

SAINT BEDE THE VENERABLE

LETTERS

Epistolae

SABBATISMUS

Saint Bede the Venerable (672–735)
Epistolae · Letters

Latin text: public domain.
Translation, alignment and edition © 2026 Inversiones San Juan Diego (Sabbatismus). Creative
Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Facing-page bilingual edition: Latin on the left-hand pages, English on the right.
Sabbatismus is the imprint of the Inversiones San Juan Diego foundation, San Pedro Sula, Honduras.
Set in EB Garamond and Cinzel.
sabbatismus.com

CONTENTS

[EPISTOLAE.(C,G,S)*] 5

Epistle II 5

Letter III 29

Epistle IV 45

Epistle V 67

Epistle VI 69

Epistle VII 73

Epistle VIII 75

Epistle IX 77

Letter X 85

Letter XI 89

Letter XII 91

Letter XIII 97

Letter XIV 99

Epistle XV 107

Epistle XVI 125

[EPISTOLAE.(C,G,S)*]

EPISTOLA PRIMA, AD ALBINUM ABBATEM.

Desideratissimo et reverendissimo Patri Albino, Beda Christi famulus, salutem.

Gratantissime suscepi munuscula tuae dilectionis, quae per venerabilem fratrem nostrum Nothelmum presbyterum mittere dignatus es, et maxime litteras, quibus me jam secunda vice in ecclesiastica gentis nostrae historia, ad quam me scribendam jamdudum instigaveras, creber adjuvare atque instituere curasti. Propter quod et ipse tibi rectissime eandem historiam, mox ut consummare potui, ad transcribendum remisi. Sed et aliud, quod te partim desiderare comperi, volumen tibi vice remunerationis aequae ad transcribendum destinavi, videlicet, illud quod de structura templi Salomonis atque allegorica ejus interpretatione nuper edidi. Teque, amantissime Pater, supplex obsecro, ut pro mea fragilitate cum his, qui tecum sunt, famulis Christi, apud pium Judicem sedulus intercedere memineris: sed et eos, ad quos eadem nostra opuscula pervenire feceris, hoc idem facere monueris. Bene vale, semper amantissime in Christo Pater optime.

EPISTOLA II

, AD ECGBERCTUM ANTISTITEM.

Dilectissimo ac reverentissimo antistiti Ecgbercto, Beda famulus Christi salutem.

Memini te hesterno dixisse anno, cum tecum aliquot diebus legendi gratia in monasterio tuo demorarer, quod hoc etiam anno velles, cum in eundem devenires locum, me quoque, ob commune legendi studium, ad tuum accire [Al., accipere] colloquium. Quod si ita, Deo volente, posset impleri, non opus esset tibi haec per litteras scripta dirigere, cum possem liberius ore ad os loquens, quaeque vellem [Al., velim], sive necessaria ducerem, secreta tibi allocutione suggerere. Verum quia hoc ne fieret, superveniens, ut nosti, corporis mei valitudo prohibuit: agere tamen quod potui, erga dilectionem tuam fraternae devotionis intuitu, curavi, mittendo videlicet per litteras quod corporaliter veniendo per colloquutionem nequiveram. Precorque te per Dominum, ne harum apices litterarum arrogantiae supercilium esse suspiceris, sed obsequium potius humilitatis ac pietatis veraciter esse cognoscas.

Exhortor itaque tuam, dilectissime in Christo Antistes, sanctitatem, ut gradum sacrosanctum quem tibi Auctor graduum et spiritualium largitor charismatum committere dignatus est, sacrosancta et [Al. om. et] operatione et doctrina confirmare memineris.

[EPISTOLAE.(C,G,S)*]

FIRST EPISTLE, TO ABBOT ALBINUS.

To the most desired and most reverend Father Albinus, Bede, servant of Christ, greeting.

I received with great pleasure the small gifts of your affection, which you deigned to send through our venerable brother Nothelm the priest, and especially the letters, by which you have now for the second time taken care to assist and instruct me frequently in the ecclesiastical history of our nation, to the writing of which you had long since urged me. On account of which I myself have returned the same history to you for transcription, as soon as I was able to complete it. But I have also destined for you another volume by way of remuneration, which I found you partly desired, namely, that which I recently published on the structure of Solomon's temple and its allegorical interpretation. And I humbly beseech you, most loving Father, to remember to intercede diligently before the merciful Judge for my frailty with those servants of Christ who are with you; and also that you would advise those to whom you cause our works to come to do the same. Farewell, best Father, always most loving in Christ.

EPISTLE II

, TO BISHOP ECGBERT.

To the most beloved and most reverend Bishop Ecgbert, Bede, servant of Christ, greeting.

I remember that you said last year, when I stayed with you for some days for the sake of reading in your monastery, that you wished also this year, when you should come to the same place, to call me also to a conference with you, for the sake of our common study of reading. If this could be fulfilled, God willing, there would be no need to direct these things written to you by letter, since I could more freely, speaking face to face, suggest to you in secret discourse whatever I wished, or deemed necessary. But because my health, as you know, supervening, prevented this from happening, I have nonetheless taken care to do what I could for your affection with a view to brotherly devotion, namely, by sending in writing what I was unable to do by coming in person and conversing. And I pray you through the Lord, not to suspect the contents of these letters to be the arrogance of pride, but rather truly to recognize them as an office of humility and piety.

I exhort therefore your holiness, most beloved Bishop in Christ, to remember to confirm by holy work and doctrine the sacred rank which the Author of ranks and the Giver of spiritual charisms has deigned to commit to you.

Neutra enim haec virtus sine altera rite potest impleri: Si aut is qui bene vivit docendi officium negligit, aut recte docens antistes rectam exercere operationem contemnit. Qui autem [Al., At qui] utrumque veraciter agit, profecto talis servus adventum Domini sui gratulabundus exspectat, sperans se citius auditurum: Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, supra multa te constituam: Intra in gaudium domini tui (Matth. XXV). Si quis vero, quod absit, gradu episcopatus accepto, nec seipsum a malis actibus bene vivendo, nec subditam sibi plebem castigando, vel admonendo corrigere curat: quid huic, veniente Domino hora qua non sperat, eventurum sit, evangelica manifeste sententia declarat, qua dicitur ad inutilem servum: Ejicite in tenebras exteriores, ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium (Ibid.).

Ante omnia sane tuae sanctae paternitati suadeo, ut ab otiosis te confabulationibus, obtrectationibus, caeterisque linguae indomitae contagiis pontificali dignitate coerceas: divinis autem eloquiis ac meditationibus Scripturarum linguam simul et mentem occupes, et maxime legendis beati Pauli apostoli Epistolis ad Timotheum et Titum, sed et verbis sanctissimi papae Gregorii quibus de vita simul et vitiis rectorum sive in libro Regulae Pastoralis seu in homiliis Evangelii multum curiose disseruit, ut sit sermo tuus semper sapientiae sale conditus, eminentior vulgari locutione, ac divino auditui dignior elucescat. Sicut enim indecens est, si vasa altaris sacrosancta vulgaribus unquam usibus ac vilibus profanentur officiis, ita perversum omni modo ac miserum est, si is qui ad consecranda in altari Dominica sacramenta ordinatus est, nunc quidem eisdem conficiendis sacramentis Domino famulaturus assistat, nunc egressus Ecclesiam ipso ore eisdemque [Al., eisque] manibus quibus paulo ante sacra tractaverat, repente frivola loqui vel agere Dominum offensurus incipiat.

Ad custodiendam vero linguae vel operis munditiam, cum lectione divina, etiam societas eorum qui Christo fideli devotione famulantur, plurimum juvat. Ut si quando vel lingua lascivire, vel operatio prava mihi subrepere coeperit, mox sociorum fidelium manu ne cadere valeam sustenter. Quod cum omnibus Dei famulis sibimet ita prospicere utillimum [Al., utilissimum] sit, quanto magis illi gradui qui non suimet tantummodo curam agere, sed etiam erga commissam sibi Ecclesiam necesse habet studium salutis impendere; juxta illum qui dixit: Praeter ea quae extrinsecus sunt instantia mea cotidiana, sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum. Quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor? Quis scandalizatur, et ego non uror? (II Cor. XII.)

For neither of these virtues can be rightly fulfilled without the other: if either he who lives well neglects the office of teaching, or a bishop who teaches rightly despises the practice of right work. But he who truly performs both, such a servant indeed awaits the coming of his Lord with joy, hoping that he will soon hear: Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will appoint you over many things: Enter into the joy of your lord (Matt. XXV). But if anyone, which God forbid, having accepted the rank of the episcopate, takes care neither to correct himself from evil acts by living well, nor the people subject to him by chastising or admonishing them: what shall happen to him when the Lord comes at an hour he does not expect, the evangelical sentence clearly declares, by which it is said to the useless servant: Cast him out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Ibid.).

Before all things, indeed, I persuade your holy fatherhood to restrain yourself with pontifical dignity from idle conversations, detractions, and other contagions of an untamed tongue; but occupy both tongue and mind with divine discourses and meditations on the Scriptures, and especially with reading the Epistles of the blessed Apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus, and also the words of the most holy Pope Gregory, in which he has discussed much carefully concerning the life and also the vices of rulers, whether in the book of the Pastoral Rule or in the homilies on the Gospel, so that your speech may always be seasoned with the salt of wisdom, more eminent than common speech, and may shine forth more worthy of divine hearing. For as it is unseemly if the sacrosanct vessels of the altar should ever be profaned for common uses and vile offices, so it is perverse in every way and miserable if he who is ordained for the consecrating of the Lord's sacraments on the altar should now indeed assist in performing those same sacraments to serve the Lord, and now having left the Church, with the same mouth and the same hands with which he had handled the sacred things a little before, should suddenly begin to speak or do frivolous things, about to offend the Lord.

Moreover, for guarding the purity of tongue or work, along with divine reading, the society of those who serve Christ with faithful devotion is of the greatest help. So that if ever either my tongue should begin to wander, or a perverse operation should creep upon me, I may soon be sustained by the hand of faithful companions lest I should fall. Since it is most useful for all the servants of God thus to provide for themselves, how much more for that rank which has necessity to expend the study of salvation not only for the care of itself, but also toward the Church committed to it; according to him who said: Besides those things which are from without, my daily pressure, the solicitude for all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire? (II Cor. XI.)

Quod non ita loquor, quasi te aliter facere sciam, sed quia de quibusdam episcopis fama vulgatum est, quod ipsi ita Christo serviant, ut nullos secum alicujus religionis aut continentiae viros habeant: sed potius illos qui risui, jocis, fabulis, comessationibus et ebrietatibus, caeterisque vitae remissioris [Al., remissioribus] illecebris subigantur [Al., subjugantur], et qui magis quotidie ventrem dapibus, quam mentem sacrificiis coelestibus pascant [Al., parent]. Quos tua sancta auctoritate si alicubi repereris velim corrigas, moneasque illos tales suae conversationis diurnae sive nocturnae testes habere, qui et actione Deo digna et exhortatione congrua prodesse populis, ac spirituale ipsorum antistitum opus juvare sufficiant. Lege enim Actus apostolorum, et videbis, referente beato Luca, quales secum comites apostoli Paulus et Barnabas habuerint, quid etiam ipsi, ubicunque devenissent, operis egerint. Statim namque ut civitates vel synagogas ingressi sunt, verbum Dei praedicare, et per omnia disseminare curabant. Quod etiam te, dilectissimo mihi caput, sagaciter cupiam, ubicunque potes implere. In hoc namque officium a Domino electus, in hoc consecratus es [Al., implere. In hoc consecratus], ut verbum evangelizes virtute magna [Al., multa], praebente tibi auxilium ipso Rege virtutum Domino nostro Jesu Christo. Quod ita rite perficies si ubicunque perveneris, mox collectis ad te ejusdem loci incolis, verbum illis exhortationis exhibueris, simul et exemplum vivendi una cum omnibus qui tecum venerint quasi coelestis militiae ductor ostenderis.

Et quia latiora sunt spatia locorum quae ad gubernacula tuae dioecesis pertinent, quam ut solus per omnia discurrere, et in singulis viculis atque agellis verbum Dei praedicare, etiam anni totius emenso curriculo, sufficiat; necessarium satis est, ut plures tibi sacri operis adiutores asciscas, presbyteros videlicet ordinando, atque instituendo doctores, qui in singulis viculis praedicando Dei verbo, et consecrandis mysteriis coelestibus, ac maxime peragendis sacri baptismatis officiis, ubi opportunitas ingruerit, insistant. In qua videlicet praedicatione populis exhibenda, hoc prae caeteris omni instantia procurandum arbitror, ut fidem catholicam quae apostolorum Symbolo continetur, et Dominicam orationem quam sancti Evangelii nos Scriptura edocet, omnium qui ad tuum regimen pertinent, memoriae radicitus infigere cures. Et quidem omnes qui Latinam linguam lectionis usu didicerunt, etiam haec optime didicisse certissimum est: sed idiotas, hoc est, eos qui propriae tantum linguae notitiam habent, haec ipsa sua lingua dicere, ac sedulo decantare facito.

I do not say this as if I know you to do otherwise, but because it is reported by rumor concerning certain bishops that they so serve Christ as to have with them no men of any religion or continence; but rather those who are subjected to laughter, jokes, fables, feastings, and drunkenness, and other allurements of a more remiss life, and who daily rather feed the belly with dainties than the mind with celestial sacrifices. If you find such anywhere, I would wish that you correct them by your holy authority, and advise them to have such witnesses of their daily or nightly conversation who may suffice to benefit the people by both action worthy of God and congruous exhortation, and to help the spiritual work of the bishops themselves. For read the Acts of the Apostles, and you will see, the blessed Luke reporting, what kind of companions the apostles Paul and Barnabas had with them, and also what work they themselves performed wherever they came. For immediately as they entered cities or synagogues, they took care to preach the word of God, and to disseminate it through all things. Which also I would sagaciously desire you, my most beloved head, to fulfill wherever you can. For you were chosen for this office by the Lord, in this you were consecrated, that you should evangelize the word with great power, the King of virtues Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, providing you help. Which you will thus rightly accomplish if, wherever you arrive, having soon gathered to you the inhabitants of that same place, you exhibit to them the word of exhortation, and at the same time show the example of living together with all who come with you, as a leader of the celestial host.

And because the spaces of the places which belong to the government of your diocese are wider than you alone suffice to run through everything and preach the word of God in every village and farmstead, even in the course of a whole year; it is necessary enough that you should associate with yourself more helpers of the sacred work, namely, by ordaining priests and instituting teachers, who may insist in every village on preaching the word of God, and consecrating the celestial mysteries, and especially in performing the offices of holy baptism, where opportunity should arise. In which preaching, to be exhibited to the people, I think this above all things is to be procured with all instance, that you take care to fix radically in the memory of all who belong to your rule the Catholic faith which is contained in the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer which the Scripture of the holy Gospel teaches us. And indeed, it is most certain that all who have learned the Latin language by the use of reading have also learned these things best: but for the unlearned (*idiotas*), that is, those who have knowledge only of their own language, make them say and diligently chant these same things in their own language.

Quod non solum de laicis, id est, in populari adhuc vita constitutis, verum etiam de clericis sive monachis qui Latinae sunt linguae expertes fieri oportet. Sic enim fit ut coetus omnis fidelium quomodo fidelis esse, qua se firmitate credendi contra immun-dorum spirituum certamina munire atque armare debeat, discat; sic, ut chorus [Al., Fit ut chorus] omnis Deo supplicantium quid maxime a divina clementia quaeri oporteat, agnoscat. Propter quod et ipse multis saepe sacerdotibus idiotis haec utraque, et Symbolum videlicet, et Dominicam orationem in linguam Anglorum translatam obtuli. Nam et sanctus antistes Ambrosius hoc de fide loquens admonet, ut verba Symboli matutinis semper horis fideles quique decantent, et hoc se quasi antidoto spirituali contra diaboli venena quae illis interdiu vel noctu astu maligno objicere posset, praemuniant. Orationem vero Dominicam saepius decantari [Al., cantari] ipsa etiam nos consuetudo sedulae deprecationis ac genuum flexionis docuit.

Quod si haec ut suggerimus in regendis pascendisque Christi ovibus tua pastoralis auctoritas perfecerit, dici non potest quantum tibi supernae mercedis apud Pastorem pastorum in futuro praeparaveris. Quanto enim rariora hujus sacratissimi operis in episcopis nostrae gentis exempla reperis, tanto altiora singularis meriti praemia [Al. om. praemia] recipies; utpote qui populum Dei per crebram Symboli vel Orationis sacrae decantationem ad intellectum, amorem, spem, fidem et inquisitionem eorumdem quae decantantur coelestium donorum, paterna pietate ac sollicitudine provocatum accenderis. Sicut e contrario si commissum tibi a Domino negotium minus diligenter compleveris, pro retentione talenti cum servo nequam et pigro partem es recepturus in futuro: maxime si temporalia ab illis commoda requirere atque accipere praesumpseris, quibus nulla coelestis beneficii dona rependere probaveris. Cum enim Dominus mittens ad evangelizandum discipulos [Al. om. discipulos] dixisset: Euntes autem praedicate, dicentes quia appropinquat regnum coelorum (Matth. X): paulo post subjunxit [Al., adjunxit], dicens: Gratis accepistis, gratis date; Nolite possidere aurum, neque argentum (Ibid.). Si ergo illos gratis Evangelium praedicare jussit, neque aurum vel argentum, vel aliquid pecuniae temporalis ab eis quibus praedicabant accipere permisit: quid rogo illis qui his contraria gerunt, periculi immineat?

Attende quid gravissimi sceleris illi commiserint qui et terrena ab auditoribus suis lucra diligentissime requirere, et pro eorum salute aeterna nihil omnino praedicando, vel exhortando, vel increpando, laboris impendere contendunt [Al., intendunt]. Sollicite atque intentione curiosa, antistes dilectissime, perpende.

Which ought to be done not only for the laity, that is, those still constituted in common life, but even for the clerics or monks who are ignorant of the Latin language. For thus it happens that the whole assembly of the faithful learns how it ought to be faithful, and with what firmness of believing it ought to fortify and arm itself against the contests of unclean spirits; thus, that the whole chorus of those supplicating God may recognize what is most to be sought from the divine clemency. On account of which I myself have often offered both of these, namely, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, translated into the language of the English, to many unlearned priests. For also the holy bishop Ambrose, speaking of this faith, admonishes that all the faithful should chant the words of the Creed always in the morning hours, and fortify themselves as if with a spiritual antidote against the poisons of the devil which he might cast at them by day or by night with malignant craft. Moreover, the very custom of diligent prayer and the bending of the knees has taught us that the Lord's Prayer should be chanted more often.

But if your pastoral authority shall have performed these things as we suggest in ruling and feeding the sheep of Christ, it cannot be said how much celestial reward you will have prepared for yourself in the future with the Shepherd of shepherds. For the rarer examples of this most sacred work you find in the bishops of our nation, the higher rewards of singular merit you will receive; inasmuch as you will have kindled the people of God, provoked by paternal piety and solicitude through the frequent chanting of the Creed or the sacred Prayer, to the understanding, love, hope, faith, and investigation of those same celestial gifts which are chanted. Just as on the contrary, if you shall have completed the business committed to you by the Lord less diligently, you are to receive a part in the future for the retention of the talent with the wicked and slothful servant: especially if you shall have presumed to require and receive temporal advantages from those to whom you have proved to repay no gifts of celestial benefit. For when the Lord, sending out the disciples to evangelize, had said: Going, preach, saying that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. X); a little after He added, saying: Freely you have received, freely give; Do not possess gold, nor silver (Ibid.). If therefore He commanded them to preach the Gospel freely, nor permitted them to receive gold or silver, or any temporal money from those to whom they preached: what danger, I ask, should threaten those who do things contrary to these?

Attend to what a most heavy crime they have committed who contend to require most diligently earthly gains from their hearers, and to expend no labor at all for their eternal salvation by preaching, or exhorting, or rebuking. Most beloved bishop, weigh this carefully and with curious intention.

Audivimus enim, et fama est, quia multae villae ac viculi nostrae gentis in montibus sint inaccessis ac saltibus dumosis positi, ubi nunquam multis transeuntibus annis sit visus antistes, qui ibidem aliquid ministerii aut gratiae coelestis exhibuerit; quorum tamen nec unus quidem a tributis antistiti reddendis esse possit immunis: nec solum talibus locis desit antistes qui manus impositione baptizatos confirmet, verum etiam omnis doctor qui eos vel fidei veritatem vel discretionem bonae ac malae actionis edoceat, absit. Sicque fit, ut episcoporum quidam non solum gratis non evangelizent [Al., quidem non solum gratis evangelizent], vel manus fidelibus imponant; verum etiam, quod gravius est, accepta ab auditoribus suis pecunia, quam Dominus prohibuit, opus verbi quod Dominus jussit exercere contemnant: cum Deo dilectus pontifex Samuel, longe aliter fecisse omni populo teste legatur. Itaque conversatus, inquit, coram vobis ab adolescentia mea usque ad diem hanc, ecce praesto sum, loquimini de me coram Domino et coram Christo ejus, utrum bovem alicujus tulerim, an asinum, si quempiam calumniatus sum, si oppressi aliquem, si de manu cujusquam munus accepi: et contemnam illud hodie, restituamque vobis. Et dixerunt: Non es calumniatus nos, neque oppressisti, neque tulisti de manu alicujus quippiam (I Reg. XII). Cujus innocentiae ac justitiae merito, inter primos populi Dei duces et sacerdotes annumerari, atque in precibus suis superno auditu atque alloquio dignus existere meruit, dicente Psalmographo: Moyses et Aaron in sacerdotibus ejus, et Samuel inter eos qui invocant nomen ejus, invocabant Dominum et ipse exaudiebat eos: in columna nubis loquebatur ad eos (Psal. XCVIII).

