, to know the hidden mysteries of God, to enter into His secrets with the sense of the heart. But he speaks indirectly of himself, because no one was so wise as he, and no one so knew the solutions of problems, and his wisdom was praised by the whole people, which not only lay hidden within, but also shone out in the surface of the body and the mirror of the countenance, and beyond all men he painted the prudence of his mind in his face. The Seventy, for that which we put: "Who is as the wise man," translated: "Who knows the wise?" And for that which we said: "And the strong shall change his face," they put: "And the impudent in his countenance shall be hated." And indeed since there are many who promise wisdom, he who is able to discern the true wise man from those who seem to be wise is found with difficulty. And since there are very many who say they are able to solve the hidden things of the Scriptures, rare is he who finds the true solution. But as for what follows: "The wisdom of a man shall enlighten his countenance, and the wicked shall be hated for his face," we are able to explain thus, so that we may put the words of Paul: "But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with revealed face" (2 Cor. 3:18); and of the Psalmist singing: "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us" (Ps. 4:7). But here he says the wisdom of a man is no other than the wisdom of God. Which, though it be the

wisdom of God, according to the possibility of the capacity of man it begins to be his who shall have deserved to have it. Every heretic and defender of false dogma is of an impudent countenance. Finally, Marcion and Valentinus say they are of a better nature than the Creator is. And this could be borne in some part if they contended they had the hope of this thing, and did not already possess the nature.

"I keep the mouth of the king, and the word of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go from his face, and do not stand in an evil word, since everything that he shall wish, he will do. Just as the king shall say, having power: and who shall say to him, What doest thou?" He seems indeed to command obedience to kings and powers according to the Apostle (Titus 3:1), especially with the Seventy translators speaking in the imperative mood: "Keep the mouth of the king"; but I think it is now said of that king of whom David says: "Lord, in Thy strength the king shall rejoice" (Ps. 20:1). And in another place, that the one kingdom of the Father and the Son may be signified, the Scripture records: "O God, give Thy judgment to the king, and Thy justice to the king's son" (Ps. 71:1). For the Father does not judge anyone, but has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). Which king, the Son of God, is the Son of the King Father. His commands, therefore, are to be kept, His will is to be performed. And this is what is written in the book of Tobias: "It is good to hide the mystery of the king" (Tobit 12:7). And he especially warns that we should not discuss why God has com-

manded each thing, but whatever a pious mind of man shall have seen to be a command, let it hasten to fulfill it. And in the law of the Lord shall be his will. But because the Seventy translated otherwise, saying: "And concerning the oath and concerning the word of God be not hasty to walk from His face": it should be known that the oath of God is written in the divine volumes. This oath therefore, sacred and secret concerning the word of God, we ought not to narrate to just anyone, and bring into the midst, and bring a swift sentence concerning it. Neither, like Moses, shouldst thou hasten to see the face of God, but sustain for so long until He Himself passes through, and thou mayest behold only His back parts. Moreover, that which follows: "Do not stand in an evil word," and the rest, let us understand concerning him who has been prevented by the error of heresy: or concerning him who although he has the faith of the Church, yet is conquered by sins, so that he is unfaithful. Do not persevere in detraction, nor in foul speech, luxury, avarice, lust. For if thou shalt have persevered, the devil, the king of vices and sin, will work perdition in thee, and will do whatever he shall have wished.

"He who keeps the commandment shall not know an evil word: and the heart of the wise knows time and judgment." It is to be noted that "he shall not know an evil word" is put for that which is "he shall not suffer" or "it shall not be in him." Since indeed also concerning the Savior it is thus written: "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). Also for "word" Symmachus

interpreted "thing," saying: "He who shall have kept the commandment shall not experience an evil thing." But he commanded that the empire of the king is to be preserved, and to know what, and why, and in what time he commands.

"Because for every business there is a time and judgment. For the affliction of man is great upon him, because he does not know what is to come; for as it shall be, who will announce it to him?" Although diverse things happen, and the just man is not able to know what may be to come for him, nor to know the causes and reasons of individual things (for no one is conscious of future things), yet he knows that all things are done by God for the utility of men, and are not disposed without His will. For there is a great affliction of the human race, because as the Poet says: "The mind of men ignorant of fate and future lot," hopes for one thing, and another happens: it expects an enemy from one place, and is wounded by the javelin of another. But for that which the Seventy translators and Theodotion said: "Because the knowledge of man is great upon him," in the Hebrew it has "malice," not "knowledge": but because the Hebrew letters RESH and DALETH are similar, except for a small apex, for RAATH they read DAATH, that is, instead of "malice," "knowledge." He who shall have had knowledge of the same language will know this better. That also which is written in the end of these verses: "Because he does not know what has been done; and what is to come after him, who will announce it to him?" we have now translated word for word

from the Hebrew speech, so that we may know there is another sense, that namely we are able to know neither those things which shall have passed away, nor to know those things which are to come, just as they are to come.

"There is no man having power over the spirit, to withhold the spirit, and he is not powerful in the day of death, and there is no discharge in war, and impiety shall not save its owner." Our soul is not in our power, lest it be taken away from us, and when the spirit goes forth at the command of the Lord, it profits nothing to close the mouth and to retain the fleeing life. And when destruction, the enemy and foe of our life, shall have arrived, we are not able to receive a truce. Nor were kings formerly in the world, and wasting all things by our impiety, able to bring opposing hands to death: but we shall be dissolved into ash and earth. Therefore it is not to be mourned if we are not able to know future things, and are often oppressed by more powerful unjust men, since all things are finished by death, and the proud and powerful man, who has devastated all things, is not able to retain his soul when it is snatched away. Otherwise: The Spirit, who dispenses all things, is not able to be prohibited by any of men, nor to receive laws of breathing. Concerning which also it was said above: "The spirit goes circling around." In the day of death we are not powerful: for in the day of life the enemy is easily avoided. Similarly, he who is in war and has not the peace of God, which surpasses all sense, shall not have a discharge, concerning which it is said

to the bride: "Thy discharges are a paradise with the fruit of apples" (Cant. 4:13). And because impiety shall not save its owner, piety from the opposite region shall save. Impiety can be called the devil, and piety our Lord Jesus Christ.

"All these things I have seen, and I gave my heart to every work which was done under the sun, and man has ruled over man to afflict him. And then I saw the impious buried, and they came, and from the holy place they went forth, and they were praised in the city because they had done so: but this also is vanity. For because there is no contradiction to those doing evil quickly: therefore the heart of the sons of man is filled in them, that they may do evil." I gave, he says, my heart to behold everything that is carried on under the sun, and this most of all, that man has received power over man, so that he may afflict and find fault with whomsoever he wishes. When therefore I directed my mind to behold these things, I saw the impious dead with such a reputation, and so buried, that they were estimated holy on earth, who also when they lived were thought worthy of the Church and the temple of God, moreover walking swollen with pride, they were praised in their evils, as it is written: "For the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul, and he who works iniquity is blessed" (Ps. 9:24). But this happens for this reason, because no one dares to contradict those sinning, nor does God immediately avenge the crime, but defers the punishment while He expects penance. But sinners, because they are not immediately argued

and rebuked, thinking that there shall be no judgment at all, persevere in crime. We can use this testimony against bishops, who have received power in the Church, and scandalize those more whom they ought to have taught and incited to better things. These are frequently praised in the Church after death, and being called blessed in those things which they had not done creditably, they are publicly preached either by their successors or by the people. And this also is therefore vain, because they do not hear according as they have acted, nor are they immediately rebuked in their sin (for no one dares to accuse a greater), therefore as if holy and blessed and walking in the commands of the Lord, they increase sins with sins. Accusation against a bishop is difficult. For if he shall have sinned, it is not believed, and if he shall have been convicted, he is not punished.

"Since a sinner does evil a hundred times, and it is deferred for him. From this I know that it shall be good for those fearing God, who shall fear from His face." From this, that to one sinning very much—for this indeed "a hundred times" signifies—God gives a place for penance, and does not immediately punish him in his crime, but expects that he may be converted from his iniquity: I understand how benign and merciful God is going to be over those who have fear of Him, and tremble at His word. Symmachus translated this passage thus: "For the evil one sinning has died, long-suffering being granted to him. Furthermore I know that it will be well for those fearing God, who have feared from His face. But

it will not be good for the iniquitous, nor will he survive for a long time, because he did not fear from the face of God." And because it is manifest what he translated, this is to be said: that the Hebrew word MAATH, which the Seventy translated "from then," and we put "a hundred times," Aquila and Symmachus and Theodotion interpreted as "has died," so that the sense may be: he who has sinned and done evil, has died: for in that which he sinned, he immediately died. But if according to the Seventy translators, instead of that which is "has died," we read "from then," according to some this sense would be driven: The sinner does not then first sin, when he is seen to commit sin, but has already sinned before: "For sinners are alienated from the womb, they have erred from the belly" (Ps. 57:4); and they seek how this which follows, "they have spoken false things," can be explained: for the simple understanding does not seem to have a consequence, that infant sinners, as soon as they have been ejected from the womb, speak a lie.

"And let it not be good for the impious, and let him not prolong his days like a shadow, who does not fear from the face of God." He imprecates evil upon those who do not have the fear of God, and wishes that it be not deferred for a long time unto punishment, but being immediately subtracted by death, they may receive the tortures which they deserve. The Apostle speaks something similar: "I wish they were cut off who trouble you" (Gal. 5:12). And elsewhere: "Alexander the copersmith has shown me many evils: may the Lord

render to him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14). In what way these were mildly said, must be sought out. These things according to the truth of the Hebrew sense. But if anyone follows the Seventy translators, who as if beginning from another sense, said: "And I recognize that it shall be good for those fearing God, that they may fear from His face, and it shall not be good for the impious, and he shall not prolong his days in the shadow: because he is not fearing from the face of God"; he will be able to say this: Those things indeed will also happen, concerning which I discussed a little before; I however most manifestly know that it will be well for those who fear from the face of God: "For the face of the Lord is upon those doing evil things" (Ps. 33:17). And it will not be well for the impious: for he does not fear from the face of God, and he shall not prolong his days in the shadow, that is, the days of his life, which are as a shadow to those living. For those who live for a long time do not prolong their days, but those who make them great by the magnitude of good works. Whence also Jacob, as if confessing himself a sinner, says: "Small and evil are my days" (Gen. 47:9). And in the psalm, confessing: "My days," he says, "have declined like a shadow" (Ps. 101:12), "and I have withered like grass." Not that he sought a long life in the present, in which everything that we live is brief and a shadow and an image: "For man walks in an image" (Ps. 38:7): but that he fears concerning the future, lest the length of his life, where true life is, be shortened.

There is a vanity which is done upon the earth: because there are just men to whom things happen as if they were the deeds of the impious, and there are impious men to whom things happen as if they were the deeds of the just. I said that this also is vanity. Among other vanities which are carried by a varied event in the world, I also discovered this: that to the just those things frequently happen which ought to have happened to the impious, and the impious live so happily in this world that you would think them to be most just. The Gospel will give the example of the rich man clothed in purple and the poor man Lazarus (Luke 16). The seventy-second psalm also disputes concerning this matter: why sometimes evils happen to the just and good things to the impious. Moreover, for that which we put: "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth," Symmachus translated absolutely, saying: "It is difficult to know what is done upon the earth." The Hebrews interpret the just to whom evils happen and the impious to whom the works of the just arrive as the sons of Aaron and Manasseh: because the former perished while sacrificing, and the latter was restored to power after such great evils and captivity.

And I praised joy; because there is no good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be joyful. And this itself shall go out with him from his labor in the days of his life, which God gave to him under the sun. We interpreted this more fully above, and now we say briefly: he is allowed to prefer that pleasure of eating

and drinking—brief and quickly to be finished—to the anguishes of the age and to those things which seem to be done iniquitously in the world: because a man seems to have only this from his labor, if he enjoys even a moderate refreshment. Truly this interpretation, if it is accepted as it is written, will approve as miserable the fasting, the hungry, the thirsty, and the mourning, whom the Lord calls blessed in the Gospel (Matt. 5). And therefore let us accept food and drink spiritually, and joy over them, which we can scarcely find in the labor of our life. Moreover, that these things are to be felt thus as we have said, the following verse demonstrates, in which he says: "I gave my heart to see wisdom and occupation": that is, that men are occupied upon the earth, and day and night are turned in the meditation of the Scriptures: so that for the most part, for the sake of the investigation of the truth, sleep flees from their eyes.

Wherefore I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to see the occupation which has been made upon the earth. Because also in day and in night he is not seeing sleep in his eyes. And I saw all the works of God: because a man will not be able to find the work which has been made under the sun, in which a man has labored that he might seek, and he shall not find. Indeed, even if the wise man says that he knows it, he will not be able to find it. He who seeks the causes and reasons of things, why this or that has been done, and why the world is governed by varied events: why one is born blind and weak, another

seeing and healthy: this one has poverty, that one riches: this one is noble, that one inglorious; he profits nothing else except to be tortured only in his own question, and to have the disputation for a torment, and yet not find what he seeks... And when he has said that he has known these things, then to have the beginning of ignorance, and to be turned in profound error. He sub-indicates, however, that there are causes of all things and justice, why each thing is thus done: but that they lie in occult, and cannot be comprehended by men.

(Chapter 9) All this I gave in my heart, that I might consider all things: because the just and the wise and their works are in the hand of the Lord. And indeed love and indeed hatred: man is not knowing all things in their face. Also this passage Symmachus interpreted more manifestly, saying: "All these things I set in my heart, that I might ventilate all things: because both the just and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. And moreover man knows neither friendships nor enmities: but all things are uncertain before them, because similar things happen to all, to the just and to the unjust." Furthermore this is the sense: In this also I gave my heart, and I wished to know whom God loved, whom He hated. And I found that the works of the just indeed are in the hand of God, and yet that whether they are loved by God or not, they cannot know now, and they fluctuate in ambiguity, whether they sustain what they sustain for a trial, or for punishment. In the future therefore

they shall know, and in their face are all things, that is, the notice of this thing precedes them when they have receded from this life, because then is the judgment, and now the contest. And whoever sustain adverse things, whether they sustain through the love of God, as Job, or through hatred, as very many sinners, is now held uncertain.

In all things there is one event, for the just and the impious, for the good and the evil, for the clean and the polluted, for the one sacrificing and the one not sacrificing. As the good, so the sinner; as the one swearing, so the one fearing an oath. Those things which through themselves are neither good nor evil, but are called "indifferent" (*media*) by the wise of the age (because they happen equally both to the just and to the unjust), disturb all simple folk, as to why they happen thus, and therefore they do not think there is a judgment, since the discrimination of all things is in the future, and here all things are confused. Moreover, that which he says: "The event is one for all, for the just and the impious," signifies the event either of anguishes or of death: and for that reason they know in themselves neither the love of God nor hatred. The one sacrificing also and the one not sacrificing, and the other things which are enumerated as contrary, are to be accepted spiritually, according to that: "A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit" (Ps. 50:19).

This is the worst in all that has been done under the sun: because there is one event for all. But also the heart of the sons of men is filled with

malice, and errors in their heart in their life, and after these things they go to the dead. For who is he who may communicate among all the living? And Symmachus interpreted this more clearly in his manner, saying: "But also the heart of the sons of men is filled with malice, and with procacity according to their heart in their life. Moreover their last things come to the dead. For who can persevere living into eternity?" Moreover Scripture repeats the same sense, concerning which we treated a little before: that since all things happen equally to all, and there is no discretion in sustaining good things or evil, or certainly we are subtracted from this age by an equal death: nevertheless we are filled with errors and procacity and malice, and after all these things we are suddenly snatched away by destruction, nor can we any longer have fellowship with the living. Or certainly thus: Since common anguishes press both the just and the unjust; for that reason men are provoked to sins: and yet after all the efforts, by which they have striven in vain, while they are ignorant, they descend to the lower regions.

There is a confidence, because a living dog is better than a dead lion: because the living know that they may die, and the dead know nothing, and there is no more a reward for them. For the memory of them has come into oblivion. But also their love and their hatred, and their envy has already perished: and they have no part still in the age in all that is done under the sun. Because he had said above that the heart of the sons of men is filled with malice and procacity, and

after all these things it is finished by death: now he completes and repeats the same things, that while men live, they can become just, but after death no occasion of a good work is given. For a living sinner can be better than a dead just man, if he wishes to pass over to his virtues. Or certainly than him who was boasting himself in malice, power, and procacity, and has died, some poor and most base man can be better. Why? because the living, through fear of death, can perpetrate good works: the dead truly avail nothing to add to that which they once carried with them from life: and all things are involved in oblivion, according to that which is written in the psalm: "I am given to oblivion, as one dead from the heart" (Ps. 30:13). But also their love and hatred and emulation, and everything that they could have in the age, is finished by the arrival of death: nor can they now do anything justly, nor sin, nor add virtues, nor vices. Although some contradict this exposition, asserting that we can even grow and decrease after destruction, and in that which he now says: "And there shall not be a part for them still in the age, in all that has been done under the sun," they understand it thus, that they say they have no communion in this age and under this sun which we discern: but that they have it under another age, concerning which the Savior says: "I am not of this world" (John 8:23); and under the sun of justice; and that the opinion is not excluded which contends that after we have migrated from this age, rational creatures can both offend and deserve well.

Otherwise a Hebrew related this verse, in which it is said: "For a living dog is better than a dead lion," as being thus explained among his own: That anyone however unlearned, and he who still lives and teaches, is more useful than a perfect teacher who is already dead. For example, that he should understand as a dog any one teacher from many: and as a lion Moses, or any other of the prophets. But because this exposition does not please us, let us tend toward greater things: and let us say that that Canaanite woman, to whom it was said: "Your faith has made you safe" (Matt. 9:23), is a dog according to the Gospel; but the dead lion is the people of the circumcision, as the prophet Balaam says: "Behold the people shall rise up as a lion's whelp, and as a lion exulting" (Num. 23:24). We therefore, from the nations, are the living dog: but the dead lion is the people of the Jews, forsaken by the Lord. And this living dog is better before the Lord than that dead lion. For we living know the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: they truly dead know nothing, nor do they expect any promise and reward: but their memory is completed. Neither do they themselves remember what they ought to have known, nor does the Lord now remember them. The love also with which they once loved God has perished, and the hatred concerning which they spoke boldly: "Did I not hate those hating you, Lord, and was I not pining away over your enemies?" (Ps. 138:21), and also their envy, according to which Phinehas was zealous, and the loins (in Greek, *nephroi*) of Mattathias

trembled. Moreover it is perspicuous that their part is not in the age. For they cannot say: "The Lord is my part" (Ps. 72:26).

Go and eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a good heart, because now your works have pleased God. At all times let your garments be white, and let not oil be lacking from your head (Eccl. 9:7): up to that place in which he says: "As fishes which are held in a most evil capture, and as birds which are caught in a snare: similarly shall the sons of men be caught in a most evil time, when it shall fall upon them suddenly." Before we dispute concerning the particulars, all things are to be briefly constrained, so that it may appear in what sense all are said together. Because in the superior chapter he had spoken before, that after men have died, they fall away from the heart of the living, and no one has either love or hatred for them, according to that of the poet (Aeneid 2): "No contest with the conquered and those deprived of the upper air": and because under the sun they can do nothing further: now as if inducing human error and custom, by which they exhort each other to enjoy the goods of this age, he makes a *prosopopoeia* after the manner of rhetoricians and poets, saying: O man, because therefore after death you are nothing, and death itself is nothing, hear my counsel, and while you live in this brief life, enjoy pleasure, use feasts, oppress cares with wine, and understand that they have been given to you by God for use. Go about adorned in white garments, let your head breathe with ointments: enjoy the embrace of

whichever of the women has pleased you, and run through this vain and brief life with vain and brief pleasure. For you will have nothing more beyond these which you may enjoy: whatever can delight you, snatch it quickly, lest it perish. Nor indeed ought you to fear frivolous comments, that a reason must be rendered to you among the lower regions for individual works, whether good or evil. For there is not any wisdom in death: no sense remains after the dissolution of this life. And these things, he says, some Epicurus might speak, and Aristippus and the Cyrenaics, and the other cattle of the philosophers.