Si autem aliquid utilitatis fidelibus conferri [Al., conferre] manus impositione [Al., impositionem], qua Spiritus sanctus accipitur, credimus et confitemur, constat e contrario quod haec ipsa utilitas eis quibus manus impositio defuerit, abest. Cujus nimirum privatio boni ad quos amplius quam ad ipsos respicit antistites, qui illorum se promittunt esse praesules quibus spiritalis officium praesulatus exhibere aut negligunt aut nequeunt? Cujus totius facinoris nulla magis quam avaritia causa est. Contra quam disputans Apostolus, in quo Christus loquebatur, aiebat: Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas (I Tim. VI, 10). Et rursum: Neque avari, inquit, regnum Dei possidebunt (I Cor. VI, 10). Cum enim antistes dictante amore pecuniae majorem populi partem, quam ulla ratione per totum anni spatium peragraré praedicando, aut circuire valuerit, in nomen sui praesulatus assumpserit: satis exitiale [Al., exitiabile] et sibimetipsi, et illis quibus falso praesulis nomine praelatus est, comprobatur concinnare periculum.

For we have heard, and it is a rumor, that many farmsteads and villages of our nation are placed in inaccessible mountains and bushy thickets, where for many passing years no bishop has been seen who has exhibited there any ministry or celestial grace; of which, however, not even one can be immune from paying tributes to the bishop: nor in such places is there only a lack of a bishop who may confirm the baptized by the imposition of hands, but even every teacher is absent who might teach them either the truth of the faith or the discretion of good and evil action. And so it happens that some of the bishops not only do not evangelize or impose hands on the faithful freely; but even, what is more heavy, having accepted money from their hearers, which the Lord prohibited, they despise performing the work of the word which the Lord commanded: whereas the pontiff Samuel, beloved of God, is read to have done far otherwise, all the people being witness. Having conversed, he said, before you from my youth even until this day, behold I am present, speak concerning me before the Lord and before His Christ, whether I have taken anyone's ox, or an ass, if I have calumniated anyone, if I have oppressed anyone, if I have accepted a gift from the hand of anyone: and I will despise it today, and restore it to you. And they said: You have not calumniated us, nor oppressed us, nor taken anything from the hand of anyone (I Kings XII). By the merit of whose innocence and justice, he deserved to be numbered among the first leaders and priests of the people of God, and to exist as worthy of divine hearing and discourse in his prayers, the Psalm-writer saying: Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who call upon His name, they called upon the Lord and He heard them: He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud (Psal. XCVIII).

But if we believe and confess that some utility is conferred on the faithful by the imposition of hands, by which the Holy Spirit is received, it is manifest on the contrary that this same utility is absent from those to whom the imposition of hands has been lacking. To whom indeed does the privation of this good look more than to the bishops themselves, who promise themselves to be the prelates of those to whom they either neglect or are unable to exhibit the office of spiritual prelacy? Of which whole crime there is no cause more than avarice. Disputing against which the Apostle, in whom Christ spoke, said: The root of all evils is cupidity (I Tim. VI, 10). And again: Nor shall the avaricious, he says, possess the kingdom of God (I Cor. VI, 10). For when a bishop, the love of money dictating, has assumed into the name of his prelacy a greater part of the people than he can by any reason travel through by preaching or go around during the space of a whole year: he is proved to prepare a sufficiently fatal danger both for himself and for those over whom he is set as prelate by a false name of prelate.

Haec tuae sanctitati, dilectissime antistes, paucis de calamitate qua nostra gens miserrime laborat insinuans, obsecro sedulus ut haec quae perversissime agi conspicias, quantum vales ad rectam vitae normam revocare contendas. Habes enim, ut credo, promptissimum tam justī laboris adiutorem, regem videlicet Ceolwlfum, qui et pro insita sibi dilectione religionis, quidquid ad regulam pietatis pertinet, firma protinus intentione adjuvare curabit, et maxime illa quae, tu cum sis propinquus illius amantissimus bona coeperis, ipse ut perficiantur opitulabitur [Al., opitulari curabit]. Quapropter velim solerter illum admoneas, ut in diebus vestris statum nostrae gentis ecclesiasticum in melius quam hactenus fuerat instaurare curet [Al., curetis]. Quod non alio magis ut mihi videtur potest ordine perfici, quam si plures nostrae genti consecrentur antistites, exemplumque sequamini legislatoris, qui cum solus iurgia ac pondus Israeliticae plebis sustinere non posset, elegit sibi divino adjutus consilio, et consecravit septuaginta seniores quorum ope [Al., cura] atque consilio [Al., auxilio] impositum sibi onus ferre levius posset [Al., liberius possit]. Quis enim non videat quanto sit melius tam enorme pondus ecclesiastici regiminis in plures, qui hoc dispersitum facilius ferant, dividi, quam unum sub fasce quem portare non possit opprimi? Nam et sanctus papa Gregorius, cum de fide nostrae gentis quae adhuc futura et conservanda erat in Christo, ad beatissimum archiepiscopum Augustinum missis litteris disputaret, duodecim in ea episcopos, postquam ad fidem venirent [Al., venerunt], ordinandos esse decrevit; in quibus Eboracensis antistes, accepto a sede apostolica pallio, metropolitanus esse deberet. Quem profecto numerum episcoporum velim modo tua sancta paternitas, patrocinate praesidio piissimi ac Deo dilecti regis praefati, solerter implere contendat, quatenus abundante numero magistrorum, perfectius Ecclesia Christi in his quae ad cultum sacrae religionis pertinent, instituat. Et quidem novimus quia per incuriam regum praecedentium, donationesque stultissimas factum est, ut non facile locus vacans ubi sedes episcopalis nova fieri debeat, inveniri [Al., invenire] valeat.

Quapropter commodum duxerim, habito majori concilio et consensu [Al., consensu, edicto] pontificali simul et regali, edicto prospiciatur locus aliquis monasteriorum ubi sedes episcopalis fiat. Et ne forte abbas vel monachi huic decreto contraire ac resistere tentaverint, detur illis licentia ut de suis ipsi eligant eum qui episcopus ordinetur, et adjacentium locorum quotquot ad eandem dioecesim pertineant, una cum ipso monasterio curam gerat episcopalem:

Insinuating these things to your holiness, most beloved bishop, in a few words concerning the calamity under which our nation most miserably labors, I diligently beseech that you contend to recall those things which you see to be most perversely done to the right norm of life, as much as you are able. For you have, as I believe, a most prompt helper in such a just labor, namely King Ceolwulf, who, both for the innate love of religion in him, will take care to help with firm intention everything that pertains to the rule of piety, and especially those good things which you, since you are his most beloved kinsman, shall have begun, he himself will help that they may be perfected. Wherefore I would wish that you skillfully admonish him, that in your days he may take care to restore the ecclesiastical state of our nation to a better condition than it had been until now. Which can be perfected by no other order more, as it seems to me, than if more bishops are consecrated for our nation, and you follow the example of the lawgiver, who, when he alone could not sustain the strifes and weight of the Israelite people, chose for himself, helped by divine counsel, and consecrated seventy elders, by whose aid and counsel he might more lightly bear the burden imposed on him. For who does not see how much better it is that such an enormous weight of ecclesiastical government be divided among many, who may more easily bear it when thus dispersed, than that one be oppressed under a bundle which he cannot carry? For also the holy Pope Gregory, when he discussed with the most blessed Archbishop Augustine in letters sent concerning the faith of our nation, which was still future and to be preserved in Christ, decreed that twelve bishops were to be ordained in it, after they should come to the faith; among whom the bishop of York, having received the pallium from the Apostolic See, should be metropolitan. Which number of bishops indeed I would wish your holy fatherhood, the protection of the most pious and God-beloved king aforesaid patronizing, to contend skillfully to fulfill, so that, the number of masters abounding, the Church of Christ may be more perfectly instituted in those things which pertain to the cult of sacred religion. And indeed we know that by the negligence of preceding kings, and most foolish donations, it has happened that a vacant place where a new episcopal see ought to be made cannot easily be found.

Wherefore I should consider it convenient, having held a greater council and with both pontifical and royal consent, that by an edict some place of monasteries be provided where an episcopal see may be made. And lest by chance the abbot or monks should attempt to go against and resist this decree, let license be given to them that they themselves choose from among their own him who should be ordained bishop, and should have the episcopal care of as many of the adjacent places as belong to the same diocese, together with the monastery itself:

aut si forte in ipso monasterio qui episcopus ordinari debeat inveniri nequeat, in ipsorum tamen juxta statuta canonum pendeat examine, qui de sua dioecesi ordinetur antistes. Quod si hoc, ita ut suggerimus, Domino adjuvante, perfeceris, facillime etiam [Al. om. etiam], ut arbitramur, hoc obtinebis, ut juxta decreta sedis apostolicae, Eboracensis Ecclesia metropolitanum possit habere pontificem. Ac si opus esse visum fuerit ut tali monasterio, causa episcopatus suscipiendi, amplius aliquid locorum ac possessionum augeri debeat, sunt loca innumera, ut novimus [Al., sunt innumera, stylo stultissimo, ut novimus] omnes, in monasteriorum ascripta vocabulum, sed nihil prorsus monasticae conversationis habentia: e quibus velim aliqua de luxuria ad castitatem, de vanitate ad temperantiam [Al., veritatem], de intemperantia ventris et gulae ad continentiam et pietatem cordis synodica auctoritate transferantur, atque in adjutorium sedis episcopalis quae nuper ordinari [Al., ordinare] debeat, assumantur.

Et quia hujusmodi maxima et plurima [Al., plura] sunt loca quae, ut vulgo dici solet, neque Deo neque hominibus utilia sunt, quia videlicet neque regularis secundum Deum ibidem vita servatur, neque illa milites sive comites saecularium potestatum qui gentem nostram a barbaris defendant possident: si quis in eisdem ipsis locis pro necessitate temporum sedem episcopatus constituat [Al., constituere], non culpam praevaricationis incurrere, sed opus virtutis magis agere probabitur. Quomodo enim in peccatum reputari potest, si injusta principum judicia recto meliorum principum examine corrigantur: ac mendax stylus scribarum iniquorum discreta prudentium sacerdotum sententia deleatur ac redigatur in nihilum, juxta exemplum sacrae historiae, quae tempora Regum Judae a David et Salomone usque ad ultimum Zedechiam describens, nonnullos quidem in eis religiosos, sed plures reprobos exstitisse designat; vicibusque alternantibus nunc impios bonorum qui ante se fuerant facta reprobare, nunc e contrario justos impiorum qui se praecesserant gesta nociva, prout justum erat, juvante se Dei Spiritu, per prophetas sanctos ac sacerdotes omni instantia correxisse; juxta illud beati Isaiae praecipientis atque dicentis, Dissolve colligationes violentarum commutationum. Dimitte confractos in remissionem, et omnem conscriptionem iniquam disrumpe (Isa. Quo exemplo, tuam quoque sanctitatem decet cum religioso rege, nostrae gentis irreligiosa et iniqua priorum gesta atque scripta convellere, et ea quae provinciae nostrae, sive secundum Deum, sive secundum saeculum sint utilia, prospicere: ne nostris temporibus vel religione cessante, amor timorque interni deseratur inspectoris, vel rarescente copia militiae saecularis, absint qui fines nostros a barbarica incursione tueantur.

or if by chance he who ought to be ordained bishop cannot be found in the monastery itself, let it nonetheless depend on their examination, according to the statutes of the canons, who should be ordained bishop from their diocese. If you shall have performed this, as we suggest, the Lord helping, you will also most easily, as we think, obtain this, that according to the decrees of the Apostolic See, the Church of York may have a metropolitan pontiff. And if it should seem necessary that for such a monastery, for the sake of undertaking the episcopate, anything more of places and possessions ought to be increased, there are innumerable places, as we all know, inscribed under the name of monasteries, but having nothing at all of monastic conversation: from which I would wish that some things be transferred by synodical authority from luxury to chastity, from vanity to temperance, from intemperance of the belly and gluttony to continence and piety of heart, and be assumed for the assistance of the episcopal see which ought recently to be ordained.

And because there are very many and very large places of this kind which, as is commonly said, are useful neither to God nor to men, because namely neither is a regular life according to God preserved there, nor do knights or counts of secular powers possess them to defend our nation from barbarians: if anyone should establish an episcopal see in those very places for the necessity of the times, he will be proved not to incur the fault of prevarication, but rather to perform a work of virtue. For how can it be reputed as a sin if the unjust judgments of princes are corrected by the right examination of better princes: and the lying pen of iniquitous scribes is deleted and reduced to nothing by the discrete sentence of prudent priests, according to the example of sacred history, which, describing the times of the Kings of Judah from David and Solomon even to the last Zedekiah, designates that some indeed among them were religious, but more were reprobate; and with alternating turns, now the impious reproveth the deeds of the good who had been before them, now on the contrary the just corrected with all instance the harmful deeds of the impious who had preceded them, as was just, the Spirit of God helping them through the holy prophets and priests; according to that of the blessed Isaiah prescribing and saying, Loose the bands of violent exchanges. Let the oppressed go free, and break every iniquitous writing (Isa. LVIII). By which example, it also becomes your holiness, together with the religious king, to overturn the irreligious and iniquitous deeds and writings of the predecessors of our nation, and to provide those things which are useful to our province, whether according to God or according to the world: lest in our times, either religion ceasing, the love and fear of the internal Inspector be deserted, or the abundance of secular militia becoming rare, there be none to guard our borders from barbaric incursion.

Quod enim turpe est dicere, tot sub nomine monasteriorum loca hi qui monachicae vitae prorsus sunt expertes in suam ditionem acceperunt, sicut ipsi melius nostis, ut omnino desit locus ubi filii nobilium aut emeritorum militum possessionem accipere possint: ideoque vacantes ac sine conjugio, exacto tempore pubertatis, nullo continentiae proposito perdurent, atque hanc ob rem vel patriam suam pro qua militare debuerant trans mare abeuntes relinquunt; vel majore scelere atque impudentia, qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxuriae ac fornicationi deserviant, neque ab ipsis sacratis Deo virginibus abstineant.

At alii graviore adhuc flagitio, cum sint ipsi laici et nullius vitae regularis vel usu exerciti [Al., exercitii], vel amore praediti, data regibus pecunia, emunt sibi sub praetextu monasteriorum construendorum territoria in quibus suae liberius vacent libidini, et haec insuper in jus sibi haereditarium edictis regalibus faciunt ascribi, ipsas quoque litteras privilegiorum suorum quasi veraciter Deo dignas, pontificum, abbatum et potestatum saeculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari. Sicque usurpatis sibi agellulis sive vicis, liberi exinde a divino simul et humano servitio, suis tantum inibi desideriis laici monachis imperantes deserviunt: imo non monachos ibi congregant, sed quoscunque ob culpam inobedientiae veris expulsos monasteriis alicubi forte oberrantes invenerint, aut evocare monasteriis ipsi valuerint; vel certe quos ipsi de suis satellitibus ad suscipiendam tonsuram promissa sibi obedientia monachica invitare quiverint. Horum distortis cohortibus, suas quas instruxere cellas implent, multumque informi atque inaudito spectaculo, iidem ipsi viri modo conjugis ac liberorum procreandorum curam gerunt, modo exsurgentes de cubilibus quid intra septa monasteriorum geri debeat, sedula intentione pertractant. Quin etiam [Al., enim] suis conjugibus simili imprudentia construendis, ut ipsi aiunt, monasteriis loca conqui-runt, quae pari stultitia cum sint laicae, famularum se Christi permittunt esse rectrices [Al., rectores]. Quibus apte convenit illud vulgi proverbium: quia vespae favos quidem facere cum possint, non tamen in his mella, sed potius venena thesaurizant.

Sic per annos circiter triginta, hoc est, ex quo Aldfrid rex humanis rebus ablatus est, provincia nostra vesano illo errore dementata est, ut nullus pene exinde praefectorum exstiterit qui non huiusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suae praefecturae comparaverit [Al., comparaverat], suamque simul conjugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit [Al., astrinxerat]: ac praevalente pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere satergerint.

For what is shameful to say, those who are entirely devoid of monastic life have received into their power so many places under the name of monasteries, as you yourselves better know, that there is entirely lacking a place where the sons of nobles or of retired soldiers can receive a possession: and therefore being vacant and without marriage, the time of puberty having passed, they persevere with no purpose of continence, and for this reason either they leave their fatherland for which they ought to have performed military service, going across the sea; or with greater crime and impudence, those who do not have the purpose of chastity, serve luxury and fornication, nor do they abstain from the very virgins consecrated to God.

But others, with a still graver offense, since they themselves are laymen and are trained neither in the practice nor endowed with the love of any regular life, having given money to kings, buy for themselves, under the pretext of building monasteries, territories in which they may more freely indulge their lust, and moreover they cause these to be inscribed as their hereditary right by royal edicts, and they even obtain that the very documents of their privileges, as if truly worthy of God, be confirmed by the subscription of pontiffs, abbots, and the powers of the age. And thus, having usurped for themselves small fields or villages, free thenceforth from both divine and human service, laymen there, ruling over monks, serve only their own desires: indeed they do not gather monks there, but whomever, expelled from true monasteries for the fault of disobedience, they happen to find wandering somewhere, or whom they themselves have managed to call away from monasteries; or certainly those whom they, from among their own retainers, have been able to invite to receive the tonsure, monastic obedience having been promised to them. With the distorted bands of these men they fill the cells which they have built, and, with a much deformed and unheard-of spectacle, these same men now bear the care of a wife and of begetting children, now, rising from their beds, discuss with diligent attention what ought to be done within the enclosures of monasteries. Indeed, with similar imprudence, they procure places for their wives also, for building monasteries, as they themselves call them, who, with equal folly, since they are laywomen, allow themselves to be directresses of the handmaids of Christ. To whom that proverb of the common folk fittingly applies: that although wasps can indeed make honeycombs, yet they store up in them not honey but rather poison.

Thus for about thirty years, that is, since King Aldfrid was taken from human affairs, our province has been driven mad by that insane error, so that almost no ealdorman has since existed who has not procured for himself a monastery of this kind in the days of his ealdormanship, and has likewise bound his own wife with equal guilt in a harmful bargain: and, this worst of customs prevailing, the king's ministers and servants too have striven to do the same.

Atque ita ordine perverso innumeri sint inventi, qui se abbates pariter et praefectos sive [Al., simul et] ministros aut famulos regis appellant, qui etsi aliquid vitae monasterialis ediscere laici non experiendo, sed audiendo potuerint, a persona tamen illa ac professione quae hanc docere debeat [Al., habeat], sunt funditus exsortes. Et quidem tales repente, ut nosti, tonsuram pro suo libitu accipiunt, suo examine de laicis non monachi, sed abbates efficiuntur. Sed quia praefatae virtutis nec notitiam probantur habere nec studium, quid his aliud quam evangelica convenit maledictio illa, qua dicitur: Caecus si caeco ducatum praestet, ambo in foveam cadunt? (Matth. XV.) Quae nimirum caecitas posset aliquando terminari, ac regulari disciplina cohiberi, et de finibus sanctae Ecclesiae cunctis pontificali ac synodica auctoritate procul expelli, si non ipsi pontifices magis hujusmodi sceleribus opem ferre atque astipulari probarentur: qui non solummodo hujusmodi decreta injusta justis infringere decretis non curant, verum suis potius subscriptionibus [Al., praescriptionibus], ut praefati sumus, confirmare satagunt: eadem ipsi phylargyria dictante, ad confirmandum male scripta, qua emptores ad comparandum hujusmodi monasteria coacti.

Multa quidem adhuc tibi possem de his et hujusmodi praevaricatoribus quibus nostra provincia miserrime vexatur, his intimare litteris, si non te ipsum nossem haec eadem certissime cognovisse. Nam neque haec ita scripsi, quasi certissime [Al. om. certissime] te ea quae antea nescires essem docturus, sed ut te amica exhortatione commonerem, ea quae optime noveras errata diligenti prout vales instantia corrigere.

Et jam jamque te multum deprecor atque obtestor in Domino, ut commissum tibi gregem sedulus ab irruentium luporum improbitate tuearis: teque non mercenarium, sed pastorem constitutum esse memineris, qui amorem summi Pastoris solerti ovium ipsius pastione demonstres, proque eisdem ovibus, si ita res poposcerit, cum beato apostolorum principe animam ponere paratus sis.

Precor sollicite praecaveas, ne cum idem princeps apostolorum caeterique fidelium gregum duces in die judicii maximum suae pastoralis curae fructum Christo obtulerint, tuarum aliqua pars ovium inter haedos ad sinistram judicis secerni, atque in aeternum cum maledictione mereatur ire supplicium: Quin potius ipse tunc eorum numero merearis ascribi, de quibus ait Isaias: Minimus erit inter mille [Al., in mille], et parvulus inter gentem [Al., in gentem] fortissimam (Isa. LX).

And thus, in perverse order, countless men have been found who call themselves abbots and at the same time ealdormen or ministers or servants of the king, who, even if as laymen they have been able to learn something of monastic life not by experiencing it but by hearing of it, are nevertheless utterly devoid of that character and profession which ought to teach it. And indeed such men suddenly, as you know, receive the tonsure according to their own pleasure, and by their own judgment are made, from laymen, not monks, but abbots. But since they are shown to have neither knowledge nor zeal for the aforesaid virtue, what else befits them than that evangelical curse by which it is said: If a blind man leads a blind man, both fall into a pit? (Matth. XV.) This blindness could no doubt at some time be brought to an end, and restrained by regular discipline, and driven far away from the borders of holy Church by all pontifical and synodal authority, were the pontiffs themselves not shown rather to bring aid to such crimes and to give their assent to them: who not only take no care to break such unjust decrees with just decrees, but rather, as we have said before, are eager to confirm them with their own subscriptions: the same avarice dictating to them that they confirm what has been wrongly written—the very avarice by which the buyers were compelled to acquire monasteries of this kind.