I however, diligently retracting with myself, find not, as some evilly judge, that all things are carried on by chance, and that varied fortune plays in human affairs, but that all things are done by the judgment of God. For neither ought the swift of foot to think his own course, if he runs. Nor let the strong trust in his own strength, nor the wise judge that riches and wealth are gathered by prudence: nor the eloquent and learned to be able to find favor among the people through eloquence and doctrine: but all things happen by God disposing. And unless He has ruled all things by His arbitrament, and has built the house, they have labored in vain who build it. Unless He has guarded the city, they watch in vain who guard it (Ps. 126:1). It is not therefore, as they think, one event, and an uncertain state of this life: because when they do not judge so, being subducted by sudden death, they will come to judgment. And in the way that fishes are caught

by a hook and by nets, and birds free through the air, while they know not, are bound by a snare: thus also men for their merit will be led to eternal punishments, when death has suddenly come, and judgment upon those who thought all things were rolled in an uncertain state. These things according to that sense by which we wished to briefly comprehend the universe: now, as if he speaks not from another's but from his own person, the particulars are to be interpreted: "Go, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a good heart: because your works have pleased God." Because you have learned that all things are finished by death, and in hell there is no penance, nor any recourse to virtues, while you are in this age, hasten, strive to do penance: while you have time, labor. For God willingly receives the penitent. Otherwise: It is profitable also simply understood, according to that: "Whether you eat, or drink, or do anything, do all things in the name of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:31). And in another place: "Drink wine with counsel." For he does not have true joy and a good heart, who abuses creatures beyond measure. Better however is it to feel thus: He whose works have pleased before God, can in no way be able to lack the true bread and wine, which was trodden from the vineyard of Sorech. The precept therefore being given to us, which says: "You have desired wisdom, keep the mandates, and the Lord will minister it to you" (Ecclus. 1:33): let us keep the mandates, and we will be able to find the spiritual bread and wine. But he who does not keep the mandates, and glo-

ries in the abundance of bread and wine, it is said to him through Isaiah: "Do not say I also know her: neither have you known, nor do you know, nor from the beginning have I opened your ears. For I know that contemning you contemn" (Isa. 48:8, according to the LXX). Furthermore that which is said in the Seventy translators: "Come, eat your bread in joy": is the voice of that Ecclesiastes who speaks in the Gospel: "He who thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). And in Proverbs: "Come, eat my breads, and drink my wine" (Prov. 9:5). "At all times let your garments be white, and let not oil be lacking from your head." Have, he says, a clean body, and be merciful. Or thus: Let there be no time in which you do not have white garments; beware lest ever you be clothed in polluted garments. Indeed a sinning people is described as having mourned in dark garments. You however put on light, and not the malediction which was written over Judas: "Let him be clothed with malediction, as a garment" (Ps. 108:18). Put on the bowels of mercy, of benignity, of humility, of mildness, of patience (Col. 3). And when you have despoiled the old man with his works, put on the new, who is renovated from day to day. Moreover that which he says: "And let not oil be lacking from your head": it is to be known that this is the nature of oil, that it both nourishes light and looses the labor of the weary. There is a spiritual oil, the oil of exultation, concerning which it is written: "Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of exultation above your fellows" (Ps. 45:8). With this oil our

face is to be exhilarated. With this the head of the one fasting is to be anointed, which sinners cannot have, to whom it is said: "There is no plaster to impose, nor oil, nor bandages" (Isa. 1:6). For they have a contrary oil, which the just man detests, saying: "Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head" (Ps. 104:5). This oil the heretics have, and with it they desire to drench the heads of those deceived.

Moreover, to discuss it more simply: the Epistle to the Romans agrees with this place: "Because it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Furthermore, as for what he says: "Bread is not for the wise," it is proven daily by the example of many who, although they are most wise, lack necessities. And, "Favor is not for the knowing." For you may see in the Church that all the most unskillful flourish: and because they have nourished the audacity of their brow, and have attained a volubility of tongue, while they do not reflect on what they speak, they consider themselves prudent and erudite: especially if they have the favor of the common people, who are more delighted and moved by lighter words. And on the contrary, that the erudite man lies hidden in obscurity, suffers persecutions: and not only does he not have favor among the people, but he wastes away in want and poverty. These things happen, however, because all things are carried along in an uncertain state, and there is no retribution for merits in the present, but in the future.

And indeed, man does not know his time, like fish that are held in an evil catch, like birds that are gathered in a snare: similarly shall the sons of men fall in an evil time, when it shall fall upon them suddenly. We have already said above that while men do not know, so do either straits or destruction come upon them. Furthermore, according to allegory, it is to be known that the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea (Matt. 13). And on the contrary, that heretics have a net, through which they catch fish for destruction. Their net is affable speech, bland eloquence, simulated or forced fasts, humble clothing, the imitation of virtues. But if they begin both to dispute about higher things, and to lift up their mouth to the sublime, and to seek the heights of God, they place a snare in the high places. Therefore, just as fish and birds are quickly caught by such a net, and by a snare of this kind: so when iniquity shall have been multiplied, and the charity of many shall have grown cold, and signs and portents shall have been made, so that even the elect might be seduced, if it is possible (Matt. 24): it is to be known that Ecclesiastical men also, who are called sons of men and are of little faith, can quickly fall. It should also be noted that throughout the whole book, wherever it is said, "sons of men," in Hebrew it has "sons of man," that is, "sons of Adam." And almost all Scripture is full of this idiom, calling the entire race of men the sons of Adam.

But I have also seen this wisdom under the sun, and it is great with me. A small city and

few men in it: and a great king came to it and surrounded it, and built a great siege engine against it. And he found in it a poor and wise man, and this one saved the city in his wisdom: and man did not remember that poor man. While others say that all things are uncertain, and that the just man has nothing more than the unjust: I have proven wisdom to be greatest even in this: that it frequently happens that a city is small, and the inhabitants in it are few, and it is surrounded by an army of innumerable enemies, and the people inside are killed by siege and famine: and suddenly, contrary to everyone's suspicion, a humble and poor man is found who, because he has a wisdom greater than all the rich, great, powerful, and proud men placed in danger and trembling at the siege, thinks and inquires, and finds how he may rescue the city from evils. And oh, the ungrateful forgetfulness of men! After they have been liberated, and the captivity loosed, and liberty restored to the fatherland, no one remembers that wise poor man, no one returns thanks for salvation: but all honor the rich, who in danger were able to provide no help. Otherwise, the Hebrew interpreted this place thus: The small city is man, who is also called a "lesser world" (microcosm) among philosophers. And the few men in it are the members from which man himself is woven. But when the great king, the devil, has come against it, and has sought a place through which he might break in, there is found in it a humble and wise, and quiet thought of the interior man, and it preserves the city which,

besieged by enemies, was being surrounded. And when man has been rescued from the danger either of persecution, or of straits, or of any adverse thing and sin: that exterior man, who is an enemy of that poor and wise man, does not remember the interior man, nor does he subject himself to his counsels: but again enjoys his own liberty (or free will). Otherwise: The small city is the Church, and the men in it are few in comparison to the whole world: against which the great king, the devil, often rises up (not because he is great, but because he boasts that he is great) and surrounds it with a siege either of persecution or of another kind of straits. And he finds in it a poor and wise man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who for us became poor (2 Cor. 8:9) and is wisdom itself: and that poor man liberates the city in his wisdom. How often have we seen the lion sitting in ambush with the rich, that is, with the senators and princes of this world, and plotting against the Church, fall by the wisdom of this poor man? And when this poor man has conquered, and the city has been restored to peace, hardly anyone remembers him, hardly anyone considers his commands: but yielding themselves entirely to luxury and pleasures, they seek riches, which do not liberate in necessity.

And I said, wisdom is better than strength, and the wisdom of the poor man which is despised, and his words which were not heard. Although no one remembers that wise poor man when all things are joyful, but all admire power and riches: I nevertheless, according to all the

above interpretations, honor more the despised wisdom and the words which no one deigns to hear.

The words of the wise are heard in quiet, more than the shout of one having power among fools. Whomever you see in the Church as a declaimer, and with a certain enticement and beauty of words exciting applause, shaking out laughter, exciting the hearers into affections of joy: know it to be a sign of insipience, as much of him who speaks as of those who hear. For the words of the wise are heard in quiet and moderate silence: but he who is a fool, although he may be powerful and have the shout either of his own voice or of the people acclaiming, shall be counted among the fools.

Wisdom is better than weapons of war, and one sinner shall lose much goodness. Now also he prefers wisdom over strength, and says it is of more value in battles than the arms of those fighting. But if there shall be one fool, although he be small and nothing, nevertheless frequently through his folly great resources and riches are subverted. Because indeed in Hebrew it can be read: "And he who sins one thing shall lose much goodness," it is even so to be understood: that on account of one sin, many righteousnesses of the past perish, and in turn the virtues follow each other, and he who has one, has all. And he who has sinned in one, is subject to all vices (James 2:10).

Dead flies pollute the oil of composition: a little folly is more precious than wisdom and

glory. He gave an example of the above sense, in which he said: that through one fool many goods can be subverted, because thus an evil person mixed with the good contaminates very many, just as flies, if they die in an ointment, lose both its odor and color. And because wisdom is often mixed with craftiness, and prudence has malice, he commands that we seek simple wisdom, and that it be mixed with the innocence of doves: let us be wise unto good, but simple unto evil. And the sense is: it is fitting for the just man to have a little simplicity, and on account of excessive patience, while he reserves vengeance to God, to seem a fool, rather than to exercise malice while immediately avenging himself under the veil of prudence. Otherwise: The flies which according to Isaiah (Chap. 7:18) rule over a part of the river of Egypt, lose the sweetness of the oil, leaving in each one of the believers the odor and traces of their uncleanness. From these flies even the prince of demons was called Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24), which is interpreted either as "idol of flies," or "man of flies," or "having flies."

The heart of the wise is in his right hand, and the heart of the fool in his left. But also on the way, when the fool walks, his heart is diminished: and he says, everyone is a fool. And in the Gospel it is commanded that the left hand not know what the right hand of the wise man does (Matt. 6:3; 5:39). And when we are struck on the right cheek, we are not commanded to offer the left cheek to the one striking, but the other right one (Matt. 5:39). For the just man does not have

a left in himself, but everything in him is right. And when the Savior shall come to judge, the lambs shall stand at the right: but the goats shall be on the left (Matt. 25:33). And in Proverbs it is written: "The Lord knows the right ways; but those which are perverse are from the left" (Prov. 4:27). He who is wise, therefore, always thinks of the future world, which leads to the right. But he who is foolish, of the present, which is placed on the left. Which indeed the same philosopher and poet following, says (Virgil, Aeneid VI): "The right way which leads under the walls of great Dis [Pluto]. This is our path to Elysium: but the left exercises the punishments of the evil, and leads to impious Tartarus."

Our Firmianus also, in the distinguished work of his Institutions, remembers the letter Y, and has most fully disputed concerning the rights and lefts, that is, concerning virtues and vices. Nor let us think that that is contrary to this little sentence, in which it is said: "Do not decline to the right, nor to the left" (Prov. 4:27). For here the right part is taken for good: but there, not so much the right, as the declining from the right is accused: lest we be more wise than it is necessary for us to be wise: because virtues are in the middle, and every excess is in vice. Moreover, of the following little verse in which he says: "But also on the way when the fool walks, his heart is in want, and he says: all is folly, or, a fool," this is the sense: A fool, as he himself sins, hopes that all sin similarly, and judges everyone from his own character. Finally, Symmachus interpreted it

thus: "But also on the way when the fool walks, he himself being foolish suspects concerning all, that they are fools." The Seventy indeed made another sense, by which they would say: "All things which the fool thinks are most vain."

If the spirit of one having power shall ascend over you, do not leave your place, because health makes great sins to rest. Now the Scripture signifies the prince of this world and the ruler of these darkenesses, and the one working in the sons of diffidence, whom also the Apostle remembers (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). But if he shall ascend into our heart, and our mind has received the wound of an evil thought, we ought not to grant him a place further, but to fight against the worst thought, and to liberate ourselves from the greatest sin, lest we should complete the thought by work: because it is one thing to sin in thought, another in work. Concerning which great sin it is also written in the psalm: "If they have not had dominion over me, then I shall be immaculate, and I shall be cleansed from the greatest fault" (Ps. 18:4 [19:13]). Symmachus translated the Hebrew word MARPHE, which all translated similarly as iama, that is, "health" or "cure," according to the sense, and said: "If the spirit of the prince shall rush upon you, do not withdraw from your place: because modesty compresses great sins." That is, if the devil shall tickle your mind and incite you to lust, do not follow the worst thought and flattering pleasure: but stand strong and rigid, and with the cold of chastity extinguish the flame of pleasure. The Hebrew in this place suspected

I know not what such thing: If you shall have received some dignity in the world, and shall have been ordained greater among the peoples, do not relinquish your prior works, and do not begin to forget ancient virtues, and to not have your former labor: because the remedy for sins is born from good conversation, and not from a swelling and superfluous dignity.

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as it were an ignorance proceeding from the face of a powerful one: that a fool is given in great sublimities, and the rich sitting in a humble place. I saw servants on horses, and princes walking like servants upon the earth. For that which we have placed: "As it were an ignorance proceeding from the face of a powerful one," Aquila and Theodotion and the Seventy interpreted: "As if not spontaneous," that is, akousion, from the face of a prince. To which subjoining, Symmachus says: "A fool placed in great sublimity: but the rich to sit humble." And this iniquity, therefore, he commemorates having perceived in the world, that the judgment of God seems to be unjust: and either through ignorance, or without His will, it happens that either in the powers of the world, or in the principate of the Church, those who are rich in speech and wisdom, rich also in good works, sit ignoble, and some imprudent person holds the principate in the Church. That this, however, happens from the devil the Apostle is not silent, who has power in the world, so that he may press down all powerful and learned men, nor permit them to appear among

the peoples. But those whom he knows to be imprudent in the Churches, he makes to be greater, so that the blind may be led by the blind into the pit. Unto this sense also works that which follows: "I saw servants upon horses, and princes walking like servants upon the earth." That those who are servants of vices and of sin, or so humble that they are counted as servants by men, suddenly puffed up with dignity by the devil, wear out the public ways with nags: and every noble and prudent man, oppressed by poverty, walks on the journey in the duty of servants. The Hebrew explained the powerful one and prince, from whose face ignorance seems to proceed, as God, because men think in this inequality of things that He does not judge justly and as is fair. Furthermore, others think it is to be joined with the preceding: that he himself is the powerful one, concerning whom it is said before these verses: "If the spirit of one having power shall ascend over you, do not leave your place." Let us not therefore be sad if in this world we seem to be humble, knowing that both fools are raised up from the face of the devil, and the rich are cast down: that servants have the insignia of lords, and princes enter into the vileness of servants. It is to be noted, however, that here also "horse" is taken in a good part, as there: "And your riding is salvation."

He who digs a pit shall fall into it, and he who breaks down a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. The understanding is partly simple and partly mystical. Since also elsewhere Solomon himself

says: "He who sets a snare shall be caught in it" (Ecclus. 27:29). And in the seventh psalm: "He opened a pit and dug it, and fell into the ditch which he made." Moreover, the convulsion of the hedge and wall are the Ecclesiastical dogmas, and the institution founded by the Apostles and Prophets, which whoever shall have dissolved, and wished to pass over, in that very thing which he neglects, he is struck by a serpent. Concerning which serpent it is also written in Amos: "If he shall descend into hell, I will command the serpent, and he shall bite them" (Amos 9:3).

He who withdraws stones shall grieve in them: and he who splits wood shall be endangered in them (Zech. 9:16). Holy stones also are rolled upon the earth in Zechariah. For they do not consist in a firm station upon it: but they pass by, and always striving for higher things, they hasten to depart from here. From these living stones both the city of the Savior is constructed in the Apocalypse (Chap. 21:18 seqq.), and the Apostle is not silent that the Church is being built. If anyone therefore, perverted by heretical art, shall have taken away these stones from the building of the Church (whence also significantly Aquila and Symmachus, for that which we have placed, "he who withdraws stones shall grieve in them," said: "He who transfers stones shall be lacerated in them"), he shall afterwards suffer torments. Because indeed the Scripture says absolutely, "He who withdraws stones," or, "he who transfers stones," and has not added good or bad; therefore also it is to be understood on the contrary, that

the Ecclesiastical man, namely a bishop and a presbyter, if according to the command of Leviticus (Chap. 14:45), he shall have taken away a stone from a leprous house, to be ground into cinder and dust: he shall grieve in that very thing, that he is compelled to take away a stone from the Church of Christ, saying according to the Apostle: "To weep with those who weep, to mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15); and, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is scandalized, and I am not burned" (2 Cor. 11:29)? Also one splitting wood shall be endangered in them. Heretics are fruitless wood, and a forest without the utility of fruits. Whence also in the temple of God a grove is prohibited to be planted, and the vain shades of leaves, that is, of words only sounding, are despised. Although therefore he may be a prudent and learned man who splits these woods with the sword of his speech, he shall be endangered in them, unless he shall have carefully attended; especially if that which follows happens to him: "If the iron shall have been blunted, and has disturbed its face," that is, if his disputation shall have been found weaker, and has not had the sharpness by which he may cut all contrary things: but the principal part of his heart be blunted; he shall pass over to the adverse part, and a perverted fortitude shall confirm him. For this is what the Seventy Interpreters translated: "And he shall be comforted with fortitude; and strengthened with superfluous wisdom he shall begin, he says, to have fortitude, and wisdom

which is superfluous and does not help the possessor."

If the iron shall have been blunted; and this not as before, but has been disturbed, he shall be corroborated by virtues: and the rest of fortitude is wisdom. If anyone, he says, shall have seen himself through negligence to have lost the knowledge of the Scriptures, and the sharpness of his wit has been blunted: and having been disturbed he has by no means remained such as he had already begun to be: For it happens sometimes that when someone has had a little knowledge, raised up into pride, he ceases to learn and to read, and gradually from that which is not added to him, it is withdrawn, and his breast remains empty of disciplines, and the iron which had been sharp is blunted: for leisure and idleness are as it were a certain rust of wisdom. If anyone therefore shall have suffered this, let him not despair of the remedy of health, but let him go to a master, and be instructed by him again, and after labor and industry, and excessive sweat, he shall be able to receive the wisdom which he had lost. This is what is said more significantly in Hebrew: "And he shall be corroborated with fortitudes," that is, by labor and sweat, and industry, and daily reading, he shall attain wisdom, and his fortitude shall have this end, that he may receive wisdom.

If the serpent shall bite in silence, there is no advantage further to the one having a tongue. This sense is simple: the serpent and the slanderer are equal. For just as that one biting secretly

inserts poison; so this one disparaging secretly pours out the virus of his breast into a brother, and has nothing more than a serpent. For since the tongue of man was created for blessing and for the edification of his neighbor, he makes it equal to a serpent while he perversely abuses its virtues. Otherwise: If the serpent devil shall have secretly bitten someone, and with no one conscious, shall have infected him with the poison of sin; if he who was struck shall have remained silent, and has not done penance, nor wished to confess his wound to a brother and master, the master and brother, who have a tongue for curing, will not easily be able to benefit him. For if the sick man is ashamed to confess the wound to the physician, that which medicine does not know, it does not cure.