Indeed I could still make known to you in this letter many things about these and such transgressors by whom our province is most wretchedly harassed, if I did not know that you yourself have most certainly come to know these very things. For I have not written these things as though I were going to teach you with utmost certainty things you did not know before, but so that I might remind you, with a friendly exhortation, to correct with diligent insistence, as far as you are able, those errors which you already knew very well.

And now, again and again, I earnestly entreat and beseech you in the Lord, that you diligently guard the flock committed to you from the wickedness of the wolves rushing upon it: and that you remember that you have been appointed not a hireling but a shepherd, that you may show the love of the highest Shepherd by the diligent pasturing of his sheep, and that for these same sheep, should the matter so require, you be ready to lay down your life with the blessed prince of the apostles.

I beg you to take diligent care, lest, when that same prince of the apostles and the rest of the leaders of the faithful flocks shall have offered to Christ on the day of judgment the greatest fruit of their pastoral care, some part of your sheep be set apart among the goats on the left hand of the Judge, and deserve to go into eternal punishment with a curse: but rather that you yourself may then deserve to be numbered among those of whom Isaiah says: The smallest shall become a thousand, and the least a most mighty nation (Isa. LX).

Tui namque est officii diligentissime prospicere quid in singulis monasteriis tuae parochiae recti, quid perversi geratur: ne vel abbas regularum inscius aut contemptor, vel abbatisa minus digna famulorum famularumve Christi praeponatur examini, nec rursum praevisioni spiritualium magistrorum contemptrix et indisciplina contumacium auditorum turba resultet; maxime quia, sicut vulgo fertur, dicere estis soliti quod non ad regum curam, non ad aliquorum saeculi principum causam, sed ad vestrum [Al., vestram] tantummodo antistitum inquisitionem atque examen, quid in singulis monasteriis agatur pertineat, nisi forte in monasteriis quilibet in ipsos principes peccasse comprobetur. Tui, inquam, est officii procurare ne in locis Deo consecratis diabolus sibi regnum usurpet, ne pro pace discordia, pro pietate jurgia, pro sobrietate ebrietas, pro charitate et castitate fornicationes et homicidia sibi sedem vindicent: nec apud te inveniantur aliqui, de quibus merito quaeratur ac dicatur, vidi impios sepultos, qui cum adviverent, in loco sancto erant, et laudabantur in civitate, quasi justorum [Al., bonorum] operum.

Eorum quoque qui in populari adhuc vita continentur sollicitam te necesse est curam gerere, ut sicut in primordio hujus epistolae praemonuimus, sufficientes eis doctores vitae salutaris adhibere memineris, et hoc eos inter alia discere facias, quibus operibus maxime Deo placere, a quibus se debeant qui Deo placere desiderant abstinere peccatis, qua cordis sinceritate in Deum credere, qua divinam clementiam supplicantes debeant devotione precari, quam frequenti diligentia signaculo se Dominicae crucis suaeque omnia adversum continuas immundorum spirituum insidias necesse habeant munire, quam salutaris [Al., salutare] sit omni Christianorum generi quotidiana Dominici corporis ac sanguinis perceptio, juxta quod Ecclesiam Christi per Italiam, Galliam, Africam, Graeciam, ac totum Orientem solerter agere nosti. Quod videlicet genus religionis, ac Deo devotae sanctificationis tam longe a cunctis pene nostrae provinciae laicis per incuriam docentium quasi prope peregrinum abest, ut hi qui inter [Al. add. illos] religiosiores esse videntur, non nisi in Natali Domini et Epiphania et Pascha sacrosanctis mysteriis communicare praesumant, cum sint innumeri innocentes et castissimae conversationis pueri ac puellae, juvenes et virgines, senes et anus, qui absque ullo scrupulo controversiae, omni die Dominico, sive etiam in natalitiis sanctorum apostolorum, sive martyrum, quomodo ipse in sancta Romana et apostolica Ecclesia fieri vidisti, mysteriis coelestibus communicare valeant. Ipsi etiam conjugati, si quis sibi mensuram continentiae ostendat, et virtutem castitatis insinuet, idem et licenter possint, et libenter facere velint.

For it is your office to look most diligently to what is done rightly and what wrongly in each of the monasteries of your diocese: lest either an abbot ignorant of the rules or a despiser of them, or an abbess less worthy, be placed in charge of the examination of the servants and handmaids of Christ, nor again a contumacious and undisciplined crowd of unruly hearers resist the oversight of their spiritual masters; especially since, as is commonly said, you are accustomed to say that it pertains not to the care of kings, not to the concern of any princes of this world, but only to the inquiry and examination of you bishops, what is done in each monastery — unless perhaps someone in the monasteries should be proved to have sinned against the princes themselves. It is your office, I say, to see to it that the devil does not usurp for himself a kingdom in places consecrated to God, that discord in place of peace, quarrels in place of piety, drunkenness in place of sobriety, fornications and homicides in place of charity and chastity, do not claim for themselves a seat: nor let there be found among you any concerning whom it might rightly be asked and said, I have seen the wicked buried, who, while they were yet alive, were in the holy place, and were praised in the city as though for the works of the just.

It is also necessary that you exercise anxious care for those who are still held in the life of the laity, so that, as we forewarned at the beginning of this letter, you remember to provide for them sufficient teachers of the life of salvation, and cause them to learn, among other things, by which works they may especially please God, from which sins those who desire to please God ought to abstain, with what sincerity of heart they ought to believe in God, with what devotion they ought to supplicate, praying for the divine clemency, with how frequent diligence they need to fortify themselves and all that is theirs with the sign of the Lord's cross against the continual snares of unclean spirits, how salutary for every kind of Christian is the daily reception of the Lord's body and blood, according to what you know the Church of Christ diligently does throughout Italy, Gaul, Africa, Greece, and the whole East. This kind of religious practice, and of sanctification devoted to God, is, through the negligence of teachers, so far removed—almost as something foreign—from nearly all the laity of our province, that those who are seen to be more religious among them presume to partake of the most sacred mysteries only at the Nativity of the Lord, and at Epiphany and Easter, although there are countless innocent boys and girls of most chaste conduct, young men and virgins, old men and old women, who, without any scruple of controversy, are able to partake of the heavenly mysteries every Lord's Day, or even on the feast-days of the holy apostles or of martyrs, just as you yourself have seen done in the holy Roman and apostolic Church. Even married persons themselves, if someone should show them a measure of continence, and instill in them the virtue of chastity, would both lawfully be able, and gladly wish, to do the same.

Haec tibi, sanctissime antistes, et tuae dilectionis intuitu et generalis gratia utilitatis breviter adnotare studui, multum desiderans multumque exhortans ut gentem nostram a vetustis abstrahere cures erroribus, et ad certiore et directiore vitae callem reducere satagas. Et si sunt aliqui cujuslibet gradus sive ordinis viri, qui bona tua coepta retinere atque impedire conentur, tu tamen propositum sanctae virtutis, supernae memor retributionis, ad firmum usque finem perducere contendas. Scio namque nonnullos huic nostrae exhortationi multum contradicturos, et maxime eos qui seipsos illis facinoribus a quibus te prohibemus esse sentiunt irretitos: sed meminisse te decet apostolicae responsionis: Quia obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus (Act. V). Mandatum quippe est Dei: Vendite quae possidetis, et date elemosynam (Luc. XII). Et: Nisi quis renuntiaverit omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus (Luc. XIV). Traditio autem moderna quorundam est, qui se Dei famulos esse profitentur, non solum [Al. om. non solum] possessa non vendere, verum etiam [Al., iterum et] comparare non habita. Qua ergo fronte audet quisquam ad servitium Domini accessurus, vel ea quae [Al., eas quas] in saeculari vita habuerat retentare, vel sub praetextu vitae sanctioris illas quas non habuerat congregare divitias: cum etiam apostolica sit notissima censura, quae Ananiam et Sapphiram hoc facere molientes, non ullo poenitentiae vel satisfactionis remedio corrigere, sed ex ipsa statim mortis ultricis acceleravit damnatione puniri? Et quidem illi non aliena colligere, sed sua incongrue retinere maluerunt. Unde manifeste patet quam longe abstiterit animus apostolorum a suscipiendis pecuniarum acquisitionibus, qui sub illa proprie regula Domino serviebant: Beati pauperes, quia vestrum est regnum Dei (Luc. VI); et e contra, partis sinistrae proposito nihilominus instituebantur exemplo: Vae vobis divitibus quia habetis consolationem vestram (ibid.). An forte errasse ac mendacium scripsisse putamus Apostolum, cum nos admonens dicebat: Fratres, nolite errare; statimque subtexit: Neque avari, neque ebriosi, neque rapaces regnum Dei possidebunt (I Cor. VI). Et iterum: Hoc autem scitote, quod omnis fornicator, aut immundus, aut avarus, aut rapax, quod est idolorum servitus, non habet haereditatem in regno Christi et Dei (Ephes. V). Cum ergo Apostolus avaritiam et rapacitatem idololatriam manifeste cognominet, quomodo putandum est eos errasse qui vel subscriptioni avari mercatus, rege licet imperante, manum subtraxerint, vel ad eradendas [Al. radendas; al., erudiendas] inutiles scripturas ac subscriptiones eorum manum apposuerint?

These things, most holy prelate, I have taken care to note down briefly for you, both out of regard for your affection and for the sake of general usefulness, greatly desiring and greatly exhorting that you take care to draw our people away from ancient errors, and strive to lead them back to a surer and more direct path of life. And if there are any men, of whatever rank or order, who attempt to hold back and hinder your good undertakings, you nevertheless, mindful of the heavenly reward, should strive to carry the purpose of holy virtue through to a firm conclusion. For I know that not a few will strongly contradict this exhortation of ours, and especially those who feel themselves entangled in those very misdeeds from which we forbid you: but it behooves you to remember the apostolic answer: that God must be obeyed rather than men (Acts V). For indeed it is a commandment of God: Sell what you possess, and give alms (Luke XII). And: Unless someone renounces all that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple (Luke XIV). But the modern practice of certain men who profess themselves to be servants of God is not only not to sell what they possess, but even to acquire what they do not have. With what face, then, does anyone dare, when about to enter the service of the Lord, either to retain those things which he had possessed in secular life, or, under the pretext of a holier life, to gather together those riches which he had not possessed—since indeed the apostolic judgment is very well known, which, when Ananias and Sapphira were attempting to do this, corrected them by no remedy of penance or satisfaction, but hastened at once to punish them by the condemnation of avenging death? And indeed they preferred not to gather things belonging to others, but to retain their own improperly. Whence it plainly appears how far the mind of the apostles was from undertaking the acquisition of money—they who served the Lord properly under that very rule: Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of God is yours (Luke VI); and, on the other hand, they were no less instructed by the example set for the opposing part: Woe to us the rich, for you have your consolation (*ibid.*). Or do we perhaps think that the Apostle erred and wrote a falsehood, when, admonishing us, he said: Brethren, do not err; and immediately added: Neither the covetous, nor drunkards, nor the rapacious shall possess the kingdom of God (I Cor. VI)? And again: But know this, that every fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous man, or the rapacious—which is the service of idols—has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. V). Since, therefore, the Apostle plainly calls avarice and rapacity idolatry, how is it to be thought that those men erred who withdrew their hand from signing a covetous bargain, even though the king commanded it, or who set their hand to erasing useless documents and their signatures?

Et quidem miranda est temeritas stultorum, vel potius deflenda miseria caecorum, qui cum sine ullo respectu superni timoris, passim ea quae [Al., timoris, ea quotidie quae] apostoli et prophetae afflatu sancti Spiritus scripserunt, rescindere ac nihili pendere probantur: illud e contra, quod ipsi vel similes ipsorum instinctu avaritiae vel luxuriae scripserunt, quasi sanctum ac divinitus cautum eradere atque emendare formidant, in morem, ni fallor, ethnicorum, qui contempto Dei cultu ea quae ipsi sibi de corde suo finxerunt ac fecerunt, numina venerantur, timent, colunt, adorant et obsecrant, Dominica illa insectatione dignissimi, qua Phariseos cum suas deuterose legi Dei praeponerent, redarguit, dicens; Quare et vos transgredimini mandatum Dei propter traditionem vestram? (Matth. XV.) Qui si etiam chartas protulerint in defensionem concupiscentiarum suarum ascriptas, ac nobilium personarum subscriptione confirmatas; tu nunquam, precor, Dominicae sanctionis obliviscaris, in qua dicitur, Omnis plantatio quam non plantavit Pater meus coelestis eradicabitur (Ibid.). Et certe a te discere vellem, sanctissime antistes, Domino protestante ac dicente, Quia lata porta et spatiosa via est quae ducit ad perditionem, et multi sunt qui intrant per eam: cum angusta porta et arcta via sit quae ducit ad vitam, et pauci sint qui inveniant eam (Matth. VII); quid de eorum vita vel salute aeterna confidas, qui toto vitae suae tempore per latam portam et spatiosam viam incedere noscuntur, et ne in minimis quidem rebus voluptati suae vel corporis vel animi, causa supernae retributionis obstere vel repugnare curabant: nisi forte per eleemosynas, quas inter concupiscentias quotidianas ac delicias pauperibus dare videbantur, criminibus absolvi posse [Al., potuisse] credendi sunt: cum manus ipsa et conscientia quae munus offerat Deo, munda a peccatis esse debeat et absoluta, aut certe per mysteria sacrosanctae oblationis, quibus ipsi dum viverent indigni exstiterant, per alios jam mortui redimi posse sperandi sunt. An forte illis permodica culpa videtur esse concupiscentiae? De qua paulo latius disputem. Haec Balaam virum [Al., Haec virum] prophetiae spiritu plenissimum a sorte sanctorum fecit extorrem, Achan communione anathematis polluit ac perdidit, Saul regni infulis nudavit, Giezi prophetiae meritis privavit ac perpetuae leprae peste cum suo semine foedavit.

And indeed the rashness of fools is to be wondered at, or rather the misery of the blind is to be lamented, who, since without any regard for the fear of heaven they are shown to rescind and count as nothing, everywhere, those things which the apostles and prophets wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while on the other hand they are afraid to erase and amend, as though it were holy and divinely ordained, that which they themselves or men like them wrote at the instigation of avarice or lust — after the manner, unless I am mistaken, of the pagans, who, having spurned the worship of God, venerate, fear, cultivate, adore and beseech those deities which they themselves fashioned and made for themselves out of their own hearts — most deserving of that reproach of the Lord with which he rebuked the Pharisees, when they preferred their own deuterocanonicals to the law of God, saying: “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?” (Matth. XV.) But if they should even produce documents drawn up in defense of their own desires, and confirmed by the signatures of noble persons, do you, I beg, never forget that ordinance of the Lord in which it is said: “Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up” (Ibid.). And indeed I would wish to learn from you, most holy bishop — since the Lord himself testifies and says, “Because wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter by it; whereas narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it” (Matth. VII) — what confidence you place in the life or eternal salvation of those who throughout the whole time of their life are known to have walked by the wide gate and the broad way, and who took care not to resist or oppose, even in the smallest matters, the pleasure of their body or mind for the sake of heavenly recompense: unless perhaps they are to be believed capable of being absolved of their crimes through the alms which, amid their daily lusts and delights, they were seen to give to the poor — though the very hand and conscience that offers a gift to God ought to be clean from sins and free of them — or unless indeed, now that they are dead, it is to be hoped that they can be redeemed by others through the mysteries of the most sacred oblation, of which they themselves, while they lived, had proved unworthy. Or does the fault of concupiscence perhaps seem to them a very small matter? Let me discuss this at somewhat greater length. This it was that made Balaam, a man most full of the spirit of prophecy, an exile from the lot of the saints; that defiled and destroyed Achan by fellowship in the curse; that stripped Saul of the insignia of kingship; that deprived Gehazi of the merits of prophecy and defiled him, together with his offspring, with the plague of perpetual leprosy.

Judam Iscariotem de apostolatus gloria deposuit, Ananiam et Sapphiram de quibus praediximus monachorum collegio indignos etiam corporis morte mulctavit, et, ut ad superiora veniamus, haec angelos a coelo dejecit, et protoplastos a paradiso perpetuae voluptatis expulit: Et si nosse vis, hic est ille triceps inferorum canis, cui fabulae Cerberi nomen indiderunt [Al., imponunt], a cujus rabidis dentibus nos prohibens Joannes Apostolus ait: Charissimi, nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est charitas Patris in eo. Quoniam omne quod in mundo est, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum et superbia vitae, quae non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est (I Joan. II). Haec contra virus avaritiae breviter sunt dicta. Caeterum si de ebrietate, comessatione, luxuria, et caeteris hujusmodi contagionibus pari ratione tractare voluerimus, epistolae modus in immensum extenderetur.

Gratia te summi Pastoris ad pastionem ovium suarum salutiferam perpetuo conservet incolumem, dilectissime in Christo antistes. Amen [Al., antistes. Scripta Non. Nov., indict. 3].

EPISTOLA III

, AD PLEGWINUM APOLOGETICA, Eo quod insimularetur a quibusdam, de aetatibus saeculi non recte sensisse.

Fratri dilectissimo et in Christi visceribus honorando Plegwino, Beda in Christo salutem.

Venit ad me ante biduum (frater amantissime) nuntius tuae sanctitatis, qui pacificae quidem salutationis a te laetissima verba detulit; sed haec tristi mox admistione confudit, addendo, videlicet, quod me audires a lascivientibus rusticis inter haereticos per pocula decantari. Exhorruui, fateor, et pallens percunctabar, cujus haereseos arguerer. Respondit quia negarem in sexta aetate saeculi Dominum Salvatorem in carne venisse. Percunctari ergo coepi quomodo diceretur; utrum quod Dominum non venisset in carne, cum tamen sexta esset aetas, an quod Domino in carne veniente necdum sexta aetas veniret, vel certe aetas septima jam venisset, cum aperta ratione sexta aetas non nisi ab ejus possit incarnatione coepisse. Deprehendique, sive hoc, sive illud, insimularetur, me in utroque sanae fidei et ecclesiasticae unitatis existere consortem.

It deposed Judas Iscariot from the glory of the apostolate; it punished with bodily death even Ananias and Sapphira, whom we mentioned above as unworthy of the fellowship of monks; and, to come to higher things, it cast the angels down from heaven, and expelled our first parents from the paradise of perpetual delight. And if you wish to know it, this is that three-headed hound of hell to whom the fables have given the name of Cerberus, from whose rabid teeth the Apostle John, warning us away, says: “Dearly beloved, do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world.” If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John II). These things have been said briefly against the poison of avarice. But if we wished to treat in like manner of drunkenness, revelry, lust, and the other contagions of this kind, the measure of this letter would be extended beyond all bounds.

May the grace of the highest Shepherd keep you perpetually unharmed for the salvific pasturing of his sheep, most beloved bishop in Christ. Amen [Al., bishop. Written on the Nones of November, indiction 3].

LETTER III

, TO PLEGWIN, APOLOGETIC, *Because he was accused by certain persons of not having thought rightly concerning the ages of the world.*

To his most beloved brother Plegwin, to be honored in the bowels of Christ, Bede sends greeting in Christ.

A messenger of your holiness came to me two days ago (dearest brother), who indeed brought from you the most joyful words of a peaceful greeting; but he soon mingled these with a sad admixture, adding, namely, that you had heard that I was being sung about among heretics by wanton rustics over their cups. I shuddered, I confess, and, turning pale, I asked of what heresy I was being accused. He answered that it was because I denied that the Lord the Savior had come in the flesh in the sixth age of the world. I began, therefore, to inquire how this was said: whether it was that the Lord had not come in the flesh, although it was nevertheless the sixth age; or that, the Lord coming in the flesh, the sixth age had not yet arrived; or indeed that the seventh age had already come—although by manifest reasoning the sixth age could only have begun from his incarnation. And I found that, whether the one or the other were alleged against me, in either case I remained a partaker of sound faith and of ecclesiastical unity.

Quomodo vel Christum in carnem venisse negans, Christi in Ecclesia potuissem esse sacerdos? vel qua consequentia evangelicis et apostolicis credens litteris, sexta illum aetate saeculi incarnatum esse discrederem; cum evangelista Matthaeus in eodem libro generationis Jesu Christi, notissimis temporum articulis per generationes denas et quaternas, quatuor ultimas discernat aetates? Primas vero duas apostolus Petrus tali distinguit indiculo: terram pariter ac coelos diluvio perditos, atque alios pro illis asseverans esse repositos; ut non tam duae aetates saeculi, quam duo saecula, si non haeresis Valentiniana timeretur, possunt nuncupari? Cum me igitur discutiens identidem liberum esse cernerem, cogitare sedulus coepi unde haec in me calumnia devolveretur; tandemque venit in memoriam quod cuidam vestrum nuper opusculum meum de Temporibus, quod ante quinquennium edidi, monstrabam, in quo annorum series juxta Hebraicam veritatem, ubi LXX interpretibus longe brevior habetur, erat annotata, ita ut usque ad adventum Salvatoris in carne nec quinque annorum millia sint completa. Suadebamque illi (fraternae, fateor, charitatis et ipsius veritatis intuitu) ut Scripturae sacrae post Christianum nobis interpretem translatae, potius quam Judaicis interpretationibus vel chronographorum imperitiae, fidem accommodare disceret: digito ostendens quod Eusebius in descriptione temporum, neque Hebraicam veritatem, neque LXX translatorum per omnia sit Editionem secutus; quod id ipsum et hic scripto facere curabo. Verum quod ipse (quisquis erat) cui haec suggesseram fraterni amoris officium vertit in odium aemulationis, et supernus moderator illi justa mercede lucem ostensae veritatis in tenebras convertit caecae falsitatis.