The words of the mouth of a wise man are grace, and the lips of a fool shall precipitate him. Folly, if it were content with its own rusticity, would have somewhat less of evil. Now, however, it carries on war against wisdom, and whatever of prudence it shall have seen in a learned man, stimulated by zeal, it does not receive. For the wise man speaks words of knowledge and words of grace, which can provide utility to the hearers, and the ears of the fool do not so receive what are said as they were said; but on the contrary they try to supplant the prudent man, and to make him like themselves. And in truth the wise man is precipitated when he speaks into the ear of the imprudent, and his words perish in a deep

whirlpool, so to speak. Whence blessed is he who speaks into the ear of one hearing.

The beginning of his words is foolishness, and the last of his mouth is the worst error. And the fool multiplies words. Man does not know what it is that was done: and what is to be after him, who shall announce it to him? Hitherto the discussion is concerning the fool, whose lips precipitate the wise man, or according to another interpretation, make the fool himself to fall. For the beginning of his speech and the end is foolishness and the worst error; or as Symmachus translated, "tumult and a certain inconstancy of words"; while he does not remain in a sentiment, but thinks that in the multiplication of speeches he can escape sin. For since he neither remembers past things nor knows future things, and is rolled about in ignorance and darkness, promising false knowledge to himself; in this he thinks himself learned, in this wise, if he should multiply words. This can also be taken concerning heretics, who do not grasp the sayings of prudent men; but preparing themselves for contrary disputations, they involve both the beginning and the end of speaking in vanity, tumult, and error: and since they know nothing, they speak more things than they have known.

The labor of fools shall afflict them, who know not how to go into the city. Join these little verses also with the preceding: he disputes either generally concerning all fools who are ignorant of God, or specially concerning heretics. Read Plato; revolve the craftiness of Aristotle; look more dili-

gently into Zeno and Carneades, and you will prove that what is said is true: "The labor of fools shall afflict them." They indeed sought the truth with all study; but because they did not have a leader and a guide for the journey, and thought they could comprehend wisdom with human senses, they by no means reached the city, concerning which it is said in the psalm: "Lord, in your city you shall dissipate their image" (Ps. 72:20). For the Lord shall dissipate in His city all the shadows and diverse images and persons which they have put on for themselves in various dogmas. Concerning which it is also written elsewhere: "The impetus of the river gladdens the city of God" (Ps. 46:5 [45:5]). And in the Gospel: "A city set upon a mountain cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:14). And in Isaiah: "I am a firm city, a city which is fought against" (Isa. 27:3, sec. LXX). For indeed all the wise of the age and heretics try to fight against this city of truth and wisdom, although it be firm and robust. And what we have said concerning philosophers, this same also is to be understood concerning heretics, that they labor and are afflicted in the study of Scriptures in vain, since they walk in the desert and are not able to find the city. Concerning whose error the Psalmist also commemorates, saying: "They have wandered in the desert and in a waterless place, they have not found the way of the city and of its habitation" (Ps. 106:4 [107:4]).

Woe to you, O land, whose king is a youth, and your princes eat in the morning. Blessed is the land whose king is the son of the freeborn,

and your princes eat in due time, in strength, and not in confusion. He seems indeed to reprove the principate of youths, and to condemn luxurious judges, because in the one wisdom is weak through age, in the others even mature age is enervated by delights. And on the contrary, to approve a prince with good morals and liberally instructed; and to preach those judges who by no means prefer pleasure to the business of the citizens: but after much labor and administration of the republic, are compelled as it were by necessity to take food. Truly, something more sacred seems to me to lie hidden in the letter, that those are called youths in Scripture who depart from ancient authority and despise the gray precepts of their parents: who, having neglected the command of God, desire to establish the traditions of men. Concerning whom also in Isaiah (Chap. 8) the Lord threatens Israel, because it would not have the water of Siloam which goes with silence, and turned away from the old pool, choosing for itself the streams of Samaria and the whirlpools of Damascus. And I will give, he says, "youths as their princes, and mockers shall rule over them" (Isa. 3:4). Read Daniel, and you will find God the ancient of days (Dan. 7). Read the Apocalypse of John, and you will find the head of the Savior white like snow, and as it were white wool (Rev. 1). Jeremiah also, because he was wise and his gray hairs were reckoned in wisdom, is prohibited to say that he is a youth (Jer. 1). Woe therefore to the land whose king is the devil, who, always desirous of new things, even in Absalom rebels

against his parent: which has those as judges and princes who love the pleasures of this age, who before the day of death arrives, say: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" (Isa. 22:13). On the contrary, blessed is the land of the Church, whose king is Christ the Son of the freeborn: descending from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from the stock of the prophets and all the saints, over whom sin did not have dominion; and on account of this they were truly free. From whom was born the freer Virgin holy Mary, having no shrub, no germ from the side: but all her fruit erupted into a flower, speaking in the Song of Songs: "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys" (Cant. 2:1). Its princes also are the Apostles and all the saints, who have as king the son of the freeborn, the son of the free woman: generated not from the handmaid Hagar, but from the liberty of Sarah. Nor do they eat in the morning, nor quickly. For they do not seek pleasure in the present age, but in their own time they shall eat, when the time of retribution shall have arrived, and they shall eat in strength, and not in confusion. All the good of the present age is confusion, of the future perpetual strength. Such a thing is also said in Isaiah: "Behold, those who serve me shall eat: but you shall be hungry: And again: Behold, those who serve me shall rejoice: but you shall be ashamed" (Isa. 65:13 and 14).

In slothfulness the framing shall be humbled, and in the infirmity of hands the house shall drip. Our house, which was created with the state of man, and the habitation which we have in the

heavens, if we are slothful and slower to good works, shall be humbled. And all the framing which ought to carry the summit to the sublime, falling to the earth, shall oppress its inhabitant. And when the help of the hands and of the virtues shall have grown torpid, all the tempests from above and the whirlwind of storms break forth upon us. Furthermore, that which we have interpreted in one man, can better be understood concerning the Church: that through the negligence of the princes all its height falls: and there the allurements of vices are, where the covering of virtues was thought to be.

In laughter they make bread and wine, that the living may feast. And all things obey money (or silver). I think that what follows depends on the preceding. For we have explained above that the Church is humbled in the sloth and idleness of the masters, and its summit falls together, and the beams leak through. Now therefore he speaks concerning the same masters. And because he had seemed to accuse them, why they remained silent and did not use the office of masters, and the bishops and presbyters constituted in the Church did not labor in word and doctrine, as Titus is also commonished to do (Titus 1:5), and it is commanded to Timothy that he not neglect the grace which he had received through the imposition of hands: but even in this they should consider themselves presbyters and bishops, that they might receive salutary things, and as teachers seek double honor, which is owed to those laboring in doctrine and word (1 Tim. 4:14). Now

on the contrary he accuses those who indeed speak in the Church and teach the peoples, but they teach those things which delight the people to hear, because it strokes sinners in vice and incites the noise of the hearers. Does it not seem to you that when an oration (or orator) is wanton in the Church, and promises beatitude and the kingdoms of heaven to the multitude, he makes bread in laughter and mixes wine for the joy of the living? Either because they who teach acquire riches and foods and wealth through delightful promises: or because they finish the bread of the Church, which is the bread of those mourning and not of those laughing (for blessed are those mourning, because they themselves shall laugh), in gladness and joy. Moreover, that which follows: "All things obey money or silver," is to be taken in two ways. Either that the teachers themselves, after they have been enriched by adulation, exercise kingship over the peoples: or certainly, because silver is always taken for speech: "For the eloquence of the Lord is chaste eloquence: silver tried by fire from the earth, purged sevenfold" (Ps. 12:7 [11:7]): he asserts this, that the ignoble common people easily yield to eloquence and to an oration which is composed with the foliage of words. Otherwise: They who have the Bridegroom with them, and on account of this are prohibited to mourn and fast, make bread in laughter. From which laughter Isaac also received his name, and they prepare wine in the gladness of those drinking. Thus every holy man who, as Christ commanded, is a master of the

Church, makes bread in laughter and gladness, and administers cups of wine in joy. Silver also, which all things obey, are those five talents from the Gospel, and two, and one of the father of the family, and the ten minas which are entrusted to the servants in negotiation (Matt. 25:15 seqq).

In your mind do not curse the king, and in the secret of your bedchamber do not curse the rich man: because a bird of heaven shall take away the voice, and having wings, it shall announce the word. And the simple precept edifies the hearers: lest, overcome by anger and fury, we break forth into the cursing and disparagement of kings and princes: because sometimes it happens against hope that it is announced to those whom we have cursed, and we incur danger by the immoderation of the tongue. Moreover, that which he says: "A bird of heaven shall take away the voice, and having wings it shall announce the word," is to be understood hyperbolically, in the way we are accustomed to say that even the very walls, which are conscious of our speaking, will not conceal what they have heard. But it is better thus to hear the precept, so that we may know it has been commanded to us, not only that nothing is to be spoken rashly against Christ, but even in the secrets of the heart, although we be constricted by various tribulations, nothing blasphemous, nothing impious is to be felt. And because the love which we exhibit to Christ we owe also to our neighbor: "For you shall love the Lord your God, but also your neighbor as yourself," now also we are commanded lest after the king we

also easily disparage the Saints: and gnaw with the bitings of the tongue those whom we have seen enriched with wisdom, knowledge, and virtues: because the Angels who go around the earth and are administering spirits, and speak in Zechariah: "We have gone around the earth, and behold, all the earth is inhabited and is silent" (Zech. 1:11): like birds, they carry our words and thoughts to heaven: and that what we think secretly does not lie hidden from the knowledge of God.

(Chap. 11.) Cast your bread upon the face of the water: because in the multitude of days you shall find it. He exhorts to almsgiving, that it is to be given to everyone asking, and good is to be done indiscriminately. For just as he who sows upon irrigated lands expects the fruit of the sowing: so he who bestows upon the needy sows not a grain of seed, but the bread itself, awaiting its multiplication by a certain interest: and when the day of judgment shall have arrived, he is about to receive much more than he had given. Otherwise: in whatever man you see that water, concerning which it is said: "Rivers of living water shall flow from his belly" (John 7:38), let it not irk you to provide the bread of wisdom, the rational bread, the bread of the word. For if you shall have frequently done this, you shall find that you have not cast the sowing of doctrines in vain. Such a thing I think was also said in Isaiah: "Blessed is he who sows upon the water, where the ox and the ass tread" (Isa. 32:20). That that teacher is held worthy of beatitude who sows upon the irrigated

breast of the hearers, gathered as much from the Jews as from the people of the Gentiles.