Ne ergo me putes (dilectissime) post notam haereseos ad inficiandi malle subterfugere praesidium, quam doctorem recipere veritatis: audi quae in libello memorato de Aetatibus scripsi. Postquam enim de momentis et horis, de die, de nocte, de hebdomadibus et mensibus, de anno et his quae ad annum pertinent, de circulo decennovennali et accidentibus illi, quantum mihi meisque satis credebam, perstrinxi, ventum erat ut aequae de aetatibus aliquid abbreviaretur. Sexto decimo ergo capitulo tale feci primordium.

For how, denying that Christ had come in the flesh, could I have been a priest of Christ in the Church? Or by what consistency, believing the evangelical and apostolic writings, could I disbelieve that he was incarnate in the sixth age of the world, since the evangelist Matthew, in that same book of the generation of Jesus Christ, distinguishes the four last ages by the most well-known articulations of times, through generations of ten and four? But the first two ages the apostle Peter distinguishes by such a mark: asserting that the earth together with the heavens perished in the flood, and that others were set in their place instead; so that, were the Valentinian heresy not to be feared, they could be called not so much two ages of the world as two worlds? When, therefore, examining myself again and again, I perceived myself to be free of this charge, I began diligently to consider whence this calumny had come rolling down upon me; and at last it came into my memory that I had recently shown to one of you my little work on the *Times*, which I had published five years before, in which the sequence of years was noted according to the Hebrew truth, where it is reckoned far shorter than by the Seventy interpreters, so that not even five thousand years had been completed up to the coming of the Savior in the flesh. And I was urging him (out of fraternal charity, I confess, and out of regard for the truth itself) to learn to give trust rather to the sacred Scripture translated for us following the Christian interpreter, than to Jewish interpretations or to the inexperience of chronographers: pointing with my finger to the fact that Eusebius, in his description of the times, followed throughout neither the Hebrew truth nor the Edition of the Seventy translators; and I shall take care to do this same thing here too, in writing. But he himself (whoever he was) to whom I had suggested these things turned the office of fraternal love into the hatred of rivalry, and the supreme Ruler, by a just recompense, turned for him the light of the truth shown into the darkness of blind falsehood.

Lest, then, you think (most beloved) that after the mark of heresy I would rather flee to the refuge of denial than receive a teacher of the truth: hear what I wrote in the aforementioned little book concerning the Ages. For after I had touched briefly upon moments and hours, upon day, upon night, upon weeks and months, upon the year and those things which pertain to the year, upon the nineteen-year cycle and its accidents, as much as I believed sufficient for myself and for mine, it came about that something should likewise be briefly set down concerning the ages. In the sixteenth chapter, therefore, I made the following beginning.

Sex, inquam, aetatibus mundi tempora distinguuntur. Prima aetas, ab Adam usque ad Noe, continens generationes decem, annos vero MDCLVI, quae tota periit diluvio, sicut infantiam mergere solet oblivio. Secunda, a Noe usque ad Abraham, generationes similiter complexa decem, annos autem CCXCII, quae in lingua inventa est, id est, in Hebraea. A pueritia namque incipit homo loqui nosse post infantium, quae et nomen inde accepit, quia fari, id est, loqui non potest. Tertia, ab Abraham usque ad David, generationes quatuordecim, annos vero CMXLII continens. Et quia ab adolescentia incipit homo posse generare, Matthaeus generationum ex Abraham sumpsit exordium, qui etiam Pater gentium constitutus est. Quarta, a David usque ad transmigrationem Babylonis generationibus aequae juxta Matthaeum quatuordecim, annis autem CDLXXIII porrecta, a qua regum tempora coeperunt; juvenilis enim dignitas regno est habilis. Quinta deinde, usque ad adventum Salvatoris in carne, generationibus et ipsa quatuordecim, porro annis DLXXXIX extenta: in qua, ut gravi senectute fessa, malis crebrioribus plebs Hebraea quassatur. Sexta, quae nunc agitur, nulla generationum vel temporum serie certa; sed, ut aetas decrepita, ipsa totius saeculi morte finienda.

Haec in praedicto libello de Aetatibus saeculi praenotando commemorans, statim aliud capitulum subnexui, quo cursus et ordo totius saeculi panderetur, ita inchoans. Prima ergo aetas continet annos juxta Hebraeos MDCLVI, juxta Septuaginta interpretes MVCCXLII. Adam, annorum CXXX, genuit Seth, qui pro Abel natus est. Seth autem, annos CV, genuit Enos, et caetera usque ad diluvium. Deinde subjunxi. Secunda aetas continet annos juxta Hebraeos CCXCII, juxta LXX interpretes CMXLII, vel adjecto Cainan, MLXXII. Sem, anno secundo post diluvium, genuit Arphaxad, a quo Chaldaei. Arphaxad annos XXXV, genuit Sela. Hic Septuaginta interpretes, quos evangelista Lucas secutus est, interposuere Cainan, qui cum XXX esset annorum genuit Sela. Item, de tertia aetate. Tertia, inquam, aetas continet annos CMXLII. Item ubi ad quartam ventum est. Quarta, inquam, aetas continet annos juxta Hebraeos CDLXXII; LXX interpretes XII adjiciunt. Cum ergo in excursu operis, ad nativitatem usque Domini Salvatoris pervenirem, ita scripsi. Octavianus regnavit annos LVI. Hujus anno XLII, Dominus nascitur, completis ab Adam annis MMMCMLII, juxta alios M MMMMCXCIX.

The times of the world are distinguished, I say, by six ages. The first age, from Adam to Noah, containing ten generations, and 1656 years, which entirely perished in the flood, just as oblivion is wont to submerge infancy. The second, from Noah to Abraham, likewise encompassing ten generations, and 292 years, which was found in language, that is, in Hebrew. For from childhood a man begins to know how to speak after infancy, which also received its name from there, because it cannot speak (*fari*), that is, to talk. The third, from Abraham to David, containing fourteen generations, and 942 years. And because from adolescence a man begins to be able to generate, Matthew took the beginning of the generations from Abraham, who was also established as the Father of nations. The fourth, from David to the transmigration of Babylon, extended by Matthew likewise near fourteen generations, and 473 years, from which the times of kings began; for youthful dignity is suitable for a kingdom. Then the fifth, until the coming of the Savior in the flesh, itself extended by fourteen generations, and further by 589 years: in which, as if weary with heavy old age, the Hebrew people are shaken by more frequent evils. The sixth, which is now being enacted, is certain by no series of generations or times; but, like a decrepit age, itself to be ended by the death of the whole world.

Commemorating these things as noteworthy in the aforementioned little book on the Ages of the world, I immediately subjoined another chapter, by which the course and order of the whole world might be opened, beginning thus. The first age therefore contains years according to the Hebrews 1656, according to the Septuagint translators 2242. Adam, being 130 years old, begat Seth, who was born instead of Abel. Seth, however, being 105 years old, begat Enos, and the rest until the flood. Then I subjoined. The second age contains years according to the Hebrews 292, according to the LXX translators 942, or with Cainan added, 1072. Shem, in the second year after the flood, begat Arphaxad, from whom are the Chaldeans. Arphaxad, being 35 years old, begat Shelah. Here the Septuagint translators, whom the evangelist Luke followed, interposed Cainan, who when he was 30 years old begat Shelah. Likewise, concerning the third age. The third age, I say, contains 942 years. Likewise when it came to the fourth. The fourth age, I say, contains 1472 years according to the Hebrews; the LXX translators add 12. When therefore in the course of the work, I reached the nativity of the Lord Savior, I wrote thus. Octavian reigned 56 years. In his 42nd year, the Lord is born, 3952 years being completed from Adam, according to others 5199.

Haec sunt quae juxta fidem sacrae historiae mihi meisque [rogantibus] strictim et simpliciter, ut credidi et sensi, abbreviare curavi, nequaquam chronographo tam erudito tantisque laudibus digno contradicens, in his duntaxat in quibus ipse divinae Scripturae contrarius non est. Qui cum in libro Ἐξαπλούς, virgam Origenis pertimescens, generationem Cainan de medio tolleret, et Evangelio Lucae et LXX pariter interpretibus fidem derogavit, eorumque translationi CXXX annos erasit. Cum vero generationibus ad Hebraeorum libros castigatis, non aequè numerum annorum juxta eosdem emendare curaret, in summa suae computationis illorum seriem CCXXXII annis excessit, sicque neutram viam observans, ipse qua voluit incessit.

In prima quippe et secunda aetate nostris, id est, de Hebraeo fonte transfusis, Graecorumque Codicibus, hujusmodi discrepantia inest, quia (sicut Hieronymus, sacrae interpres historiae, in libris Hebraicarum Quaestionum refert) antequam gignatur qui gigni memoratur, minus vixisse apud Hebraeos pater invenitur centum annos; sed posteaquam est genitus idem ipsi minus centum quam in Hebraeis inveniuntur in Graecis: atque ita utrobique numeri universitas consonat. Per hanc autem corruptionem Graecorum Codicum exoritur illa famosissima quaestio, ubi Mathusalem XIV annis vixisse post diluvium computatur, cum certum sit apud Hebraeos Codices eodem anno diluvii eum fuisse defunctum.

Quod si aliquis dixerit Hebraeos libros postea a Judaeis esse falsatos, eosque dum nostris invident auctoritatibus sibi abstulisse veritatem, audiat Origenem quid in septimo [volumine] explanationum Isaiae, huic respondit quaestiunculae, quod nunquam Dominus et Apostoli, qui caetera crimina arguunt in Scribis et Phariseis, de hoc crimine, quod erat maximum, reticuissent. Audiat Josephum historiographum Judaeorum, qui in primo libro Ἀρχαιότητος adversus Apionem Grammaticum scribens, aperte et lucide monstravit, et minorem annorum numerum esse veracem, et nequaquam Scripturam sanctam a Judaeorum gente esse falsatam.

Neque igitur (inquiens) innumera apud nos habentur volumina inter se invicem discordantia; sed duo tantum et viginti sunt libri qui omnium temporum seriem continent, qui et juste creduntur divinitus inspirati. Ex quibus quinque sunt libri Moysi, continentes leges, vitae et successionis humanae prosapiam usque ad ipsius Moysi terminum protendentes, qui paulo minus ad tria millia annorum continentiam gerunt. Et post pauca. Rebus igitur ipsis constat quam nos venerabiliter utamur Scripturis nostris.

These are the things which according to the faith of sacred history I have taken care to abbreviate strictly and simply for me and mine [at their request], as I believed and felt, in no way contradicting so learned a chronographer worthy of such great praises, at least in those things in which he himself is not contrary to divine Scripture. Who when in the book *Hexaplus*, fearing the rod of Origen, he took away the generation of Cainan from the midst, he derogated faith both from the Gospel of Luke and likewise from the LXX translators, and erased 130 years from their translation. But when, with the generations corrected to the books of the Hebrews, he did not likewise take care to amend the number of years according to the same, he exceeded their series by 232 years in the sum of his computation, and thus observing neither way, he himself proceeded where he wished.

In the first and second age of ours, that is, poured out from the Hebrew fountain, and in the Greek Codices, a discrepancy of this kind is present, because (as Jerome, the interpreter of sacred history, relates in the books of *Hebrew Questions*) before he who is mentioned to be begotten is born, the father is found to have lived a hundred years less among the Hebrews; but after he is born, the same are found to be a hundred years less among the Greeks than in the Hebrews: and thus on both sides the universality of the number accords. However, through this corruption of the Greek Codices that most famous question arises, where Methuselah is computed to have lived 14 years after the flood, when it is certain among the Hebrew Codices that he died in the same year of the flood.

But if anyone should say that the Hebrew books were afterwards falsified by the Jews, and that while they envied our authorities they took away the truth from themselves, let him hear what Origen, in the seventh [volume] of his explanations of Isaiah, replied to this little question: that never would the Lord and the Apostles, who argue against other crimes in the Scribes and Pharisees, have been silent concerning this crime, which was the greatest. Let him hear Josephus, the historiographer of the Jews, who writing in the first book of the *Antiquities* (*Archaiotētos*) against Apion the Grammarian, openly and lucidly showed both that the smaller number of years is truthful, and that in no way was the holy Scripture falsified by the nation of the Jews.

Therefore (he says) neither are there held among us innumerable volumes discordant among themselves; but there are only twenty-two books which contain the series of all times, which are also justly believed to be divinely inspired. Of which five are the books of Moses, containing laws, extending the lineage of human life and succession until the term of Moses himself, which carry a containment of a little less than three thousand years. And after a few words. It stands therefore by the things themselves how venerably we use our Scriptures.

Nam cum tot saecula intercesserint, neque addere quis unquam, neque auferre, aut post mutare quid ausus est; sed omnibus gentis nostrae hominibus insita haec quodammodo atque ingenita fides est, credere haec Dei esse consulta, et his jugiter inhaerere, ac pro ipsis (si ita res poposcerit) libenter animam ponere.

Audiat beatum Hieronymum, quod non Hebraeos sed Graecos Codices dicat esse falsatos. Cum enim Verba Dierum interpretari cogeretur, ita hoc opus causando praefatus est. Si Septuaginta interpretum pura, et ut ab eis in Graecum versa est Editio permaneret, superflue (mi Chromati, episcoporum sanctissime atque doctissime) impelleres, ut tibi Hebraea volumina Latino sermone transferrem. Quod enim semel aures hominum occupaverat, et nascentis Ecclesiae roboraverat fidem justum erat et nostro silentio comprobari. Nunc vero cum pro varietate regionum diversa ferantur exemplaria, et germana illa antiquaque translatio corrupta sit atque violata, nostri arbitrii putas, aut e pluribus judicare quid verum sit, aut novum opus in veteri opere cudere, et caetera, quibus eundem sensum latius exsequitur. Cujus sententiae etiam beatus antistes Augustinus concinit, et ipse namque cum hujus discrepantiae causam, neque malitiae Judaeorum, neque LXX interpretum, qui et ipsi Judaei erant, errori vel invidentiae voluisset ascribere (ne quos alibi per LXX cellulas uno divinitatis Spiritu repleverat, hoc passim argueret falsitatis); hoc invenit ut diceret.

Credibilius ergo quis dixerit, cum primum de Bibliotheca Ptolemaei describi ista coeperunt, tunc aliquid tale fieri potuisse in Codice uno, scilicet primitus inde descripto, unde jam latius emanaret, ubi potuit quidem accidere etiam scriptoris error. Sed hoc in illa quaestione de vita Mathusalem non absurdum est suspicari. Et paulo post: Nam etiam nunc (inquit) ubi numeri non faciunt intentum ad aliquid quod facile possit intelligi, vel quod appareat utiliter disci, et negligenter describuntur, et negligentius emendantur. Quis enim sibi aestimet esse discendum quot millia hominum tribus Israel sigillatim habere potuerunt? quoniam prodesse aliquid non putatur. Item post aliquanta. Sed quomodo libet istud accipiatur, recte fieri nullo modo dubitaverim, ut cum diversum aliquid in utrisque Codicibus invenitur, quandoquidem ad fidem rerum gestarum utrumque esse non potest verum, ei linguae potius credatur, unde est in aliam per interpretes facta translatio. Lege librum de Civitate Dei XV:

For since so many ages have intervened, no one has ever dared either to add, or to take away, or afterwards to change anything; but in all men of our nation this faith is in a certain way implanted and innate, to believe these to be the decrees of God, and to cling to them continually, and for them (if the matter should so demand) to lay down one's soul willingly.

Let him hear blessed Jerome, that he says not the Hebrew but the Greek Codices were falsified. For when he was compelled to interpret the Words of the Days (*Chronicles*), he prefaced this work by arguing thus. If the pure Edition of the seventy translators, and as it was turned into Greek by them, should remain, superfluously (my Chromatius, most holy and most learned of bishops) would you impel me to transfer the Hebrew volumes into the Latin tongue for you. For that which had once occupied the ears of men, and had strengthened the faith of the nascent Church, it was just should also be approved by our silence. But now when for the variety of regions diverse examples are carried, and that genuine and ancient translation has been corrupted and violated, you think it of our judgment, either to judge from many what is true, or to forge a new work in an old work, and the rest, by which he follows the same sense more widely. With which opinion also the blessed bishop Augustine harmonizes, for he himself, since he had wished to ascribe the cause of this discrepancy neither to the malice of the Jews, nor to the error or envy of the LXX translators, who were also themselves Jews (lest those whom elsewhere through seventy cells he had filled with one Spirit of divinity, he should here and there accuse of falsity); he found this to say.

More credibly therefore might someone say, when those things first began to be described from the Library of Ptolemy, then something of such kind could have happened in one Codex, namely the one first described from there, from which it would now emanate more widely, where indeed even the error of a scribe could have occurred. But this is not absurd to suspect in that question concerning the life of Methuselah. And a little after: For even now (he says) where numbers do not make the intent toward something which can easily be understood, or which appears to be usefully learned, they are both negligently described and more negligently amended. For who should estimate for himself that it must be learned how many thousands of men the tribes of Israel could have individually? since it is not thought to be of any benefit. Likewise after some things. But in whatever way that may be accepted, I would in no way doubt that it is rightly done, that when something diverse is found in both Codices, since both cannot be true as to the faith of things done, that language should rather be believed from which the translation was made into another through translators. Read the book on the *City of God* XV.

«Neque enim ullo modo audiendi sunt, qui putant aliter annos illis temporibus computatos, id est, tantae brevitatis, ut unus annus X illos habuisse credatur,» tricenis (videlicet) senisque diebus terminatos (argumento utentes, quod apud plerosque scriptores historiae reperitur, Acarnanas sex mensium, Arcadas trium, Aegyptios quatuor, habuisse annum, et ipsos aliquando etiam Lunae fine annum suum limitasse), quoniam huiusmodi sensum ipsa Scriptura palam destruit. Ubi cum juxta Hebraeos legatur: Vixitque Adam annis CXXX, et genuit Seth, et facti sunt dies Adam postquam genuit Seth DCCC anni, et genuit filios et filias, et factum est omne tempus quod vixit Adam anni CMXXX, et mortuus est, LXX dixerunt: Et vixit Adam CCXXX annis et genuit Seth, et fuerunt dies ejus postquam genuit Seth DCC anni, et mortuus est. Et facti sunt omnes dies ejus, CMXXX anni, et caetera in hunc modum. Quid enim? Nunquid in prima parte cujusque versiculi breviores annos, in medio majores, in fine posuerunt aequales? quod et facere erroris, et vel suspicari, stultitiae est.

Mirantur aliqui quare tantus tamque egregius sanctae interpretes Scripturae Hieronymus, de quo dictum, et jure dictum est: Jeronyme, interpretes variis doctissime linguis, Te Bethlehem celebrat, te totus personat orbis; quare (inquam) noluerit ille, cum librum transferret Chronicorum, quod verum ab Hebraeis didicerat, hoc etiam tradere Latinis. Quemcunque autem hoc moverit, scire debet quia sicut ipse in eodem Temporum libro praefatus est, vel interpretes esse voluit, vel novi operis conditor, et quia forsitan nolebat, ubi summa necessitas non inerat, insanientium in se ultro provocare rabiem, singulariter posteris hoc negotii relinquere, sicut Eustochiae virgini quodam loco dicit, radios quidem se et licia velle parare, aliis vero curam dimittere texendi. Quippe qui in tam necessaria divinae Scripturae translatione pene a Latinis simul et Hebraeis est lapidibus oppressus. Ab Hebraeis quidem, quod eis irridendi Christianos et calumniandi pro Codicibus mendosis occasio foret ablata, a Latinis autem, quod eis nova et insolita, tametsi meliora, pro veteribus ingererentur et solitis. Ita ut etiam beatus Augustinus litteris amicissima charitate per tot maris terrarumque spatia transmissis, haec inserere curaret.

"For in no way are they to be heard who think that years were computed otherwise in those times, that is, of such great brevity that one year is believed to have had ten of those," terminated (namely) by thirty-six days (using the argument which is found among many writers of history, that the Acarnanians had a year of six months, the Arcadians of three, the Egyptians of four, and they themselves sometimes even limited their year by the end of the Moon), since the Scripture itself openly destroys a sense of this kind. Where, since it is read according to the Hebrews: *And Adam lived 130 years, and begat Seth, and the days of Adam after he begat Seth were 800 years, and he begat sons and daughters, and all the time that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died*, the LXX said: *And Adam lived 230 years and begat Seth, and his days after he begat Seth were 700 years, and he died.* And all his days were 930 years, and the rest in this manner. For what? Did they place shorter years in the first part of each verse, larger ones in the middle, and equal ones at the end? which is both a deed of error and even to suspect it is a deed of folly.

Some wonder why so great and so excellent an interpreter of holy Scripture as Jerome, of whom it was said, and justly said: *Jerome, most learned interpreter in various tongues, Bethlehem celebrates you, the whole world sounds your name*; why (I say) he was unwilling, when he transferred the book of *Chronicles*, to hand down also to the Latins that which he had learned as true from the Hebrews. However, whomsoever this should move, he ought to know that just as he himself prefaced in the same book of Times, he either wished to be an interpreter or the founder of a new work, and because perhaps he did not wish, where the greatest necessity was not present, to provoke the rage of those raving against him of his own accord, to leave this business singularly to posterity, just as he says to the virgin Eustochium in a certain place, that he wishes indeed to prepare the rays and the threads, but to leave the care of weaving to others. Indeed, he who in so necessary a translation of divine Scripture was almost oppressed with stones by the Latins and the Hebrews at the same time. By the Hebrews indeed, because the occasion for mocking and calumniating Christians for faulty Codices would be taken away from them; by the Latins, however, because new and unusual things, although better, were being thrust upon them instead of the old and accustomed ones. So that even the blessed Augustine, in letters transmitted by most friendly charity through so many spaces of sea and lands, took care to insert these things.

De vertendis [autem] in Latinam linguam canonicis libris laborare te nolo, nisi eo modo quo Job interpretatus es, ut signis adhibitis, quid inter tuam et LXX quorum est gravissima auctoritas interpretationem distet, appareat. Satis autem nequeo admirari si aliquid in Hebraeis exemplaribus invenitur quod interpretes illius linguae peritissimos fugerit. Omitto hic LXX, de quorum vel consilio vel spiritus majore concordia quam si unus homo esset, non audio aliquam in partem certam ferre sententiam, nisi quod de his praeeminentem auctoritatem in hoc munere sine controversia tribuendam existimo. Illi me plus movent, qui cum posteriores interpretarentur, et sermonum locutio numque Hebraeorum viam atque regulas mordacius (ut fertur) tenerent, non solum inter se non consenserunt, sed aequae reliquerunt multa quae tanto post eruenda ac prodenda, remanerent. Si enim obscura sunt, te quoque in eis falli posse creditur; si manifesta, illos in eis falli potuisse non creditur.

Haec interea, cum de Temporibus et Annis sermo est, tuam simplicitatem (dilectissime frater) admoneo, ne, opinione vulgari seductus, quasi sex annorum millia speres saeculum praesens duraturum esse, et juxta nescio cujus haeretici librum, quem me puerum memini antiquo stylo descriptum vidisse, diem quidem et horam judicii nesciri, annum vero putes ab hominibus posse praesciri, eo quod Dominus dixerit: De die autem illa et hora nemo scit, non autem dixerit de anno; et cum rursus aierit: Non est vestrum nosse tempora vel momenta, neque illic adjunxerit annos. Hic etenim chronographus haeresiarches astruere nitebatur quod ante incarnationem Domini quinque annorum millia et quingenti transierint, ac deinde ad diem usque judicii quingenti tamen superessent, e quibus CCC et aliquot supra praeterierant tempore quo haec deliberabat. Hujus numeri summam partim de Genesi, partim de libro Judicum accumulans, sed et Samueli et Sauli bis quadragenos annos tribuens. Argumentoque utebatur, quod in vinea Dominica novissimi operarii una hora fecerint; et Joannes apostolus dixerit, Filioli, novissima hora est, quod cum hora una in die, hoc in sex millibus annorum quingenti esse anni deberent, et quod superveniens vespera post XII horas die hoc, expletis annis duodecies quingentenis, id est, sex millibus, aeterna justis iudicis retributio generet.

"But I do not wish you to labor in turning the canonical books into the Latin tongue, except in that way in which you interpreted Job, so that with signs applied, it may appear what distance there is between yours and the interpretation of the LXX, whose authority is most grave." "For I cannot sufficiently wonder if something is found in the Hebrew examples which escaped the most skilled interpreters of that language." "I omit here the LXX, concerning whose counsel or greater concord of spirit than if it were one man, I do not dare to bring a certain opinion into any part, except that I think a preeminent authority in this gift is to be attributed to them without controversy." "Those move me more, who when they were interpreting later, and held the way and rules of the Hebrew words and locutions more biting (as it is said), not only did they not agree among themselves, but equally left many things which remained to be unearthed and brought forth so long after." "For if they are obscure, it is believed that you also can be deceived in them; if manifest, it is not believed that they could have been deceived in them."

Meanwhile, since the discourse is concerning Times and Years, I admonish your simplicity (most beloved brother), lest, seduced by common opinion, you should hope as it were that the present age is going to last six thousand years, and according to the book of I know not which heretic, which I remember having seen described in ancient style when I was a boy, you should think that while the day and hour of the judgment are indeed not known, the year can be foreknown by men, because the Lord said: *But concerning that day and hour no one knows*, but he did not say concerning the year; and when again he said: *It is not yours to know the times or the moments*, neither there did he subjoin years. For here the heresiarch chronographer was striving to assert that before the incarnation of the Lord five thousand five hundred years passed, and then until the day of judgment five hundred would nonetheless remain, of which three hundred and some above had passed at the time when he was deliberating these things. Accumulating the sum of this number partly from Genesis, partly from the book of Judges, but also attributing twice forty years to Samuel and Saul. And he used the argument that in the vineyard of the Lord the last laborers worked one hour; and John the apostle said: *Little children, it is the last hour*, which since one hour in a day, this in six thousand years ought to be five hundred years, and that the supervening evening after twelve hours of the day, with twelve times five hundred years completed, that is, six thousand, the eternal retribution of the just judge generates.

Unde et ipse satis doleo (fateor) et, quantum licet, vel amplius irasci soleo quoties a rusticis interrogor, quot de ultimo milliaro saeculi restent anni; atque contra ipse ab illis sciscitari unde noverint quod nunc ultimum agatur milliarium, cum Dominus in Evangelio non tempus adventus sui prope vel procul esse testetur, sed nos semper accinctis lumbis lucernisque ardentibus vigilare ac se exspectare donec veniat jubeat. Animadverto enim quia cum sermonem facientes ad fratres incidente occasione de Aetatibus saeculi disputamus, quidam simpliciorum sex annorum millia nos praedicare autumant. Nec defuere qui septem annorum millibus saeculi hujus statum, qui (et) septem diebus volvitur, terminandum esse putarent, quos saepedictus doctor Augustinus, in expositione Psalmi sexti manifestae temeritatis redarguit, dicens inter alia: «Si enim post septem annorum millia ille dies venturus est, omnis homo potest annis computatis adventum ejus addicere. Ubi erit ergo quod nec Filius hoc novit?» Quod utique dictum est quia per Filium homines hoc non discunt: non quod apud se ipse non noverit, secundum illam locutionem: Tentat vos Dominus Deus vester ut sciat, id est, ut scire vos faciat; et: Exsurge, Domine, id est, fac nos exurgere. Cum ergo ita dicatur nescire filius hunc diem, non quod nesciat, sed quod nescire faciat eos quibus hoc non expedit scire, id est, non eis hoc ostendat, quod sibi vult nescio qua praesumptione, quae annis computatis certissimum sperat post septem annorum millia diem Domini.

Haec tibi (dulcissime frater) innocentiae meae pignora, has amicae charitatis indices mitto litteras, ne me arbitreris humanae divinae scientiae penitus expertem, quin potius secundum Scripturas ac scita Patrum, fidei et catholica voce profiteri Dominum Salvatorem in sexta aetate saeculi carnem pro nobis assumpsisse mortalem; cursum vero saeculi nullo (nobis) certo annorum numero definitum, ipsius solum Judicis cognitum esse scientiae. Etsi enim mihi quis dixerit: Ecce hic est Christus, aut ecce illic, id est, hoc vel hoc tempore futurus ad iudicium nequaquam audio, neque sector illum: Scio enim quia sicut fulgur coruscans de coelo in ea quae sub coelo sunt fulget, ita erit Filius hominis in die sua. Agnoscas etiam qua opinione vulgus in sex vel septem millium venerit annorum, et qua ipse auctoritate assertionem meae computationis astruam, Hebraica, videlicet, veritate per Originem prodita, per Hieronymum edita, per Augustinum laudata, et per Josephum confirmata, quibus ego in rebus talibus nullos invenio doctiores.

Whence also I myself grieve enough (I confess) and, as much as is allowed, or even more, I am wont to be angry as often as I am asked by rustics how many years remain of the last millennium of the world; and on the contrary I myself inquire from them whence they know that the last millennium is now being enacted, since the Lord in the Gospel does not testify the time of his coming to be near or far, but commands us always with girded loins and burning lamps to watch and to expect him until he comes. For I notice that when making a discourse to the brothers, when the occasion happens to arise to dispute concerning the Ages of the world, some of the simpler ones think we are preaching six thousand years. Nor were there wanting those who thought the state of this world, which is revolved in seven days, was to be terminated in seven thousand years, whom the oft-mentioned doctor Augustine, in the exposition of the sixth Psalm, argued against as being of manifest temerity, saying among other things: "For if after seven thousand years that day is going to come, every man can predict his coming with years computed. Where therefore will it be that not even the Son knows this?" Which certainly was said because men do not learn this through the Son: not that he himself does not know it with himself, according to that locution: **The Lord your God tests you that he may know**, that is, that he may make you to know; and: **Arise, Lord**, that is, make us to arise. Since therefore the son is said in this way not to know this day, not because he does not know, but because he makes those not to know for whom it is not expedient to know, that is, he does not show this to them, what does that I know not what presumption want for itself, which with years computed hopes for the most certain day of the Lord after seven thousand years?

These things, most sweet brother, I send to you as pledges of my innocence, these letters as indices of friendly charity, lest you should think me entirely devoid of human or divine science, but rather that I profess with a faithful and catholic voice, according to the Scriptures and the decrees of the Fathers, that the Lord Savior in the sixth age of the world assumed mortal flesh for us; but that the course of the world, defined by no certain number of years (to us), is known only to the science of the Judge himself. For even if anyone should say to me: **Behold here is Christ, or behold there**, that is, that he is going to be at this or that time for judgment, I in no way listen, nor do I follow him: for I know that as lightning flashing from heaven shines on those things which are under heaven, so shall the Son of man be in his day. May you also recognize by what opinion the common people came into the six or seven thousand years, and by what authority I assert the assertion of my computation: namely, by the Hebrew truth produced through Origen, edited through Jerome, praised through Augustine, and confirmed through Josephus, than whom I find none more learned in such matters.

Neque autem mirandum, laudabilem virum Eusebium, quamvis miro sapiendi dicendique ingenio testam ferrumque (ut dicitur) conglutinare valeret, non valere tamen quod non didicerat, hoc est, Hebraeam scire linguam, cujus timore quasi merito reverendae et hoc quod sciebat ipse corrumpere non timuit, ut supra docuimus.

Obsecro sane ut has purgationis meae litteras religioso ac doctissimo fratri nostro David porrigas, quatenus eas ille coram venerabili domino ac patre nostro, Wilfrido, scilicet, antistite, legere possit, ut quoniam illo praesente atque audiente insipientius sum prius appetitus conviciis, ipso etiam nunc audiente ac dijudicante, quam immeritus eadem convicia sim perpessus appareat. Ipsum quoque David prae caeteris rogo, ut, juxta exemplum sibi cognominis pueri, furorem spiritus nequam a fratre desipiente, hortatione sanorum verborum, quasi dulci psalmodiae modulatione, sedulus effugare contendat. Quod utique in coena illa in qua me poculo ebrius culpae studuit, ille qui semet potius lectioni intentus inculpabilem facere debuerat, perficere nequibat, utpote sensus et sententiae meae quam laudabat necdum conscius. Vere enim dictum est: Quia si momorderit serpens in silentio, non est abundantia incantatori. Amen.

EPISTOLA IV

, AD WICREDAM, *De Paschae celebratione, sive de aequinoctio vernali juxta Anatolium.*

Reverendissimo ac sanctissimo fratri Wicredae presbytero, Beda, optabilem in Domino salutem.

Libenter accepi litteras tuae benignitatis, amantissime in Christo frater, et capitula quae rogasti promptus describere, ac tibi dirigere acceleravi, memor familiaritatis ac dulcedinis, qua, cum illo advenirem, me suscepisti. Sed et quaestionem illam merito famosam de historia ecclesiastica, super qua me interrogasti praesentem, et cui tunc breviter ut potui respondi, nunc latius etiam litteris explanare studui, hoc est, de aequinoctio verno, quod in libro praefato Anatolius antistes reverendissimus, in undecimo Kalend. April. die annotasse perhibetur, cum caeteri Aegyptiorum magistri hoc magis in duodecimo Kalendarum earumdem die annotandum esse decernant.

Nor indeed is it to be wondered at that the laudable man Eusebius, although with a wonderful genius of knowing and speaking he was able to conglutinate tile and iron (as it is said), was nonetheless not able to do what he had not learned, that is, to know the Hebrew tongue, for fear of which as if of deserved reverence he did not fear to corrupt even that which he himself knew, as we have taught above.

I certainly beseech that you reach these letters of my purgation to our most religious and most learned brother David, so that he may be able to read them in the presence of our venerable lord and father, Wilfrid, namely, the bishop, so that since I was first attacked with reproaches more foolishly in his presence and hearing, now also with him hearing and judging, it may appear how undeservedly I suffered those same reproaches. I also ask David himself before the rest, that, according to the example of the boy of the same name to him, he should busily contend to put to flight the fury of the wicked spirit from a foolish brother by the exhortation of sound words, as if by the sweet modulation of psalmody. Which certainly in that feast in which, drunk with the cup, he studied to blame me, he who rather ought to have made himself blameless by being intent on reading, was unable to fulfill, as being not yet conscious of my sense and opinion which he was praising. For it is truly said: *Because if the serpent bites in silence, there is no abundance to the enchanter.* Amen.

EPISTLE IV

, TO WICREDA, *Concerning the celebration of Easter, or concerning the vernal equinox according to Anatolius.*

To the most reverend and most holy brother Wicreda, the priest, Bede, sends desirable salvation in the Lord.

Full well I received the letter of your kindness, most beloved brother in Christ, and I have hastened to describe the chapters you requested and direct them to you, mindful of the familiarity and sweetness with which you received me when I came there. But also that question, deservedly famous, regarding ecclesiastical history, about which you questioned me in person, and to which I then responded briefly as I could, I have now studied to explain more broadly even by letter; that is, concerning the vernal equinox, which in the aforementioned book the most reverend bishop Anatolius is said to have noted on the eleventh day before the Kalends of April [March 22], whereas the other Egyptian masters decree that this should rather be noted on the twelfth day before those same Kalends [March 21].

Dicit namque sanctus Proterius Alexandrinae antistes ecclesiae, ad beatissimum papam Leonem scribens de pascha: «Et manifeste quidem secundum cursum solis, XXV die mensis Famenoth, qui etiam XII Kalendarum Aprilium aequinoctium esse cognoscitur. Sed non oportet ab hoc aequinoctio primi mensis exordium iuxta cursum lunae prorsus affigere, alioquin per omnia solis circulo lunae discursus concordare debuerat.» Dicit et sanctus Cyrillus ejusdem praesul Ecclesiae: «Sol enim ipse quotidie terra marique et clauditur in fine diei, et in diei initio aperitur, et finit sol cursum totius anni, in duodecimo Kalendarum Aprilis.» Unde te merito, sicut et caeteros movet studiosos, quomodo Anatolius, cum sit et ipse eruditione ac genere Aegyptius, quasi contrarius litteris Aegypti doctoribus, scribat aequinoctium idem in undecimo Kalendas Apriles occurrere solere. «Est ergo, inquiens, in primo anno initium primi mensis, quando est decem et IX annorum circuli initium, secundum Aegyptios quidem mensis Famenoth vigesimo sexto die, secundum Macedones Distri mensis XXII, secundum vero Romanos undecimo Kalendas Aprilis, in qua die invenitur sol non solum conscendisse primam partem, verum etiam quadram jam in eadem die habere, id est, in prima ex duodecim partibus.» Haec autem particula prima, vernale est aequinoctium et ipsa est initium mensium, et caput circuli, et absolutio cursus stellarum, quae planetae, id est, vagae dicuntur, ac finis duodecimae particulae, et totius circuli terminus. Sed facillima ratione posse credo doceri, non eum caeteris Aegypti et orientis praeceptoribus in hoc esse contrarium. Facit enim ratio quadrantis (quem bissextum vocant), ut sol aequinoctialem sui cursus locum in signifero circulo, nunc in primo exortu suo, nunc in meridie, nunc in occasu, nunc media nocte comprehendat, et quoties mane vel meridie fieri aequinoctium contigerit, ad duodecimum Kalendarum Aprilium; quoties autem vesperi, vel media nocte, ad undecimum Kalendarum earumdem diem pertinet. Absque enim contradictione nox omnis ex quo Dominus a mortuis resurrexit, sequentis diei temporibus anteponitur, non autem praecedentis apponitur.

For the holy Proterius, bishop of the church of Alexandria, says, writing to the most blessed Pope Leo concerning Easter: "And clearly indeed according to the course of the sun, on the 25th day of the month of Phamenoth, which is also known to be the equinox on the 12th day before the Kalends of April. But it is not proper to fix the beginning of the first month according to the course of the moon entirely from this equinox; otherwise the course of the moon ought to have agreed in all things with the circle of the sun." And holy Cyril, prelate of the same Church, says: "For the sun itself is daily enclosed both on land and sea at the end of the day, and is opened at the beginning of the day, and the sun finishes the course of the whole year on the twelfth day before the Kalends of April." Whence you are rightly moved, as are other studious people, how Anatolius, though he himself be Egyptian by education and race, writes as if contrary to the Egyptian doctors of letters, that the same equinox is accustomed to occur on the eleventh day before the Kalends of April. "It is therefore," he says, "in the first year the beginning of the first month, which is the beginning of the cycle of nineteen years, according to the Egyptians indeed on the twenty-sixth day of the month of Phamenoth, according to the Macedonians on the 22nd of the month of Dystus, but according to the Romans on the eleventh day before the Kalends of April, on which day the sun is found not only to have ascended the first part, but even to have a fourth part already on that day, that is, in the first of twelve parts." Now this first particle is the vernal equinox and it is itself the beginning of months, and the head of the cycle, and the resolution of the course of the stars, which are called planets, that is, wanderers, and the end of the twelfth particle, and the terminus of the whole cycle. But by a very easy reason I believe it can be taught that he is not contrary to the other teachers of Egypt and the East in this. For the reason of the quadrant (which they call bissextus), causes the sun to reach the equinoctial place of its course in the zodiacal circle, now at its first rising, now at midday, now at sunset, now at midnight; and as often as it happens that the equinox occurs in the morning or at midday, it pertains to the twelfth day before the Kalends of April; but as often as it occurs in the evening or at midnight, it pertains to the eleventh day before those same Kalends. For without contradiction every night from the time the Lord rose from the dead is placed before the times of the following day, but is not added to the preceding.

Unde consulte Anatolius non vetat in undecimum, sed ante undecimum Kalendarum Aprilium pascha celebrari, nam post illa quae posuimus ejus verba continuo subjungit: Et ideo non parum delinquere dicimus eos qui ante initium hoc novi anni Pascha putant esse celebrandum. Non ergo in hoc initio in qua aequinoctium esse dicit, sed ante hoc initium novi anni Pascha prohibet celebrari, cum ipse in eodem libro diligenter ex antiquorum pariter et novorum Patrum scriptis affirmet, ante transcendens aequinoctii pascha agi non posse. Ipse enim sibi testis erat quod scribens non prima sedis aequinoctialis tempora, sed ultima signavit, hoc est, ea a quibus Paschae celebrationem incipere posse noverat. Cum enim secundo vel tertio anno post bissextum paschae dies Dominicus in undecimo Kalendarum Aprilium occurrerit, constat nimirum, quod cum aequinoctio Paschae tempus inchoatur. Cujus caeremoniae partes celebrantur ejusdem prima noctis, quamvis illa mediante, vel etiam inchoante perfici aequinoctium nullus ambigit, eo quod profecto Dominicae ipsam resurrectionis rite celebrari horam, quae diluculo facta est. Et ut patenter animadvertas quod Anatolius vespertinum specialiter aequinoctium scribat, a quo Pascha incipere potest, quodque ad duodecimum Kalendarum Aprilium regulariter respiciat, attende quid in sequentibus ex antiquorum sententia Patrum annotat. Cum enim sint duo aequinoctia veris et autumnii aequis spatiis dirempta, et decimo quarto die primi mensis sit statuta solemnitas post vesperam, quando luna soli apposita e regione deprehenditur, sicut etiam oculis probare licet, invenitur utique vernalis aequinoctii partem sol obtinens, luna vero e contrario autumnalis.

Quid ergo mirandum si in XI Kalendarum Aprilium aequinoctium fieri dicat, cum de illa loqui se hora declaret, quando occidente ad vesperam sole, luna e contrario suum attollit exortum. Ubi pariter intuendum quod aequinoctia veris et autumnii aequis spatiis dixit esse dirempta. Et inde colligendum quod ab aequinoctio ad aequinoctium dimidium anni computare debeamus, atque autumnale duodecimo Kalendarum Octobris annotare, centum, videlicet, et octoginta duobus diebus a vernali discretum.

Whence Anatolius consultingly does not forbid Easter to be celebrated on the eleventh, but before the eleventh before the Kalends of April; for after those words of his which we have set down, he immediately subjoins: And therefore we say that they transgress not a little who think that Easter ought to be celebrated before this beginning of the new year. He does not therefore forbid Easter to be celebrated in this beginning in which he says the equinox is, but before this beginning of the new year, since he himself in the same book diligently affirms from the writings of the ancient and new Fathers alike, that Easter cannot be performed before the passing of the equinox. For he was himself a witness to himself that in writing he did not mark the first times of the equinoctial seat, but the last, that is, those from which he knew the celebration of Easter could begin. For when in the second or third year after the bissextus the Lord's day of Easter occurs on the eleventh day before the Kalends of April, it is indeed established that the time of Easter begins with the equinox. The parts of whose ceremony are celebrated on the first night of the same, although no one doubts that the equinox is perfected while that night is in its middle or even beginning, for the reason that the hour of the Lord's resurrection itself, which occurred at dawn, is rightly celebrated. And that you may clearly perceive that Anatolius writes specifically of the evening equinox, from which Easter can begin, and that he regularly regards the twelfth day before the Kalends of April, attend to what he notes in the following from the opinion of the ancient Fathers. For since there are two equinoxes of spring and autumn separated by equal spaces, and on the fourteenth day of the first month the solemnity is appointed after evening, when the moon placed opposite the sun from that region is observed, as even may be proved by the eyes, the sun is found obtaining the part of the vernal equinox, but the moon on the contrary that of the autumnal.