Give a portion to seven, and indeed to eight: because you know not what evil is to be upon the earth. And in Ezekiel seven and eight steps are read for the ascent to the temple (Ezek. 40:26, 31). And after that ethical psalm, that is, the hundred and eighteenth [119th], there are fifteen psalms of the steps, through which we are first instructed in the Law, and the septenary number having been completed, we afterwards climb through the ogdoad [eight] to the Gospel. It is commanded therefore that we believe in both instruments, namely the old as well as the new, with equal veneration. The Jews gave a portion to seven, believing in the Sabbath: but they did not give to eight, denying the resurrection of the Lord's day. On the contrary, the heretics, Marcion and Manichaeus and all who tear the old Law with a rabid mouth, give portions to eight, receiving the Gospel: but they do not grant the same to the septenary number, rejecting the old Law. Let us therefore believe in both Instruments. For we cannot even now comprehend in the mind the worthy tortures and worthy punishment which is laid up for those who are occupied on the earth, Jews as well as heretics, denying one of the two. The Hebrews understand this place thus: Keep both the Sabbath and circumcision: lest if by chance you should not do this, unexpected evil should come upon you.

If the clouds are filled, they shall pour out rain upon the earth. And if the tree falls to the

south or to the north: in the place where the tree falls, there it shall be. Keep the mandates which were commanded to you above, that the clouds may pour out their rain upon you. For wherever you shall have prepared a place for yourself, and a future seat, whether to the south or to the north: there when you are dead, you shall remain. Otherwise: Therefore we said above: "Cast your bread upon the face of the water, and give to everyone asking you": because the clouds also, when they are full, bestow their riches upon mortals, and you, like a tree, although you may be long-lived, shall not be forever, but suddenly overturned by the tempest of death as of the winds, wherever you fall, there you shall remain continually, whether the last time finds you rigid and fierce, or clement and merciful. Otherwise: It is said in the Psalms to God: "Your truth is even unto the clouds" (Ps. 36:5 [35:6]). And in Isaiah, God threatens the sinning vineyard: "I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isa. 5:6). The clouds, therefore, are the Prophets, and every holy man, who when he has gathered many disciplines in his heart, then shall be able to rain the precepts of doctrines, and to say: "Let my speech be expected as rain, and they shall pour out rain upon the earth" (Deut. 32:2): to which it is said: "Let the earth hear the words of my mouth." Moreover, that which follows: "And if the tree falls to the south or to the north: in the place where the tree falls, there it shall be": let us take that example from Habakkuk, in which it is written: "God shall come from The-

man" (Hab. 3:3), which other interpreters have rendered, "God shall come from the south." And as much as I estimate, the south is always taken in a good part. Whence also it is said in the Song of Songs: "Arise, O North wind" (Song 4:16), that is, "recede" and "go away," and "come, O south wind." The tree, therefore, which collapses in this life, and is cut down by the condition of mortality, either sinned before while it stood, and is afterwards placed in the part of the north: or if it brought forth fruits worthy of the south, it shall lie in the southern region. Nor is there any tree, but that it is either to the north or to the south. This same thing signifies also that which is written in Isaiah: "I will say to the north, give up, and to the south [Africo], do not withhold" (Isa. 43:6). For it is never commanded to the south and to the east wind that they bring: because it behooves those to be at the other regions, who are afterwards to be led to the east and the south. The north wind, therefore, leads its inhabitants to the south, and the south-west wind [Africus] to the east. For they cannot profit if they persevere in their former seats.

He who observes the wind shall not sow; and he who gazes at the clouds shall not reap. He who considers to whom he should do good, and does not give to everyone asking him, often passes by him who deserves to receive (Luke 6:30). Otherwise: He who only preaches the word of God at that time when the people listen willingly, and a second breeze of rumor breathes favorably, is a negligent sower and a lazy farmer. For in those

very prosperous things, while we do not know, adverse things rise up. But in season and out of season, in its own tenor, the word of God is to be preached (2 Tim. 4:2): nor is the tempest of adverse clouds to be considered at the time of faith. Concerning which it is said in Proverbs: "As a vehement and useless rain: so are they who forsake wisdom and praise impiety" (Prov. 28:3, 4). Therefore, without consideration of the clouds and fear of the winds, one must sow in the midst of tempests. Nor should it be said: that time is commodious, this useless, since we are ignorant of what the way and what the will of the Spirit is, dispensing all things.

As you do not know which is the way of the spirit, and like the bones in the womb of the pregnant woman: so you do not know the works of God, who makes all things. Just as you do not know the way of the spirit and of the soul entering into the little child, and you are ignorant of the varieties of bones and veins in the belly of the pregnant woman: how from a vile element the body of man is varied into diverse effigies and limbs, and from the same seed, one thing softens in the flesh, another hardens in the bones, another palpitates in the veins, and another is bound in the nerves: so you cannot know the works of God, who is the maker of all things. From which he teaches that contrary things are not to be feared, nor is judgment to be made rashly concerning the winds and clouds, which we spoke of above: since the sower ought to proceed in his own tenor and course, and reserve the

outcome for the sentence of the Lord. "For it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

In the morning sow your seed, and until evening do not let go your hand: because you know not what may please, this or that. Even if both, it is as one good thing. And the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun: because if a man shall have lived many years, let him rejoice in all these, and let him remember the days of darkness, because they shall be very many. All that is to come is vanity. Do not choose to whom you should do good: but also when you shall have done good, never desist from the good work. Let the evening find the morning justice. And let the rising of the sun accumulate the mercy of the evening. For it is uncertain which work more pleases God, and from which the fruit of justice is prepared for you. Moreover, it can happen that not one, but both please God. Otherwise: Both in youth and in old age, let your labor be equal. Nor should you say: while I was able, I labored: I ought to rest in old age. For you know not whether in youth or in long-lived age you please God. Nor does the frugality of youth profit if old age is led in luxury. For on whatever day the just man shall have erred, his ancient justices will not be able to deliver him from death. But if according to both interpretations you shall have always done good, and shall have had an equal course in every age, you shall see God the Father, the sweetest light; you shall see Christ, the sun of justice. Furthermore, if you shall also have lived

many years, and shall have had all good things, or shall have perpetrated good works, and shall have known that you are always about to die, and the advent of darkness is always turned before your eyes: you will condemn present things as fluid, fragile, and falling. Symmachus has interpreted the end of this sentence thus: "If a man shall have lived many years, and shall have rejoiced in all these, he ought to remember also the days of darkness: because they shall be many, and in all of which it shall come to pass that he ceases to be." Otherwise: God promises in another place of Scripture, saying: "I will give you the early and the latter rain" (Deut. 11:14), namely the Old Testament and the New, and with both rains I will irrigate you. Whence also now we are admonished that we so read the old Law that we do not condemn the Gospel: so let us seek spiritual understanding in the old Instrument, lest in the Evangelists and Apostles we think that only that which is read sounds. For we are ignorant in which more knowledge and grace is bestowed on us by God, and that he is happy who shall have associated both in common and made them as if one body. He who shall have attained this will see the light, will see Christ, the sun of justice. And if he shall have lived for many years, he will be occupied in the highest joy and delight, having the knowledge of the Scriptures, and he will be compelled to this labor the more by the record of the future judgment: because the perpetual time of darkness will arrive, and eternal punishments will be prepared for those who shall not have

sown in the morning and at evening, and have by no means associated both: nor have they seen the light, nor the sun, whence the light itself goes forth.

(Chap. 12.) Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart be in good in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes. And know this, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. And repel anger from your heart, and take away malice from your flesh: because youth and folly are vanity. And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of malice come, and the years approach in which you shall say: I have no will [or pleasure] in them. In this chapter, there was a diverse explanation of all, and almost as many sentences as men. Whence, because it is long to review the opinions of all, and to explain the arguments by which they wished to approve their own sentences—it is almost the matter of one volume—let it suffice to have indicated to the prudent what they thought, and as if in a certain brief tablet, to have painted the sites of the lands, and to have shown the vastness of the whole world and the ambit of the Ocean in a narrow compendium.

The Hebrews estimate that the mandate pertains to Israel, which is commanded to enjoy its riches before the time of captivity arrives for it, and it changes youth for old age: whatever delightful or pleasant thing appeared both to the heart and to the eyes, let it use it while it is at hand: yet so that it knows itself to be judged in all

things: and let it flee as much from evil thoughts as from lusts, knowing that folly is coupled to youth: and let it always remember its Creator before the days of the Babylonian and Roman captivity arrive, in which it will not be able to have will. And all this place from that which he says: "Before the sun and the moon and the stars are darkened," even to that place in which the Scripture commemorates: "And the dust shall be converted into its earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to the Lord, who gave it": they explain concerning the state of their condition. Which things because, as we said above, they are laciniose and prolix, will be touched by us strictly and briefly. Rejoice therefore in your youth, O Israel, and do those things or these, concerning which it has already been said, before the captivity arrives, and your honor and glory recede from you: and the judges and your saints (whom they wish to be understood in the sun and moon and stars) are taken away. Before Nebuchadnezzar comes, or Titus the son of Vespasian, summoned by the prophets, and their vaticinations are completed. In the day in which the angels presiding over the temple shall recede, and all the most robust in your army shall be troubled, and the eloquence of the masters shall be idle, and the prophets, who were accustomed to receive the light of their visions from the heavens, shall be darkened: when the gates of the temple shall be closed, and Jerusalem shall be humbled, and the Chaldean shall come, like the song of a bird, thus provoked by the voices of Jeremiah (Jer. 9),

and the daughters of the song shall be silent, the choirs of those psalling in the temple. At that time, when coming into Jerusalem, even the enemies of God themselves shall be terrified by the magnitude, and being doubtful in the way, they shall dread the destruction of Sennacherib. For they think this was said: "And they shall fear from the high, and they shall dread in the way" (Isa. 37). In those days the almond tree shall flourish, that staff and rod which Jeremiah saw in the exordium of his prophecy, and the locust shall be fattened, Nebuchadnezzar with his army, and the caper shall be dissipated (Jer. 1), the friendship of God with Israel. Moreover, what the caper wishes for itself will be more fully explained when we have begun to speak concerning the individual things. Moreover, all this will happen to Israel: because man is about to go into the house of his eternity, and he is about to return from the protection of God to the celestial things, who, going away into his tabernacle, they shall go around in the street weeping and wailing, and walled in by the siege of the enemies. Rejoice, therefore, O Israel, in your youth, before the silver cord is broken, that is, as long as your glory is with you, before the golden fillet runs back, that is, before the ark of the testament is taken away: before the pitcher is crushed at the fountain, and the wheel is rolled over the cistern [lacum], that is, as long as within the holy of holies are the precepts of the law and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and before you return into Babylon, whence you went out in the loins of Abraham, and you begin to be

crushed in Mesopotamia, whence also formerly you set out: and all the grace of prophecy, by which you had formerly been inspired, returns to its giver. These things the Jews discuss even unto today, and they draw the understanding of this chapter to their own person.