What wonder then if he says the equinox occurs on the 11th before the Kalends of April [March 22], since he declares himself to be speaking of that hour when, the sun setting in the evening, the moon on the contrary lifts up its rising. Where likewise it must be observed that he said the equinoxes of spring and autumn were separated by equal spaces. And from this it must be gathered that from equinox to equinox we ought to compute half a year, and to note the autumnal on the twelfth day before the Kalends of October [September 20], separated by one hundred and eighty-two days from the vernal.

Quod esse verissimum etiam horologica docet inspectio, maxime cum hanc aequissimam anni inter aequinoctiorum diremptionem antiquissimi et eruditissimi doctoris Aristobuli verbis astruat, qui fuit unus ex illis LXX illustribus Scripturae sacrae interpretibus. Quod autem idem ait Anatolius, In qua die invenitur sol, non solum conscendisse primam partem, verum etiam quartam jam habere in ea die, id est, in prima ex duodecim partibus, XII partes XII signa horoscopi nominat, quae tricenis diebus et paucis insuper horis solem singula tenent. Unde et Maro de iisdem dicit: Idcirco certis dimensum partibus orbem, Per duodena regit mundi sol aureus astra, Quarum, videlicet, partium prima juxta naturam a loci aequinoctii vernalis incipit. Haec autem prima ex duodecim vernale est aequinoctium, quia nimirum partis ejusdem initium, scilicet, ubi sol primo positus est, ipsum tenet aequinoctium, recte praemittit solem in ea die non solum conscendisse primam partem, verum etiam quadram jam in ea die habere, quia quoties aequinoctiale tempus juxta rationem praefatam in undecimo Kalendarum Aprilium incidit, toties in ipso temporis momento illa quarta pars diei, quae annuatim accrescere solet, secundum naturam perfecta esse dignoscitur. Nam cum duodecimo Kalendarum earumdem die contingit aequinoctium, tum in ipso aequae die, et in ipsa aequinoctiali hora quadrans idem naturaliter expletur. Ideo autem addimus naturaliter, quia consuetudinis est humanae, variis illum temporibus anni prout cuilibet generi placuit inserere. Naturalis vero est rationis in completionem circuli solaris adjici, quam Cyrillus signavit in ea, quam ut supra proposuimus sententia, dicens: Et finit sol cursum totius anni in duodecimo Kalendarum Aprilium. Et ne quis forte contendat in hac Anatolii sententia, hoc quod ipse sensit nos intelligere non potuisse, libet paucis annectere quae de iisdem partibus et aequinoctio vir doctissimus Victor Capuanae urbis antistes describebat: «Coelestis, inquit, circulus, per quem sol et luna et stellae, quae planetae appellantur, contra impetum totius coeli proprio motu feruntur, per duodecim partes, judicio est sapientiae distributus.

Which the horological inspection also teaches to be most true, especially since he supports this most equal separation of the year between the equinoxes with the words of the most ancient and learned teacher Aristobulus, who was one of those seventy illustrious interpreters of the Holy Scripture. Moreover, what the same Anatolius says, "On which day the sun is found not only to have ascended the first part, but even to have a fourth [quadram] already on that day, that is, in the first of twelve parts," he names the twelve parts the twelve signs of the horoscope, each of which holds the sun for thirty days and a few hours besides. Whence also Maro [Virgil] says of the same: "Therefore the golden sun rules the world's orb through the twelve stars of the world, measured in certain parts," of which parts, namely, the first begins according to nature from the place of the vernal equinox. Hence Anatolius rightly subjoins: "Now this first of the twelve is the vernal equinox," because indeed the beginning of the same part, namely, where the sun was first placed, holds the equinox itself; he rightly premised that the sun on that day not only had ascended the first part, but even had a fourth [quadram] already on that day, because as often as the equinoctial time according to the aforementioned reason falls on the eleventh before the Kalends of April, so often in that very moment of time that fourth part of the day, which is accustomed to increase annually, is recognized to be perfected according to nature. For when the equinox happens on the twelfth day before the same Kalends, then in that same day, and in the same equinoctial hour, the same quadrant is naturally filled. But we add "naturally" because it is of human custom to insert it at various times of the year as it pleased any nation. But it is of natural reason to be added at the completion of the solar circle, which Cyril also marked in that opinion which we proposed above, saying: "And the sun finishes the course of the whole year on the twelfth day before the Kalends of April." And lest anyone should perhaps contend that in this opinion of Anatolius we could not understand what he himself felt, it is pleasing to join in a few words what the most learned man Victor, bishop of the city of Capua, described concerning these same parts and the equinox: "The celestial circle," he says, "through which the sun and moon and stars, which are called planets, are borne by their own motion against the impetus of the whole heaven, is distributed through twelve parts by the judgment of wisdom.

Quibus peractis CCCLXV die, quo toto tempore annus expletur, dum sol repetierit circuli supradicti primae partis initium, oritur anni principium, quod fit a duodecimo Kalendarum Aprilium die usque ad undecimum. Saepe enim vespere, interdum nocte, nonnunquam ipsa Kalendarum XI Aprilium die provenire deprehenditur. Vicesima quinta igitur aut sexta die Martii mensis secundum Alexandrinos, hoc est, juxta Latinos duodecimo vel undecimo Kalendarum Aprilium die fit, juxta solis cursum primi mensis initium. Ne quis autem nos inconstantiae velit arguere, quod velut sub ambiguo fluctuantes diem primi mensis minime definiamus, hujusmodi objurgator aut potius inquisitor sciat quod solertissima Aegyptiorum investigatio et admodum subtilissima a septima diei hora, horam primam alterius diei docet incipere, et cum sit XXV dies Martii mensis, XII Kalendarum Aprilium, si vespere ejusdem diei sol spatium primae partis illustret, jam XXVI dies ascribitur, ex Aegyptiaca ut diximus traditione subtili, et sine dubitatione probabili. Et post pauca: Igitur luna, inquit, si XIV reperitur, sole in prima parte sui circuli constituto, jure primi mensis ascribitur. Si vero prius XIV luna hoc pleno lumine orbis effulserit, quam sol memoratam primam partem circuli sui contigerit, XII mensis esse reperitur vel reputabitur. Et quoties ita contigit, solemnitatis Paschae differtur, ad alterum plenilunium, quod evenire necesse est adhuc sole in prima parte de duodecim circuli partibus constituto.»

Haec de verbis beati Victoris assumere placuit, quatenus sententia sancti Patris Anatolii, quae et in ipsius opere paschali, et in historia ecclesiastica plerisque obscura est, per ejus tibi dicta clarius redderetur. Sed neque hoc praetereundum, quod sunt qui contendunt Anatolium in hac sententia nequaquam undecimum, sed octavum Kalendarum Aprilium diem posuisse, dicentes Eusebium, cum hanc sententiam in historia ecclesiastica poneret, diem pro die mutasse, et quod caetera bene ac philosophice posita videret, uno verbo corrigere voluisse, quod in ea minus perfecte dictum conspexerit, ne illum, videlicet, quem laudare proposuerat, palam notabilem monstraret, si ejus pura verba, et ut ipse scripserat, suis inderet historiis. Sed mirum si Eusebius, tam circumspectus sermone et sensu scriptor, in tantum laudis aliorum potuit esse cupidus, ut eorum scripturis deflagrans, ea quae non dixerant illos dixisse finxerit, nec formidaret argui, postquam lectores sui integra eorum opuscula perscrutarentur, atque quae ipse de his assumpserat, aliter in suis auctoribus posita offendissent.

Which having been completed on the 365th day, in which whole time the year is fulfilled, when the sun shall have repeated the beginning of the first part of the aforementioned circle, the principle of the year arises, which happens from the twelfth day before the Kalends of April unto the eleventh. For often it is found to occur in the evening, sometimes at night, and occasionally on the day of the 11th before the Kalends of April itself. Therefore on the twenty-fifth or sixth day of the month of March according to the Alexandrians, that is, according to the Latins on the twelfth or eleventh day before the Kalends of April, the beginning of the first month occurs according to the course of the sun. But lest anyone should wish to accuse us of inconstancy, as if we, fluctuating under ambiguity, were by no means defining the day of the first month, let such a rebuker or rather inquirer know that the most skillful and very subtle investigation of the Egyptians teaches that the first hour of another day begins from the seventh hour of the day; and though it be the 25th day of the month of March, the 12th before the Kalends of April, if in the evening of the same day the sun should illuminate the space of the first part, it is already ascribed to the 26th day, from the subtle and without doubt probable Egyptian tradition, as we have said. And after a few words: Therefore the moon, he says, if it is found to be the 14th, the sun being constituted in the first part of its circle, it is rightly ascribed to the first month. But if the moon shall have shone forth with its full light as the 14th before the sun shall have reached the mentioned first part of its circle, it is found or will be reputed to be the 12th month. And therefore as often as it so happens, the solemnity of Easter is deferred to the next full moon, which must necessarily happen with the sun still constituted in the first part of the twelve parts of the circle."

These words from the blessed Victor it has pleased me to take up, so that the opinion of the holy Father Anatolius, which in both his own paschal work and in the ecclesiastical history is obscure to most, might be rendered clearer to you through his words. But neither is this to be passed over, that there are those who contend that Anatolius in this opinion by no means placed the eleventh, but the eighth day before the Kalends of April [March 25], saying that Eusebius, when he placed this opinion in the ecclesiastical history, changed the day for the day, and because he saw the rest well and philosophically placed, he wished to correct in one word what he saw to be less perfectly said in it, lest he should show him, namely, whom he had proposed to praise, to be openly noteworthy, if he had inserted his pure words, and as he himself had written, in his own histories. But it is a wonder if Eusebius, a writer so circumspect in speech and sense, could be so desirous of the praise of others that, deflowering their writings, he feigned that they said those things which they had not said, nor feared to be rebuked after his readers should search their complete works, and find those things which he had taken from them placed otherwise in their authors.

Mirum si Victorem, cuius dicta posuimus, virum aequae eruditionis eximiae talis impostura latuit, qui in alio opere scribens de pascha, hanc eandem sententiam Anatolii de historia ecclesiastica, quasi jure laudabilem ac memorabilem assumens, ubi opportunum rebatur inseruerit, et ipse undecimum in ea non octavum Kalendarum Aprilium scribens diem. Sed et Dionysius cognomento Exiguus, scientia praecipuus, mirum quare vel ipse in epistolis suis paschalibus Anatolii suffragium de historia ecclesiastica flagitaret, si ejus ibi dicta sciret falsata, quem ut Graecae etiam linguae peritissimum, qualiter haec sint primo edita, latere non potuit. Ait enim sic: «Sed quia mensis hic unde sumat exordium, vel ubi terminetur, evidenter in Moysi scriptis non colligitur: praefati venerabilis CCCXVIII pontifices antiqui moris observantiam, et exinde a sancto Moyse traditam, sicut in septimo libro ecclesiasticae historiae fertur solertius investigantes, a VIII Iduum Martiarum usque in diem Nonarum Aprilium natam lunam facere dixerunt primi mensis initium, et a duodecimo Kalendarum Aprilium usque ad XIV Kalend. Maii lunam XIV solertius inquirendam.» Itaque verisimile videtur, Eusebium quidem quod in Graeca auctoritate invenerat, fideliter suis indidisse historiis. Ipsum vero libellum Anatolii postmodum in aliquibus Latinorum exemplaribus esse corruptum, eorum nimirum fraude qui, paschae verum tempus ignorantes, errorem suum tanti Patris auctoritate defendere gestirent.

Sed quaerunt illi qui Eusebium magis unam emendasse sententiam, quam alios quoslibet totum Anatolii putant infalsasse, quomodo in illo libello sit scriptum. Sed quid mirum si in vigesima prima luna erraverint qui tres dies addiderunt ante aequinoctium, in quibus pascha immolari posse definiunt, quod certum omnimodis etiam putari absurdum. Quibus respondendum, quia Anatolius potuerit nosse plurimos eorum qui sic vel sic de pascha senserint, nec tamen ad nostram notitiam pervenerint. Et e contra quaerendum ab eis quomodo in ipso libello sit scriptum: Est ergo in primo anno initium primi mensis, quod est novemdecim annorum circuli initium, secundum Aegyptios quidem mensis Phamenoth XXVI die, juxta Macedones vero Distri mensis XXII. Secundum Romanos vero Martii mensis XXVI die, id est VIII Kalendas Aprilis, cum XXVI dies mensis Aegyptiorum Phamenoth, et XXII dies mensis Macedonum Distri non sit VIII Kalendarum Aprilium, sed XI Kalend. April.

It is a wonder if such an imposture escaped Victor, whose words we have set down, a man equally of distinguished erudition, who in another work writing concerning Easter, taking up this same opinion of Anatolius from the ecclesiastical history as if by right laudable and memorable, inserted it where he thought opportune, and he himself writing the eleventh, not the eighth day before the Kalends of April in it. But also Dionysius, surnamed Exiguus, eminent in knowledge, it is a wonder why he himself in his paschal epistles should demand the support of Anatolius from the ecclesiastical history, if he knew his words were falsified there, since it could not be hidden from him, as one most skilled even in the Greek language, how these were first published. For he speaks thus: "But because it is not evidently gathered in the writings of Moses from where this month takes its beginning, or where it is terminated: the aforementioned venerable 318 bishops, investigating more skillfully the observance of the ancient custom, and as delivered from holy Moses, just as it is reported in the seventh book of the ecclesiastical history, said that the moon born from the 8th of the Ides of March [March 8] unto the day of the Nones of April [April 5] makes the beginning of the first month, and that the 14th moon is to be sought more skillfully from the twelfth day before the Kalends of April [March 21] unto the 14th before the Kalends of May [April 18]." Therefore it seems likely that Eusebius indeed faithfully put into his histories what he had found in the Greek authority. But that the little book of Anatolius itself was afterwards corrupted in some Latin copies by the fraud of those, namely, who, being ignorant of the true time of Easter, desired to defend their error by the authority of such a Father.

But let those who think that Eusebius rather amended one opinion than that any others falsified the whole book of Anatolius ask how it is written in that book. But what wonder if they have erred in the twenty-first moon who added three days before the equinox, in which they define that Easter can be sacrificed, which is certainly to be thought absurd in every way. To whom it must be answered, that Anatolius could have known many of those who felt thus or so concerning Easter, and yet have not reached our notice. And on the contrary it must be asked of them how it is written in that same book: "There is therefore in the first year the beginning of the first month, which is the beginning of the cycle of nineteen years, according to the Egyptians indeed on the 26th day of the month of Phamenoth, according to the Macedonians on the 22nd day of the month of Dystrus. But according to the Romans on the 26th day of the month of March, that is, the 8th before the Kalends of April," since the 26th day of the month of Phamenoth of the Egyptians, and the 22nd day of the month of Dystrus of the Macedonians is not the 8th before the Kalends of April, but the 11th before the Kalends of April.

Nonne verisimillimum apparet quam sit falsata sententia, ubi ipse qui VIII Kalend. pro XI Kalend. April. mutavit, oblitus est etiam Aegyptiorum vel Graecorum mensium statum mutare. Sed his quae minus nota erant manere permissis ut fuerant, illud solummodo quod suis sibiue visibile erat mutavit. Quid sane horum sit verius, illi potius qui Anatolium Graecum legunt videant.

Verum sive Eusebius hanc sententiam seu alius quilibet totum ipsum libellum a suo statu mutaverit, constat absque ulla dubietate, quamvis plurima veterum turba confirmet, aequinoctium octava Kalendarum Aprilium die nequaquam posse reperiri. Quod in conspectione horologica et aperta ratione probabitur. Regula enim tenet ecclesiasticae observationis, quae et edictis Patrum priorum et clarius est Nicaeno probata concilio, ut paschae dies Dominicus ab XI Kalendarum Aprilium usque in VII Kalendarum Maiarum diem quaeratur. Item catholicae institutionis regula praecipit ut ante vernalis aequinoctii transcensum pascha non celebretur. Qui ergo VIII Kalendarum Aprilium putat esse aequinoctium, necesse est idem aut ante aequinoctium pascha celebrari licitum dicat, aut ante VII Kalendarum diem pascha celebrari licitum neget. Ipsum quoque pascha quod Dominus pridie quam pateretur cum discipulis fecit, aut nona Kalendarum Aprilium die non fuisse, aut ante aequinoctium fuisse confirmet. Bene vale semper in Domino, dilectissime Pater.

Primo anno circuli decemnovenalis XXX est luna in XI Kalendarum Aprilium, eodemque anno luna XIV quinta die Kalendarum Aprilium, id est, Nonas Apriles: jungeque ad XXX et sume regulares mensis Aprilis, eo anno quo XIV luna Aprilem incurrat. Eo vero quo mense Martis luna XIV incurrit, tarde Martis regulares triginta sex. Ex epactis utique agnoscis facillime, utrum in Martium an in Aprilem luna decima quarta eveniat. Si enim plus XV aut minus V epactis habes, Aprili luna XIV computatur. Tene ergo regulares in Aprili trigesima quinta, et subtrahe epactas semper ejus anni, et quod remanserit, ipsa est dies lunae decima quarta, utputa tertio anno circuli decemnovenalis XXII erunt epactae, tolle XXII de XXXV et remanent XIII tertia decima die mensis Aprilis, id est, Idus Aprilis luna decima quarta occurrit. Si vero feriam quaeras XIV lunae, adde concurrentes anni illius numero, qui relictus est, utputa istis tredecim qui in praesenti sunt, in Aprili quoque regulares VII.

Does it not appear most likely how falsified the opinion is, where he himself who changed the 8th for the 11th before the Kalends of April, forgot also to change the state of the Egyptian or Greek months? But leaving these which were less known to remain as they were, he changed only that which was visible to his own and himself. Let those who read Anatolius in Greek rather see which of these is more true.

Truly, whether Eusebius or any other whosoever changed this one opinion or the whole book itself from its state, it is certain without any doubt, although a very great crowd of the ancients confirms it, that the equinox can by no means be found on the eighth day before the Kalends of April [March 25]. Which will be proved both in horological inspection and by open reason. For the rule of ecclesiastical observation holds, which is proved both by the edicts of the former Fathers and more clearly by the Council of Nicaea, that the Lord's day of Easter should be sought from the 11th before the Kalends of April [March 22] unto the 7th day before the Kalends of May [April 25]. Likewise the rule of catholic institution commands that Easter should not be celebrated before the passing of the vernal equinox. He therefore who thinks the equinox is on the 8th before the Kalends of April, must of necessity either say it is lawful for Easter to be celebrated before the equinox, or deny that it is lawful for Easter to be celebrated before the 7th day before the Kalends [April 25]. He would also confirm that the very Easter which the Lord performed with the disciples on the day before he suffered, either was not on the ninth day before the Kalends of April [March 24], or was before the equinox. Farewell always in the Lord, most beloved Father.

In the first year of the nineteen-year cycle, the moon is 30 on the 11th before the Kalends of April [March 22], and in the same year the 14th moon is on the fifth day before the Nones of April [April 5], that is, the Nones of April: join it to 30 and take the regulars of the month of April, in that year in which the 14th moon falls in April. But in that month in which the 14th moon falls in March, hold thirty-six as the March regulars. From the epacts indeed you will most easily recognize whether the fourteenth moon occurs in March or in April. For if you have more than 15 or less than 5 epacts, the 14th moon is computed in April. Hold therefore the regulars in April as thirty-five, and always subtract the epacts of that year, and what shall remain, that is the day of the fourteenth moon; for example, in the third year of the nineteen-year cycle there will be 22 epacts; take 22 from 35 and 13 remain; on the thirteenth day of the month of April, that is, the Ides of April, the fourteenth moon occurs. If moreover you seek the weekday [feria] of the 14th moon, add the concurrents of that year to the number which is left, as for example to those thirteen which are present, and also 7 as the regulars in April.

Haec omnia collige et postea divide per septenarium, et quod remanserit ipsa est feria lunae decima quarta, et sic facillime ad diem Dominicum pervenies. Mense autem Martis tene regulares triginta sex, subtrahe epactas anni illius, verbi gratia, secundo anni circuli decemnovenalis undecimo fiunt XXV die mensis ejusdem, XIV luna aderit, id est, octavo Kalendarum Aprilium. Si vero feriam ejusdem diei requiras, adde numero praescripto concurrentes anni illius et regulares quatuor in Martio. Iis quoque in unum collectis partitoque per septenarium, et quod remanserit ipse est dies lunae decima quarta, si nihil remanserit, VII feria est. Igitur si detractis epactis triginta, remanent tamen quodcunque superest, ipse est dies mensis, in quo XIV, lunam reperiens, ut eo anno quo quatuor epactae fiunt, absume IV de XXXV et remanent triginta unum. Tolle XXX et remanent I. Prima die mensis XIV luna occurrit, id est, Kalendas Apriles. Si deductis epactis XXX tantum remanent XIV die mensis luna XIV evenit, quod semel intra XIX accedit annos, quando VI epactae ascribuntur, et III Kalendarum Aprilium XIV luna provenit. Ut te exemplis ad inveniendam instruam feriam, qua XIV occurrat luna, utputa anno praesenti Dominicae incarnationis DC-CLXXXVI, sume epactas hujus anni XXVI, detractisque ejusdem XXXV regularibus et remanent IX et ecce IX die mensis XIV luna erit, id est, V Idus April. Junge etiam concurrentes anni praesentis, id est, I ad IX et fiunt X, et his adde VII et fiunt XVII, hos partire per VII bis VII, XIV et remanent III, tertia feria erit luna XIV, IV XV, V XVI, VI XVII, VII XVIII, I XIX, qui est dies paschae, V Idus April. XIV luna, IV Idus XV, III Idus XVI, II Idus XVII, Idus XV IV XVIII, Kalendas Maias XIX. Secundo anno, post hunc VII, quia plus V sunt, et minus XV, ad Martium pertinet XIV luna, quam sic requires. Sume regulares Martis mensis XXXVI, detrahe ab eis VII, et remanent XXIX vicesimo nono Martis mensis, id est, IV Kalendarum April. decima quarta tibi luna occurrit. Ad inveniendam feriam, sume easdem XXIX et adde eis concurrentes anni illius, id est, II, fiunt XXXI. In iis quoque adjice regulares quatuor, et erit omnis summa XXXV, partire per VII. Quinques enim VII fiunt XXXV et nihil remanet, quia septima feria erit luna decima quarta quarto Kalend. April., et XV tertio Kalend. April. Ipse est dies dominicus Paschae, etiam per singulos circuli decemnovenales annos.

Collect all these and afterwards divide by seven, and what shall remain is itself the weekday of the fourteenth moon, and thus you will most easily arrive at the Lord's day. But for the month of March hold thirty-six as the regulars, subtract the epacts of that year; for example, in the second year of the nineteen-year cycle they become 11; taking 11 from 36, 25 remain; on the 25th day of the same month, the 14th moon will be present, that is, the eighth day before the Kalends of April. If moreover you require the weekday of the same day, add the concurrents of that year to the prescribed number and four as the regulars in March. These also being collected into one and divided by seven, what shall remain is itself the day of the fourteenth moon; if nothing remains, it is the 7th weekday [Saturday]. Therefore if thirty being subtracted from the epacts, whatever remains is over, that is the day of the month in which you will find the 14th moon; as in that year in which four epacts occur, take 4 from 35 and 31 remain. Take 30 and 1 remains. On the first day of the month the 14th moon occurs, that is, the Kalends of April. If 30 being deducted from the epacts 30 remain, the 14th moon falls on the 14th day of the month, which happens once within 19 years, when 6 epacts are ascribed, and the 14th moon occurs on the 3rd before the Kalends of April [March 30]. That I may instruct you with examples to find the weekday on which the 14th moon occurs, as for example in the present year of the Lord's incarnation 776, take the epacts of this year 26, and 35 regulars being subtracted from the same, 9 remain, and behold on the 9th day of the month the 14th moon will be, that is, the 5th before the Ides of April [April 9]. Join also the concurrents of the present year, that is, 1 to 9 and they become 10, and to these add 7 and they become 17; divide these by 7: twice 7 are 14 and 3 remain; it will be the third weekday [Tuesday] for the 14th moon, 4th for the 15th, 5th for the 16th, 6th for the 17th, 7th for the 18th, 1st for the 19th, which is the day of Easter, the 5th before the Ides of April [April 9] is the 14th moon, 4th before the Ides the 15th, 3rd before the Ides the 16th, 2nd before the Ides the 17th, Ides the 18th, [then to] the Kalends of May the 19th. In the second year after this, 7, because they are more than 5 and less than 15, the 14th moon pertains to March, which you shall thus seek. Take the regulars of the month of March 36, subtract 7 from them, and 29 remain; on the twenty-ninth of the month of March, that is, the 4th before the Kalends of April [March 29], the fourteenth moon occurs to you. To find the weekday, take those same 29 and add to them the concurrents of that year, that is, 2, they become 31. To these also add four as the regulars, and the whole sum will be 35; divide by 7. For five times 7 become 35 and nothing remains, because the seventh weekday will be the fourteenth moon on the fourth before the Kalends of April [March 29], and the 15th on the third before the Kalends of April [March 30]. That is the Lord's day of Easter, also through the individual years of the nineteen-year cycle.

Semper his regularibus et hac ratione annuis epactarum detractis diebus, decimam quartam sine errore reperies lunam, et illis regularibus concurrente numero praescripto junctis. Feriam quoque decimam quartam lunae reperies, et sic computatis feriis, quae supersunt septimanae illius, lunae quoque aetatem crescentis singulis appone diebus, et tum simul locum lunae, et aetatem certissime invenies.

Haec, dilecte comes, proprio argumenta labore / Descripsi tibimet, tu dic quo munere mecum / Certares hodie, dum talia do tibi fessus.

Enarratio dodrantis et semunciae in partibus horarum, per quas lunaris luminis ratio computatur apud scriptores.

Unius semper horae dodrante et semuncta transmissa, id est, diviso unius horae spatio, in viginti quatuor semuncias, quia tot sunt semunciae in libra plena, iterumque divide viginti quatuor in quatuor, hoc est quater sex, et ter VI dodrans dicitur, semel vero quadrans, et hoc est quae ait unius horae dodrante, id est, tribus partibus X et octo semunciis. Quod vero et semiuncia sex reliquarum semiunciarum, ad quadrantem pertinentium, unam volvit adjungi dodranti, ut essent XIX semiunciae, quo aestus Oceani quotidie tardius veniret, tardiusque recederet.

De ordinatione Feriarum Paschalium per Theophilum episcopum Caesarensem ac reliquorum episcoporum synodum.

Post resurrectionem vel ascensionem Domini Salvatoris, Apostoli quomodo pascha deberent observare, nihil ordinare potuerunt, quia dispersi erant per universum mundum, ad praedicandum occupati. Sed quacunque die decima quarta luna mense Martio fuisset, pascha celebrabant. Post transitum ergo de hoc mundo omnium apostolorum, per singulas provincias diversa tenebant jejunia. Nam Galli quacunque die octavo Kalendarum Aprilium fuisset, quando Christi resurrectio tradebatur, semper pascha celebrabant, in Italia vero alii XX dies jejunabant, alii septem. Orientales vero, sicut apostolos viderunt, ut supradictum est, decima quarta luna, mense Martis pascha tenebant. Cum ergo hae tales observationes per singulas provincias tenerentur, unde moeror erat sacerdotibus, eo quod a quibus una fides recte tenebatur, eorum dissentirent jejunia. Tunc papa Victor, Romanaeque urbis episcopus direxit auctoritatem ad Theophilum Caesariensis Palestinaeque antistitem, ut quomodo pascha recto jure a cunctis catholicis celebraretur ecclesiis, inibi fieret ordinatio, ubi Dominus et salvator mundi fuerat in carne versatus.

Always with these regulars and this reason, the annual days of the epacts being subtracted, you will find the fourteenth moon without error, and with those regulars the prescribed number of concurrents being joined. You will also find the fourteenth weekday of the moon, and thus the weekdays which remain of that week being computed, add also the age of the waxing moon to the individual days, and then you will most certainly find the place of the moon and its age at the same time.

These arguments, beloved companion, by my own labor / I have described for you; you say by what gift with me / You would strive today, while I, weary, give such things to you.

Exposition of the three-fourths [dodrans] and the half-ounce [semuncia] in the parts of hours, through which the ratio of the lunar light is computed among writers.

One hour always having been passed with a three-fourths and a half-ounce, that is, the space of one hour being divided into twenty-four half-ounces, because there are so many half-ounces in a full pound [libra], and again divide twenty-four into four, that is four times six, and three times six is called a three-fourths [dodrans], and once indeed a quadrant, and this is what he says of the three-fourths of one hour, that is, in three parts and eighteen half-ounces. Moreover, because also a half-ounce of the six remaining half-ounces, pertaining to the quadrant, he wished to be added to the three-fourths, so that there should be nineteen half-ounces, by which the tides of the Ocean might daily come later and recede later.

Concerning the ordering of the Paschal Weekdays by Theophilus, bishop of Caesarea, and the synod of the rest of the bishops.

After the resurrection or ascension of the Lord the Savior, the Apostles could ordain nothing as to how they ought to observe Easter, because they were dispersed through the whole world, occupied in preaching. But on whatever day the fourteenth moon should be in the month of March, they celebrated Easter. After the passing therefore of all the apostles from this world, they held various fasts through the individual provinces. For the Gauls, on whatever day it should be the eighth before the Kalends of April [March 25], when the resurrection of Christ was handed down, always celebrated Easter; but in Italy some fasted for twenty days, others for seven. Moreover the Orientals, as they saw from the apostles, as was said above, held Easter on the fourteenth moon, in the month of March. When therefore these such observations were held through the individual provinces, whence there was grief to the priests, for the reason that their fasts dissented from those by whom one faith was rightly held. Then Pope Victor, bishop of the city of Rome, directed authority to Theophilus, prelate of Caesarea of Palestine, so that where the ordering might be made as to how Easter might be celebrated by right law by all catholic churches, there where the Lord and Savior of the world had lived in the flesh.

Percepta itaque auctoritate, praedictus episcopus non solum de sua provincia, sed etiam de diversis regionibus omnes episcopos evocavit. Ubi cum illa multitudo sacerdotum convenit, tunc Theophilus episcopus protulit auctoritatem ad se missam Victoris papae, et quid sibi operis fuisset injunctum ostendit. Tunc pariter omnes dixerunt episcopi: Nisi prius quomodo mundus fuerit a principio investigatus, nihil potest de observantia paschae salubriter ordinari. Dixerunt ergo episcopi: Quem credimus factum fuisse in mundo primum, nisi Dominicum diem? Theophilus episcopus dixit: Probate quod dicitis. Responderunt episcopi: Secundum Scripturae auctoritatem, factum est vespere et mane dies primus.

Deinde secundus, tertius, quartus, quintus, sextus, septimus. In quo septimo requievit Deus ab omnibus operibus suis, quem diem Sabbatum appellavit. Ergo cum novissimum diem signet Sabbatum, quis potest esse primus, nisi Dominicus dies? Theophilus episcopus dixit: Ecce de die Dominico, quia primus sit probastis, de tempore enim quid dicitis? Quatuor enim mundi tempora accipiuntur: Ver, aestas, autumnus, hiems. Quod ergo tempus primum factum in mundo? Episcopi responderunt: Vernalis. Theophilus episcopus dixit: Probate quod dicitis. Et illi responderunt, Scriptum est: Germinet terra feni herbam secundum genus suum et lignum fructiferum, ferens fructum suum. Haec autem temporibus veris accipitur. Theophilus episcopus dixit: In quo loco caput mundi esse creditis? In principio temporis, an in medio tempore, aut in fine? Episcopi responderunt: In aequinoctio octavo Kalendarum Aprilium. Theophilus episcopus dixit: Probate quod dicitis. Et illi responderunt: Scriptum est quia fecit Deus lucem et vocavit Deus lucem diem, et fecit Deus tenebras, et vocavit tenebras noctem, et divisit inter lucem et tenebras aequas partes. Theophilus dixit: Ecce de die vel tempore probastis, de luna quid vobis videtur? Utrum crescentem ac jam plenam, an imminutam a Deo fuisse consecratam. Episcopi responderunt: Plenam. Et ille: Probate quod dicitis. Responderunt: Et fecit duo luminaria magna, et posuit ea in firmamento coeli ut luceant super terram. Luminare majus in inchoationem diei, luminare minus in inchoationem noctis, non poterat aliter nisi esset plena. Nunc ergo investigavimus quomodo in principio factus fuerit mundus, id est, die Dominico.

The authority therefore having been received, the aforesaid bishop called together all the bishops not only from his own province, but also from various regions. Where when that multitude of priests convened, then Bishop Theophilus brought forth the authority sent to him by Pope Victor, and showed what work had been enjoined upon him. Then all the bishops together said: Unless first it be investigated how the world was from the beginning, nothing can be salubriously ordained concerning the observance of Easter. The bishops therefore said: What day do we believe to have been made first in the world, if not the Lord's day [Sunday]? Bishop Theophilus said: Prove what you say. The bishops responded: According to the authority of Scripture, it was made evening and morning, the first day.

Then the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh. In which seventh day God rested from all his works, which day he called the Sabbath. Therefore since the Sabbath marks the last day, what can be the first, if not the Lord's day [Sunday]? Bishop Theophilus said: Behold, you have proved concerning the Lord's day that it is the first; but what do you say concerning the time? For four times of the world are accepted: Spring, summer, autumn, winter. What time therefore was made first in the world? The bishops responded: Spring. Bishop Theophilus said: Prove what you say. And they responded, It is written: Let the earth bring forth grass of fodder according to its kind and the fruit-bearing tree, bearing its fruit. Now this is accepted for the times of spring. Bishop Theophilus said: In what place do you believe the head of the world to be? In the beginning of time, or in the middle of time, or at the end? The bishops responded: In the equinox on the eighth day before the Kalends of April [March 25]. Bishop Theophilus said: Prove what you say. And they responded: It is written that God made the light and God called the light day, and he made the darkness, and he called the darkness night, and he divided between light and darkness in equal parts. Theophilus said: Behold, you have proved concerning the day or time; what does it seem to you concerning the moon? Whether waxing and already full, or diminished, was it consecrated by God? The bishops responded: Full. And he: Prove what you say. They responded: And he made two great luminaries, and he placed them in the firmament of heaven that they might shine over the earth. The greater luminary for the beginning of the day, the lesser luminary for the beginning of the night; it could not be otherwise unless it were full. Now therefore we have investigated how the world was made in the beginning, that is, on the Lord's day.

Verno tempore in aequinoctio, quod est octavo Kalendarum Aprilium, luna plena per ipsum tantummodo tempus et elementa resurgunt. Theophilus dixit: Nunc igitur agendum est de ordinatione, quomodo debeamus pascha tenere. Episcopi dixerunt: Nunquid potest dies Dominicus praeteriri, ut in eo Pascha minime celebretur, qui tot et talibus benedictionibus sanctificatus est? Theophilus dixit: Dicite ergo quibus et qualibus benedictionibus eum esse sanctificatum asseritis, ut scribere possimus. Episcopi dixerunt: Prima illi benedictio est, quia in ipso tenebrae sunt remotae, et lux apparuit. Secunda est illi benedictio, quod de terra Aegypti velut de tenebris peccatorum quasi per fontem baptismi per mare Rubrum populus fuisset liberatus. Tertia illi benedictio est, quia in eodem die coelestis cibus manna hominibus datus est. Quarta illa benedictio est, qua Moyses mandat ad populum: Sit vobis observatus dies primus et novissimus. Quinta illa benedictio est, ut in CXVII psalmo dicit: Circumdederunt me sicut apes, et exarserunt sicut ignis in spinis. De resurrectione autem Domini dicit: Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus, exsultemus et laetemur in ea, usque ad cornu altaris. Sexta illi benedictio est, quod in ipsa Dominus resurrexit. Vides ergo quia dies resurrectionis Dominicus singulariter in Pascha teneri possit. Theophilus dicit: De tempore autem ad Moysen mandatum est a Deo: Hic mensis erit vobis initium mensium, Pascha facite in eo. Omnes ergo triginta dies a Domino consecrati sunt. Episcopi dixerunt: Jam superius dedimus responsum, principium mundi esse aequinoctium octavo Kalendarum Aprilium. Et ab octavo Kalendarum Aprilium usque in octavum Kalendas Maias, legimus esse consecratos. Theophilus dixit: Ecce impium non est ut passio Dominica, tantum sacramenti mysterium, extra limitem excludatur? Passus namque Dominus ab undecimo Kalendarum Aprilium, qua nocte a Judaeis traditus est, et a septimo Kalendarum resurrexit, quomodo ergo tres dies extra terminum excluduntur? Omnes episcopi dixerunt: Nulla ratione fieri debet, ut tantum sacramentum extra limitem excludatur, sed hi tres dies intra terminum inducantur, et de subter retrahere constitutum est. Ergo in illa synodo ab undecimo Kalendarum Aprilium usque in undecimo Kalendarum Maiarum, Pascha debent servare, et nec ante nec postea cuicunque constitutum limitem transgredi liceat. Similiter et de luna praeceptum divinum teneatur. Mandatum est per Moysen: Sit vobis observatum a decima quarta luna usque XXI. Has ergo septem lunas similiter in Pascha tenendo constat fuisse, consecrata sunt. Quando ergo fit intra suum limitem ab undecimo Kalendarum aprilium usque in undecimo Kalendarum Maiarum, dies dominicus, et luna ex illis octava sanctificata, Pascha nobis visum est celebrare.

In the time of spring in the equinox, which is the eighth day before the Kalends of April, the moon is full through that time alone and the elements arise. Theophilus said: Now therefore action must be taken concerning the ordering, how we ought to hold Easter. The bishops said: Can the Lord's day be passed over, so that Easter is by no means celebrated in it, which has been sanctified by so many and such blessings? Theophilus said: Say therefore by what and what kind of blessings you assert it to have been sanctified, so that we may write it. The first blessing to it is because in it the darkness was removed, and light appeared. The second blessing to it is that from the land of Egypt as if from the darkness of sins, as if through the fountain of baptism through the Red Sea the people were liberated. The third blessing to it is because on the same day the celestial food manna was given to men. The fourth blessing is that which Moses mandates to the people: Let the first and the last day be observed by you. The fifth blessing is as he says in the 117th psalm: They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns. But concerning the resurrection of the Lord he says: This is the day which the Lord has made, let us exult and be glad in it, even unto the horn of the altar. The sixth blessing to it is that on it the Lord rose. You see therefore that the Lord's day of resurrection can uniquely be held for Easter. Theophilus says: But concerning the time it was mandated to Moses by God: This month shall be to you the beginning of months, perform Easter in it. Therefore all thirty days were consecrated by the Lord. The bishops said: We have already given the response above, that the beginning of the world is the equinox on the eighth before the Kalends of April. And from the eighth before the Kalends of April unto the eighth before the Kalends of May [April 24], we read that they are consecrated. Theophilus said: Behold, is it not impious that the Lord's passion, so great a mystery of the sacrament, should be excluded outside the limit? For the Lord suffered from the eleventh day before the Kalends of April [March 22], on which night he was betrayed by the Jews, and he rose from the seventh before the Kalends [March 26]; how then are three days excluded outside the term? All the bishops said: By no reason ought it to happen that so great a sacrament be excluded outside the limit, but let these three days be brought within the term, and it was constituted to withdraw from below. Therefore in that synod from the eleventh day before the Kalends of April [March 22] unto the eleventh day before the Kalends of May [April 21], they ought to observe Easter, and let it be lawful for no one to transgress the constituted limit either before or afterwards. Likewise let the divine precept concerning the moon be held. It was mandated through Moses: Let it be observed by you from the fourteenth moon until the 21st. Therefore it is established that these seven moons likewise in holding Easter were consecrated. When therefore the Lord's day occurs within its limit from the eleventh before the Kalends of April unto the eleventh before the Kalends of May, and the eighth moon from those has been sanctified, it has seemed good to us to celebrate Easter.

Omnis paschalis luna cujuscunque aetatis est, si detrahis ab ea septem, fiet tibi aetas lunae, quae fit in initio quadragesimae. Verbi gratia: Si decima quinta luna est paschalis, tolle de quindecim duodecim, et remanent centum et undecim. Tertia est luna in initio quadragesimae, eo anno quo decima quinta luna est die Dominico Paschae, et caetera similiter. Memento quod anno bissextili lunae Februarii mensis triginta dies, et tamen luna Martii mensis triginta dies habeat, sicut semper habet, ne paschalis lunae ratio vacillet.

EPISTOLA V

, AD ACCAM. *De principio Genesis.*

Dilectissimo ac Reverendissimo abbati Accae, humillimus famulorum Christi Beda, salutem!

De principio libri Genesis in quo mundi hujus creatio descripta est, multi multa dixere, multa posterii ingenii sui monimenta reliquere, sed praecipue, quantum nostra pusillitas ediscere potuit, Basilius Caesariensis, quem Eustathius interpres de Graeco fecit esse Latinum, Ambrosius Mediolanensis, Augustinus Hipponensis episcopus, quorum primus libris novem, secundus, vestigia ejus sequens, libris sex, tertius libris XII et rursum aliis duobus specialiter adversum Manichaeos descriptis, prolixa legentibus doctrinae salutaris fluentia manarunt, completo in eis promisso Veritatis quo dicebat: Qui credit in me, sicut ait Scriptura, flumina de ventre ejus fluent aquae vivae.

E quibus Augustinus etiam in libris Confessionum suarum, in libris quoque quos contra adversarium legis et prophetarum eximie composuit, sed et in aliis sparsim opusculis suis nonnullam ejusdem primordialis creaturae memoriam, cum expositione congrua fecit. Verum quia haec tam copiosa, tam sunt alta ut vix, nisi a locupletioribus, tot volumina acquiri, vix tam profunda nisi ab eruditioribus valeant perscrutari, placuit vestrae sanctitati id nobis officii injungere, ut de omnibus his velut de amoenissimis late florentis paradisi campis, quae infirmorum viderentur necessitati sufficere decerperemus.

Nec segnior in exsequendo, quae jubere es dignatus exstiti, quin potius statim perspectis Patrum voluminibus, collegi ex his, ac duobus in libellis distinxi, quae rudem adhuc possent instruere lectorem, quibus eruditus ad altiore disceret fortiolemque majorum ascendere lectionem. In quo opere sensum per omnia memoratorum, aliorumque aequae catholicorum Patrum, nunc ipsis eorum, nunc, breviandi causa, meis sermonibus, nunc tacitis eorum vocabulis, nunc commemoratis prout opportunitas locorum dictabat, ponere studebam.