We, however, returning to the order of the previous disputation, will attempt to explain the individual things. "Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart be in good in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes." "And know concerning all these: that God will bring you into judgment." He had said that the light of this world is most sweet, and that man ought to rejoice in the days of his life, and pluck pleasure with all zeal: for the eternal night of death presses on, when it may not be permitted to enjoy the things gathered, and all things which we had pass away like a shadow. Now therefore he exhorts man, and says: O youth, before old age and death press upon you, rejoice in your youth, and whatever seems good to your heart and pleasant to your sight, take it, enjoy the things of the world as you please. On the other hand, lest he should be thought in saying these things to provoke man to luxury, and to fall into the dogma of Epicurus, he removed this suspicion, bringing in: "And know, that concerning all these God will bring you into judgment." So, he says, use the things of the world, that you may know you are to be judged in the end. "And repel anger from your heart, and take away malice from your flesh:

because youth and folly are vanity." In anger, he comprehends all perturbations of the mind. In malice of the flesh, he signifies all pleasures of the body. So therefore, he says, enjoy the goods of this age, that you may not delinquent either in desire or in the flesh. Leave behind the ancient vices, with which in your youth you served vanity and folly: because youth is coupled to insipience. "And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of malice come, and the years approach, in which you shall say: I have no will in them." Always remember your Creator, and so walk the way of your youth, that you may remember the ultimate death: before the time arrives for you, in which all sad things succeed.

"Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain." If we receive this concerning the general consummation of the world, this chapter agrees with the words of the Lord, in which he says: "There shall be tribulation and anguish, such as has not been from the beginning of creation, nor shall be." For the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved (Matt. 24), which are the keepers of the house: so that by house this world is understood, by strong men indeed, those deceived by error, and the contrary strengths to be dissipated. But if the special consummation of each one is referred to the end of this life: both the sun and the moon and the stars and the clouds and the rains shall cease to be for him who shall

have died. Otherwise: Rejoice, O youth, O Christian people, and enjoy the goods which have been granted to you by God, and in all these know that you are to be judged by the Lord. Nor should you think, because the former branches were broken and you were grafted into the root of the good olive, that therefore you are secure: but take away anger from your heart, and pleasures from your body, and having left behind other vices, remember your Creator, before the day of malice arrives for you, and the incurable one, in which punishments are prepared for those who sin: lest when you have sinned, the sun of justice [sol justitiae] sets for you at midday, and the light of knowledge perishes, and the splendor of the moon, that is, of the Church, is withdrawn, and the stars set, concerning which it is written: "In which you shine as luminaries in the world, having the reason of life" (Phil. 2:15). And elsewhere: "Star differs from star in glory." "Before the clouds return after the rain" (1 Cor. 15:41), lest the Prophets who irrigate the hearts of believers with their speech and their rains, after they have perceived you to be unworthy of their shower, return to their seat: to him namely, by whom they were sent.

"In the day in which the keepers of the house shall be moved, and the men of strength shall perish." By the keepers of the house, either the sun is understood and the moon, and the remaining chorus of the stars, or the Angels who preside over this world. The men of strength indeed, or the strong, as Symmachus interpreted, who shall perish, or as Aquila translated, shall err, are

perceived as demons, having obtained the name of the strong even themselves from the strong devil. Whom the Lord overcoming and binding, according to the parable of the Gospel, lays waste his house (Luke 11). Otherwise: The keepers of the house, those who refer all things which are written to the body of man, think the ribs are signified, because by them the intestines are walled, and all the softness of the belly is preserved. Moreover, they estimate the legs as the men of strength: they adapt the sun and moon and stars to the eyes, ears, nostrils, and the senses of the whole head. Moreover, this is because below they are compelled by necessity to understand the things which follow not concerning angels and demons, sun and moon and stars, but concerning the members of man.

"And the grinders shall cease: because they are diminished: and those that look through the holes shall be darkened." In the consummation of the world when the charity of many shall have grown cold, and the souls of the masters shall have been diminished, which are able to provide celestial food to believers, and transferred into the celestial things: then those who in part were looking at the light of knowledge in this world will begin to be involved in darkness. For if it is said to Moses: "I will place you in the hole of the rock: and so you shall see my back parts" (Exod. 33:22): how much more does each soul look at the truth through a hole and certain dark caverns! Otherwise: There are two grinding, from which the Gospel is not silent that one is received and

the other left (Matt. 24:41). When these have been diminished and have ceased, it is necessary that all light of knowledge be taken away from the eyes. Otherwise: They think that the grinders ceasing because they are diminished is said concerning the teeth. Because when extreme old age arrives, the teeth also are either worn down or fall out: by which the ground foods are transmitted into the belly. Moreover, they think the eyes are those looking through the holes becoming dark: because for those consumed by age the sharpness grows dim and the sight is obscured.

"And they shall shut the doors in the street in the humility of the voice of the grinder: and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird; and all the daughters of song shall grow mute." When the voice of the grinder shall have been weakened, and the doctrine of the masters shall have ceased, consequently all things shall cease: among which both the doors in the street shall be shut, so that according to the foolish virgins of the Gospel (Matt. 25), each one may have the gates of his street shut, and they may not be able to buy oil. Or certainly, with the foolish virgins wandering about in the street, those who shall have entered with the bridegroom shall shut the chamber. For if the way which leads to life is straight and narrow, and that which leads to death is broad and spacious (Matt. 7): rightly, with the charity of many grown cold, the door of doctrines is shut in the streets. Moreover, in the following little verse, in that which he says: "And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird," or

"sparrow," we will use it in time, if ever we see a sinner rising up through penance at the voice of a bishop or a presbyter. It can also be received extraordinarily, although we may not follow the context of the chapter, concerning the ultimate resurrection, when at the voice of the archangel the dead shall rise. Nor is it to be wondered at if we compare the trumpet of the angels to a sparrow, when every voice compared to Christ is thin. And as much as I can record in my mind, I have never known myself to have read of the sparrow in a bad part. The just man speaks in the tenth psalm: "In the Lord I trust: how do you say to my soul, Transmigrate into the mountain like a sparrow." And elsewhere: "I have watched, and have become like a solitary sparrow on the roof" (Ps. 101:8). Also in another place: "For the sparrow has found a home for itself" (Ps. 83:4). Otherwise: They wish the doors shut in the streets to be understood as the weak steps of the old man: because he always sits and is not able to walk. Moreover, they interpret the humility of the voice of the grinder concerning the jaws, because he cannot grind food, and with the breath hardly coarctated, his thin voice is heard. Furthermore, showing that he rises up at the voice of the bird shows that, with the blood now growing cold and the moisture dried up, by which materials sleep is nourished, he wakes up at a light sound and, in the middle of the night, when the cock has crowed, he gets up hastily: being by no means able to turn his limbs more often in the bed. Also that all the daughters of song grow mute, or as

it has better in the Hebrew, grow deaf, signifies the ears, because the hearing of old men becomes heavier, and they are able to know no distinctions among voices, nor be delighted by songs. Which indeed also Barzillai speaks to David, not wishing to cross the Jordan.

"But also they shall fear from high places and they shall dread in the way." That is, they will not be able to enter arduous things, and with weary knees and a trembling vestige, fluctuating even on a level journey, they shall dread the offense of their steps.

"And the almond tree shall flourish, and the locust shall be fattened, and the caper [capparis] shall be dissipated: because man shall go into the house of his eternity: and they that mourn shall go round about in the street." Even now the speech of Ecclesiastes is about the members of man through metaphor: that when old age arrives and the hair has grown white, then the feet have swollen, lust has grown cold, and man has been dissolved by death: then he shall return into his earth and into the house of his eternity, the sepulcher: and the rites of the exsequies being duly celebrated, let a crowd of mourners precede the funeral. Moreover, the flower of the almond tree, which we have put for gray hair, some interpret as the sacred spine, because, with the flesh of the buttocks decreasing, the spine grows and flourishes. Furthermore, as for what he says: "The locust shall be fattened," it should be known that where in our codices "locust" is read, in the Hebrew it is written: AAGAB (אגב): which word is

ambiguous among them. For it can be translated both as "ankle" and as "locust." In the same way therefore as in the beginning of Jeremiah, the word SHOKED (שֶׁקֶד), if the accent be varied, signifies both "nut" and "vigils"; and it is said to him: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And he replied: "A nut-wood staff." And the Lord said to him: "You have seen well: because I will watch over my word to do it" (Jer. 1:11), either that or that: and it has the etymology of "nut," because God is about to watch and to retribute to the people what they deserve, and that is the occasion of the speech. So also now the ambiguity of the word through its etymology indicates the swollen legs of old men, and weighted down by the humors of gout. Not that this happens to all old men, but because it happens for the most part, it is called synecdochically [συνεκδοχικῶς] from a part, that which is the whole. In that indeed where we have "caper" [capparis], in the Hebrew it has ABIONA (אַבְיוֹנָה): which itself is also ambiguous, and is interpreted as "love, desire, concupiscence" or "caper." And it is signified, as we said above, that the lust of old men grows cold, and the organs of coitus are dissipated. Moreover, this is because these ambiguous words, while in their names they sound both "almond" and "locust" and "caper," being derived signify something else, and through a figure are derived to the senses which suit an old man. It should also be known that where now the Seventy Interpreters have placed "almond tree," the word itself is SHOKED (שֶׁקֶד), which is in the beginning of Jeremiah: but there it

was turned into "nut," here into "almond." Symmachus, sensing I know not what in this place, interpreted much otherwise. For he says: "Over these also they shall see from the high, and there shall be terror in the way, and the vigilant shall fall asleep, and the strength of the spirit shall be dissolved." For man shall go into the house of his eternity, and they that mourn shall go around in the street." Whose interpretation the Laodicean followed, and he cannot please either the Jews or the Christians: while he is far from the Hebrews and deigns not to follow the Seventy Interpreters.

"Before the silver cord [funiculus argenteus] is broken, and the golden fillet [vitta aurea] runs back, and the pitcher [hydria] is crushed at the fountain, and the wheel is broken over the cistern [lacum]." "And the dust returns to its earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, who gave it." "Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, all is vanity." He returns to the things above, and after a great hyperbaton (which he had interposed from that place in which he says: "And remember your Creator in the days of your youth: before the days of malice come, and before the sun and the moon are darkened," and the rest, "in the day in which the keepers of the house shall be moved") now he concludes the begun sentence with a similar end, saying: "Before the silver cord is broken," and that or that happens. Moreover, the silver cord shows this white life, and the breath which is bestowed upon us from heaven. Also the return of the golden fillet signifies the soul, which returns thither whence it had descended. Furthermore,

the two remaining things which follow, the crushing of the pitcher at the fountain, and the breaking of the wheel over the cistern, are enigmas of death through metaphor. For just as the pitcher which is crushed ceases to draw, and the wheel through which waters are raised from the cistern and wells, if it shall have been broken: or as the Seventy Interpreters wished, rolled up in its own cord, the use of water is intercepted: so also when the silver cord shall have been interrupted, and the river of the soul runs back to the fountain, man shall perish. And as follows more manifestly: "The dust shall return to its earth," whence it was taken: "and the spirit shall return to the Lord, who gave it." From which those are sufficiently to be laughed at, who think that souls are sown with bodies, and are generated not by God, but by the parents of bodies. For when the flesh returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God, who gave it; it is manifest that God is the parent of souls, not men. After the description of human destruction, beautifully repeating the exordium of his book, he says: "Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, all is vanity." For when all the labor of mortals, concerning which it has been disputed in this whole volume, arrives here, that the dust returns into its earth, and the soul returns thither whence it was taken, it is of great vanity to labor in this age and to acquire things that will profit nothing.

"And further, because Ecclesiastes was made wise: he still taught the people knowledge, and made them hear: and searching he composed

proverbs." "Ecclesiastes sought much, that he might find words of will, and write rightly words of truth." The wisdom by which Solomon preceded the whole race of men, he now also professes at the end of his opusculum, that he was not content with the institution of the ancient Law: but of his own accord immersed himself into deep questions, and for the teaching of the people, composed proverbs and parables, having one thing in the marrow, promising another on the surface. Indeed, that proverbs do not sound this which is written, we are also taught in the Gospels (Matt. 13 and 15): that the Lord spoke to the people in parables and proverbs: but in secret he dissolved them for the Apostles. From which it is manifest that also the book of Proverbs, not as the simple ones arbitrate, has open precepts: but just as gold in the earth, a nucleus in a nut, the fruit is sought hidden in the bristly coverings of chestnuts: so in them the divine sense is to be searched more deeply. Over these he added that he wished to know the causes and natures of things, and the disposition and prudence of God: wherefore each thing, or how it was made, he wished to know: so that what David after the dissolution of body and soul hopes he is to see return to the heavens, saying: "I shall see the heavens, the works of your fingers" (Ps. 8:4): this now in the present Solomon strove to find, so that the human mind, walled in by the fence of the body, might comprehend the truth known to God alone.

"The words of the wise, like goads, and like nails fixed deep, which are given by one shepherd to those having assemblies." Lest he should seem after the law of God to burst forth suddenly as a temerarious preceptor, and to vindicate to himself the doctrine which Moses had received first not so much of his own accord as with God being angry, then inspiring: he says his words are the words of the wise, which in the likeness of goads correct those who delinquent, and move the slow steps of mortals with a pungent sting: and so let them be firm like nails fixed deep and into the solid: nor let them be brought forth by the authority of one, but by the council and consent of all the masters. And lest human wisdom should be contemned, he says it was granted by one shepherd: that is, although very many teach, yet the author of the doctrine is one Lord. This place makes against those who estimate that the God of the ancient Law is one, and that of the Gospel another, because one shepherd instructed the council of the prudent. Moreover, both the Prophets and the apostles are the prudent ones. At the same time this is also to be noted, that the words of the wise are said to sting, not to stroke, nor to touch luxury with a soft hand: but to inflict the pains and wound of penance upon those who err and (as we said above) are slow. If therefore the speech of anyone does not sting, but is for the delight of those hearing, that is not the speech of a wise man. Indeed, the words of the wise are like goads. Which because they provoke the delinquent to conversion, and are firm, and given

by the council of the saints, and granted by one shepherd, are also founded in a solid root. By this goad, I think not yet Paul, but still Saul in the way of error being pierced, heard: "It is hard for you to kick against the goad" (Acts 9:5).

"And further than these, my son, beware." "Of making many books there is no end: and much meditation is a labor of the flesh." Excepting these words which have been given by one shepherd, and proved by the council and consent of the wise, do nothing, vindicate nothing to yourself: follow the footsteps of the elders, and do not discrepancy from their authority. Otherwise, for one seeking many things, an infinite number of books will occur: which may draw you away into error, and will make the one reading labor in vain. Or certainly he teaches that brevity is to be studied, and senses are to be followed more than words, against the philosophers and doctors of this age, who attempt to assert the falsities of their dogmas by the vanity and multiplication of speeches. On the contrary, divine Scripture is coarctated in a brief circle, and as much as it is dilated in senses, so much it is constrained in speech. Because God made a consummated and abbreviated speech upon the earth, and his word is near in our mouth and in our heart (Rom. 10:8; Deut. 30:14). Otherwise: Frequent reading and daily meditation is accustomed to be more a labor of the soul than of the flesh. For just as whatever is done by hand and body is completed by the labor of hand and body: so what pertains to reading is more a labor of the mind. From which

it seems to me that the things above concerning the multitude of books are to be perceived otherwise than many estimate. It is the custom of the Scriptures, although there be more books, if they do not discrepancy among themselves and are written concerning the same thing, to call it one volume. Since indeed both the Gospel and the immaculate Law of the Lord converting souls (Ps. 18:8) are named singularly, although there are several Gospels and many are the mandates of the law. So also the volume signed in the speech of Isaiah is all divine Scripture (Isa. 29), and Ezekiel and John eat one chapter of a book (Ezek. 8; Rev. 10). The Savior of all also, prophesied by the voices of the saints of old, says: "In the chapter of the book it is written of me" (Ps. 39:9). According to this sense therefore I think it is now commanded that more books not be made. For whatever you shall have said, if it be referred to him who in the beginning was with God, and was God the Word (John 1), it is one volume: and innumerable books are named one Law, one Gospel. But if you shall have disputed diverse and discrepant things, and shall have led your mind hither and thither by too much curiosity, even in one book there are many books. Whence it is said: "From much speaking you shall not escape sin" (Prov. 10:19). To such books therefore there is no end. For all good and truth is concluded by a certain end: malice indeed and lying are without end. And the more they are sought, so much greater a series of them is born. Concerning this thing study and meditation is a labor of the

flesh. Of the flesh, I say, not of the spirit. Since indeed also the spirit has its labor, according to that which the Apostle says: "But I have labored more than all them: yet not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). And the Savior: "I have labored crying" (Ps. 68:4).

"The end of the discourse of the universal word is most easy in hearing: Fear God, and keep his commandments." "For this is all man, because God will bring every deed into judgment concerning every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The Hebrews say that when among the other writings of Solomon which have become antiquated and have not endured in memory, and this book seemed to be obliterated, for that reason that it asserted the creatures of God to be vain, and thought all to be for nothing, and preferred food and drink and passing delights above all: from this one chapter it merited authority, that it should be placed in the number of the divine Volumes, because he coarctated his whole disputation and the whole catalog by this quasi-recapitulation [ἀνακεφαλαιώσσει], and said the end of his speeches was most prompt in hearing, nor has anything difficult in itself, so that namely we fear God and do his precepts. For to this was man born, that understanding his creator, he might venerate him with fear and honor and the work of the commandments. Since indeed when the time of judgment arrives, whatever has been done by us, stands under the judge, and for a long time expects a doubtful sentence, and each one receives

for his work, whether he has done something of evil, or of good. Moreover, for that which we have put: "Concerning every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil," Symmachus and the Seventy interpreted, "concerning every condemned thing," or certainly "concerning every ignored thing," because even concerning an idle word, and one brought forth not by will but by ignorance, we are to render an account in the day of judgment. Otherwise: Because fear is of servants, and perfect charity casts out fear (1 John 4:18), and in divine Scripture the fear of both those beginning and of those perfected is called double: now I think it is said concerning the perfected fear in virtues, according to that: "Nothing is wanting to those fearing him" (Ps. 33:10). Or certainly, because he is still man, and has not yet received the name of God, he has this reason of his substance, that being placed in the body he fears God. Because every deed, that is, all men God will bring into judgment over all things, which they have sensed otherwise than have been disposed and said by him, whether into this part or into that. For woe to those who say evil is good and good is evil (Isa. 5:20).