Every paschal moon of whatever age it is, if you subtract seven from it, the age of the moon which happens in the beginning of Lent will be made for you. For example: If the fifteenth moon is paschal, take twelve from fifteen, and one hundred and eleven remain. The moon is the third in the beginning of Lent, in that year in which the fifteenth moon is on the Lord's day of Easter, and the rest likewise. Remember that in a bissextile year the moon of the month of February has thirty days, and yet the moon of the month of March has thirty days, as it always has, lest the ratio of the paschal moon should waver.

EPISTLE V

, TO ACCA. *On the beginning of Genesis.*

To the most beloved and most Reverend abbot Acca, the most humble of the servants of Christ, Bede, [sends] greeting!

Concerning the beginning of the book of Genesis, in which the creation of this world is described, many have said many things, and have left many monuments of their genius. But especially, as far as our littleness has been able to learn, Basil of Caesarea, whom the translator Eustathius made to be Latin from Greek; Ambrose of Milan; and Augustine, bishop of Hippo. Of these, the first in nine books, the second, following his footsteps, in six books, the third in twelve books, and again in two others specially written against the Manichaeans, poured forth long streams of saving doctrine for readers, the promise of Truth being fulfilled in them, where He said: "He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

From which Augustine also, in the books of his Confessions, and also in the books which he composed excellently against the adversary of the law and the prophets, but also scattered in other small works of his, has made some memory of the same primordial creation, with a suitable exposition. But because these works are so copious and so deep that such volumes can hardly be acquired except by the wealthier, and such profound things can hardly be examined except by the more learned, it has pleased your holiness to enjoin this duty upon us, that from all these, as if from the most pleasant fields of a broadly flowering paradise, we should pluck what might seem sufficient for the necessity of the weak.

Nor was I slow in executing what you deigned to command, but rather, having immediately looked through the volumes of the Fathers, I collected from them, and divided into two small books, those things which could instruct a still rude reader, by which, once learned, he might learn to ascend to the higher and stronger reading of the elders. In which work I studied to set down the sense throughout of the mentioned Fathers and of other equally Catholic Fathers, sometimes in their own words, sometimes, for the sake of brevity, in my own, sometimes with their names silent, sometimes mentioned as the opportunity of the places dictated.

Produxique opus usque dum ejectus Adam de paradiso voluptatis, exsilium vitae temporalis intravit: aliqua etiam de sequentibus sacrae historiae, si Deus voluerit, auxilio vestrae intercessionis comitante scripturus, dum primo librum sancti Esdrae prophetae ac sacerdotis, in quo Christi et Ecclesiae sacramenta sub figura solutae longae captivitatis, restaurati templi, reaedificatae sanctae civitatis, reductorum in Jerosolymam vasorum quae abducta, rescriptae legis Dei quae incensa fuerat, castigati ab uxoribus alienis populi et uno corde atque anima in Dei servitium conversi, ut propheta simul et historicus conscripsit, parumper perscrutatus fuero; et aliqua ex his quae commemoravi sacramentis apertiora studiosis Deo favente reddidero.

Bene vale, semper amantissime antistes, nostri memor in Domino!

EPISTOLA VI

AD EUMDEM ACCAM De templo Salomonis.

Hortatur nos Vas electionis, et Magister gentium, ad lectionem divinatorum eloquiorum, veridica voce contestans, quia quaecunque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum, spem habeamus. Ubi optime ad obtinendam spem coelestium bonorum, patientiam nobis habendam, et consolationem Scripturarum inspiciendam esse declarat.

Patientiam videlicet, ut ea quae occurrerint adversa, mente humili ac submissa, quasi a justo iudice, et pio patre irrogata flagella toleremus, sive ad virtutum gloriam, augmentumque meritorum, si iusti et innocentes ferimur, seu ad correctionem morum, si vitiis implicamur.

Consolationem vero Scripturarum, ut harum crebra meditatione ad memoriam revocemus, quantum illi summi Patres, et praeclara Ecclesiae lumina tenebrosae afflictionis saepe in vita praesenti pertulerint, quantum in futura vita gloriae cum divino merito pietatis et patientiae perceperint, quantum etiam in hac vita apud fideles omnes indefectivae laudis et claritatis reliquerint, dicente Scriptura: Memoria iusti cum laudibus (Prov. X). Et iterum: Corpora sanctorum in pace sepulta sunt, et nomina eorum vivent in generationes et generationes (Eccli. XLIV).

And I brought the work forward until Adam, cast out from the paradise of delight, entered the exile of temporal life. I am also about to write some things concerning the following parts of the sacred history, if God wills, with the help of your intercession accompanying, provided that I first examine for a little while the book of the holy prophet and priest Ezra, in which he, as both prophet and historian, wrote the sacraments of Christ and the Church under the figure of the released long captivity, the restored temple, the rebuilt holy city, the vessels brought back to Jerusalem which had been taken away, the law of God rewritten which had been burnt, the people corrected from foreign wives and turned with one heart and soul to the service of God; and I shall return some of these things which I have mentioned more open to the studious, God favoring.

Fare well, always most beloved bishop, mindful of us in the Lord!

EPISTLE VI

TO THE SAME ACCA. On the temple of Solomon.

The vessel of election and teacher of the Gentiles exhorts us to the reading of the divine oracles, witnessing with a truthful voice that "whatever things were written, were written for our instruction, so that through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures we might have hope." Where he excellently declares that patience must be held by us, and the consolation of the Scriptures must be looked into, for the obtaining of the hope of heavenly goods.

Namely, patience, so that we may tolerate those adversities which occur with a humble and submissive mind, as scourges inflicted by a just judge and a pious father, whether for the glory of virtues and the increase of merits, if we are struck being just and innocent, or for the correction of morals, if we are entangled in vices.

And the consolation of the Scriptures, so that by frequent meditation on these we may recall to memory how much those highest Fathers and illustrious lights of the Church often bore of dark affliction in this present life, how much glory they received in the future life with the divine merit of piety and patience, and how much of unfailing praise and clarity they left among all the faithful in this life; the Scripture saying: "The memory of the just is with praises" (Prov. 10). And again: "The bodies of the saints are buried in peace, and their names shall live from generation to generation" (Ecclus. 44).

Et apostolus Jacobus: Ecce beatificamus, inquit, eos qui sustinuerunt. Sufferentiam Job audistis, et finem Domini vidistis (Jac. V). Non autem frustra commemoratis justorum pressuris addidit: Et finem Domini vidistis, quia neque ille hinc sine flagello exiit, qui hic sine vitio vixit; quique ad sanandos infirmos, mortuosque suscitandos apparuit in mundo, ipse, ad praemonstrandum nobis exemplum patientiae, per infirmitatem mortis voluit redire de mundo.

Unde Psalmista cum dixisset: Deus noster Deus salvos faciendi (Psal. LXVII), mox admirando vel potius obstupescendo subjunxit: Et Domini Domini exitus mortis. Itaque per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum spem habeamus, etiam nos consolandi poststrarum afflictiones pressurarum, cum et ipsi in tribulatione patientes exstiterimus, et eorum actus ad mentem reduxerimus, qui nos et merito justitiae longe praecesserunt, et longe majora nobis adversitatum certamina tolerarunt.

Illi etenim propter justitiam qua excellenter eminebant, persecutiones saepe patiebantur injustorum, quatenus cum operatione justitiae coronam insuperabilis patientiae perciperent, et insuper cunctis se sequentibus, gloriosa perseverantia sua vestigia praefixa relinquerent. Nos autem saepius misericordia et provisione Conditoris nostri pro nostris castigamur erratibus, ut salubri compunctione ad conscientiam nostram redeuntes, puniamus sollicitis lacrymis diluentibus quod illecebris fallentibus ac negligentis admisimus; sicque, juvante Domino, correcti ad spem vitae, ad illorum qui innocentes afflicti sunt mereamur pertinere consortium.

Nam et hic in consolatione Scripturarum invenimus, quia benedixit Dominus omnes timentes se, pusillos cum majoribus, multasque nobis in domo Patris sui mansiones esse declaravit. Quarum nunc consolatione et te, dilectissime antistitem, praesentes rerum temporalium angores quotidie alleviare, atque ad videnda bona Domini in terra viventium sublimiter animari, non ambigo, utpote abundantem non tantum divinarum paginis litterarum, sed et piis earum expositionibus, quas veneranda Patrum nobis Scriptura reliquit.

Verum quia nova quemque nonnunquam amplius delectant, visum mihi est opusculum quod de factura templi Dei sequens magnorum vestigia tractatorum nuper allegorice condideram tuae sanctitati percurrendum mittere. Cujus lectioni intentus, quanto plura Christi et Ecclesiae sacramenta antiquis indita paginis inveneris, quanto ampliora ibi Dei dona, sive in praesenti nobis data, seu in futuro promissa perspexeris, tanto leviora credo, et minus curanda omnium labentium rerum, et adversa judicabis et prospera,

And the apostle James: "Behold, we count them blessed," he says, "who have endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord" (James 5). Moreover, not in vain did he add to the mentioned pressures of the just: "And you have seen the end of the Lord," because neither did He depart hence without a scourge, who lived here without fault; and He who appeared in the world to heal the sick and raise the dead, Himself, to show us an example of patience, willed to return from the world through the infirmity of death.

Whence the Psalmist, when he had said: "Our God is the God of salvation" (Psalm 67), soon added, wondering or rather being struck with awe: "And of the Lord, the Lord, is the issue of death." Therefore, through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures we have hope, also of our being consoled after the afflictions of our pressures, when we ourselves have been patient in tribulation and have brought back to mind the acts of those who both far preceded us in the merit of justice and far greater contests of adversities tolerated for us.

For they, on account of the justice in which they excellently shone, often suffered the persecutions of the unjust, so that with the work of justice they might receive the crown of insuperable patience, and moreover leave their fixed footsteps to all following them by their glorious perseverance. But we are more often chastised for our errors by the mercy and provision of our Creator, so that returning to our conscience with wholesome compunction, we may solicitously punish with diluting tears what we admitted with deceptive allurements and negligences; and thus, the Lord helping, corrected to the hope of life, we may deserve to pertain to the fellowship of those who were afflicted being innocent.

For even here in the consolation of the Scriptures we find that the Lord blessed all fearing Him, the small with the great, and declared that there are many mansions for us in the house of His Father. By whose consolation now I do not doubt that you also, most beloved of bishops, daily alleviate the present anguishes of temporal things, and are sublimely animated to see the goods of the Lord in the land of the living, as one abounding not only in the pages of the divine letters, but also in their pious expositions, which the venerable Scripture of the Fathers has left to us.

But because new things sometimes delight anyone more, it seemed good to me to send to your holiness for reading the little work which I had recently composed allegorically concerning the making of the temple of God, following the footsteps of the great treatisers. Intent upon the reading of which, by how much more you find the sacraments of Christ and the Church implanted in the ancient pages, by how much more you perceive there the gifts of God, whether given to us in the present or promised in the future, by so much lighter, I believe, and less to be cared for, you will judge all fleeting things, both adverse and prosperous;

juxta exemplum beati Joannis, qui ab imperatore nefando intra angustias unius parvisimae relegatus insulae, confestim a pio Conditore, per spiritum est, ad contemplanda infinita illa coelestium mansionum arcana, introductus; et ubi putatus est a deceptis hostibus amicorum hominum auxilio ac societate destitui, ibi amicorum angelorum meruit aspectu atque colloquio perfrui. A quibus edoctus, eo magis magisque illecebras saeculi et amaritudines didicit esse spernendas, quo sublimius illa speculabatur, quae pro magnitudine atque aeternitate sui longe amplius vel metuenda constat esse, vel amanda.

Bene valens semper, dilectissime, pro nobis intercede.

EPISTOLA VII

, AD NOTHELMUM PRESBYTERUM. *De XXX Quaestionibus.*

Dilectissimo fratri Nothelmo Beda, salutem!

Quae de libro Regum dilucidanda tibi, frater dilectissime, misisti, statim, prout potui, Domino juvante, explicare curavi, ea duntaxat distinctione, ut XXX ex his propositiones, quae graviores forte videbantur, brevibus distinctas capitulis, quo facilius possent inveniri, hoc tibi volumine comprehenderem. Caetera vero quae commistim annotasti nomina vel verba, quae facilius ac brevius solvi poterant, in aliis schedulis seorsum collecta, simul tuae fraternitati transmitterem.

Quamvis ipse noveram, plurima in eodem libro multo obscuriora, quam ea esse quae a me quaerenda judicasti. Sed et hoc non ignorabam, saepius fieri solere ut is qui obscuriora forte nonnulla jam bene intellexerat, qui videlicet haec in tractatibus magnorum auctorum sufficienter explanata repererat, ipse adhuc in quibusdam facilioribus sensu incertus perseveret, ac dubius, quae illi fortasse qui profundiora tractabant, quaesitu digna non ducebant. Fit etiam ut non omnia quae a Patribus scripta sunt, ab omnibus possint haberi, et ignorentur quaestiones Scripturarum a legentibus; non quod doctoribus expositae non sint, sed quod ipsae earum quaestiones vel non habeantur, vel habere non intelligantur quaerentibus; sicut in plurimis eorum, quorum a me responsa et petisti et accepisti, constat esse factitatum.

In quibus videlicet responsis, qui tuis petitionibus vestigia Patrum sequens, satisfacere studui, precor ut vicem debitam nostrae devotioni reddens, pro sospitate nostra et cordis et corporis, una cum fratribus qui illis in locis vobiscum Domino deserviunt, intercedere memineris. Sed et si quid de his quae scripsi aptius forte alicubi, quod facillime contingere potuit, expositum inveneris, nobis quoque ocus hoc destinare non graveris.

according to the example of the blessed John, who, being relegated by an impious emperor within the straits of one very small island, was immediately introduced by the pious Creator, through the spirit, to contemplate those infinite secrets of the heavenly mansions; and where he was thought by his deceived enemies to be destitute of the help and society of friendly men, there he deserved to enjoy the sight and colloquy of friendly angels. Taught by whom, he learned that the allurements and bitterness of the age are all the more to be despised, by how much more sublimely he beheld those things which, for their magnitude and eternity, it is certain are far more to be feared or loved.

Always faring well, most beloved, intercede for us.

EPISTLE VII

, TO NOTHELM THE PRIEST. *On the XXX Questions.*

To his most beloved brother Nothelm, Bede, [sends] greeting!

The things from the book of Kings which you sent to me to be elucidated, most beloved brother, I took care to explain immediately, as far as I could, the Lord helping; at least with this distinction, that I should include for you in this volume thirty of these propositions, which perhaps seemed weightier, distinguished into short chapters, so that they might be found more easily. But the other names or words which you noted mixed in, which could be solved more easily and briefly, I should transmit at the same time to your fraternity, collected separately in other schedules.

Although I myself knew that many things in the same book are much more obscure than those which you judged should be sought from me. But also this I was not ignorant of, that it is often wont to happen that he who had already well understood some perhaps more obscure things, who namely had found these sufficiently explained in the treatises of great authors, himself still perseveres uncertain and doubtful in certain easier senses, which those who were treating more profound things perhaps did not think worthy of being sought. It also happens that not all things which have been written by the Fathers can be had by all, and the questions of the Scriptures are ignored by readers; not because they have not been explained by teachers, but because either those questions of theirs are not had, or it is not understood that they are had by those seeking; as it is certain has happened in very many of those whose answers you both sought from me and received.

In which answers indeed, I who have studied to satisfy your petitions following the footsteps of the Fathers, pray that, rendering a due return for our devotion, you would remember to intercede for our safety both of heart and of body, together with the brothers who in those places serve the Lord with you. But also if you find anything concerning these things which I have written perhaps more aptly set forth elsewhere, which could very easily happen, do not be slow to direct this to us also quickly.

EPISTOLA VIII

, AD ACCAM EPISCOPUM, *In expositionem Evangelii secundum Marcum.*

Expositionem Evangelii secundum Marcum, opitulante ipsa evangelica gratia, scripturi, primo quae fuerit eidem Marco causa Evangelii scribendi, breviter insinuandum esse censuimus.

Cum Romanae urbi clarum veri Dei lumen praedicante beato Petro apostolo fuisset exortum, adeo sermo veritatis universorum mentes placito illustrabat auditu, ut quotidie audientibus eum nulla unquam satietas fieret. Unde neque auditio sola eis suffecit, sed Marcum discipulum ejus omnibus precibus obsecrantes orant, ut ea quae ille verbo praedicabat, ad perpetuam eorum commonitionem habendam Scripturae traderet, quo domi forisque in hujusmodi verbi meditationibus permanerent.

Nec prius ab obsecrando desistunt, quam quae oraverant impetrarent. Petrus vero, ut per Spiritum sanctum religioso se spoliatum comperit furto, delectatus est; et fidem eorum devotionemque per haec considerans, factum confirmavit, et in perpetuum legendam Scripturam Ecclesiis tradidit.

Clemens in sexto Dispositionum libro haec ita gesta esse describit. Cui simile dat testimonium etiam Hierapolites episcopus, nomine Papias, qui et hoc dicit, quod Petrus in prima Epistola sua, quam de urbe Roma scripsit, meminerit Marci, in qua tropice Romam Babyloniam nominarit, cum dicit: Salutat vos ea Ecclesia, quae in Babylone electa est, et Marcus filius meus.

Assumpto itaque Evangelio quod ipse confecerat, perrexit in Aegyptum, et primum Alexandriae Christum annuntians, constituit Ecclesiam tanta doctrina, et vitae continentia, ut omnes sectatores Christi ad exemplum sui cogeret.

Denique Philo, disertissimus Judaeorum, videns Alexandriae primam Ecclesiam adhuc Judaizantem, quasi in laudem gentis suae librum super eorum conversatione scripsit. Et quomodo Lucas enarrat Jerosolymae credentes omnia habuisse communia, sicut et ille quod Alexandriae sub Marco fieri doctore cernebat, memoriae tradidit.

EPISTLE VIII

, TO BISHOP ACCA, *In the exposition of the Gospel according to Mark.*

About to write the exposition of the Gospel according to Mark, with the help of the same evangelical grace, we have judged that first the cause for the same Mark of writing the Gospel must be briefly insinuated.

When the clear light of the true God had arisen in the city of Rome by the preaching of the blessed apostle Peter, the word of truth so illustrated the minds of all with a pleasing hearing, that no satiety was ever made to those hearing him daily. Whence neither hearing alone sufficed them, but beseeching with all prayers they entreat Mark his disciple, that those things which he [Peter] preached by word, he should commit to Scripture for their perpetual commonition, so that at home and abroad they might remain in meditations of a word of this kind.

Nor do they desist from beseeching before they obtained what they had prayed for. But Peter, when he discovered through the Holy Spirit that he was despoiled by a religious theft, was delighted; and considering their faith and devotion through these things, he confirmed the deed, and delivered the Scripture to the Churches to be read forever.

Clement, in the sixth book of the Dispositions, describes these things as having been so done. To whom also the bishop of Hierapolis, Papias by name, gives a similar testimony; who also says this, that Peter in his first Epistle, which he wrote from the city of Rome, remembered Mark, in which he tropically named Rome Babylon, when he says: "The Church which is in Babylon, elected together, salutes you, and so does Mark my son."

The Gospel therefore having been assumed which he himself had made, he went into Egypt, and first announcing Christ at Alexandria, he constituted the Church with such doctrine and continence of life, that he compelled all followers of Christ to the example of himself.

Finally Philo, the most eloquent of the Jews, seeing the first Church at Alexandria still Judaizing, wrote a book upon their conversation as if in praise of his own nation. And just as Luke narrates that those believing at Jerusalem had all things in common, so also he committed to memory what he saw happening at Alexandria under Mark as teacher.

Tradunt autem hunc natione Israelitica, et sacerdotali ortum prosapia, ac post passionem ac resurrectionem Domini salvatoris ad praedicationem apostolorum evangelica fide ac sacramentis imbutum, atque ex eorum fuisse numero de quibus scribit Lucas quia multa etiam turba sacerdotum obediebat fidei. Quapropter, utpote legalibus institutus edictis, optimum per omnia vivendi ordinem genti, quam ad fidem vocabat praemonstravit. Sed et canonicam Paschae observantiam, quae universis Christi Ecclesiis foret imitabilis, ostendit.

In cujus Evangelium tuo, dilectissime antistitem Acca, necnon et aliorum fratrum plurium commonitus hortatu, prout Dominus dedit, scripturi, maxime quae in Patrum venerabilium exemplis invenimus, hinc inde collecta ponere curabimus. Sed et nonnulla propria ad imitationem sensus eorum, ubi opportunum videbitur, interponemus. Lectoremque supplex obsecro, ut si haec nostra opuscula transcriptione digna duxerit, annotationem nominum eorum quae supra in margine apposita sunt, diligens scriptura conservet, quomodo in expositione Evangelii beati Lucae, quam ante annos plurimos, auxiliante Dei gratia, composuimus, constat esse factitatum. Orantem pro nobis sanctitatem tuam coelestis semper gratia protegat. Sed et hoc ante omnia cunctos qui haec forte lecturi sunt deprecor in Domino, ut pro meis et corporis et animi fragilitatibus, apud pium judicem intercessores existere dignentur.

EPISTOLA IX

, AD ACCAM. De Evangelio Lucae.

Domino beatissimo et nimium desiderantissimo Accae episcopo Beda humilis presbyter, in Domino aeterno salutem!

Mira vere est, et vera mire, doctoris egregii sententia, quia charitas omnia credit, omnia sperat. Datis namque ad me epistolis, ut aliqua tibi scribam rogare te dicis, et inter rogandum, necdumque meae consensionis accepto responso, quaesitis adhuc opusculis quasi jam acquisitis ac perfecte consummatis praefationis signaculum condis. Nondum fundamine jacto, non allata saltem materia, ipse quasi completo jam tanti laboris aedificio, claves quibus introitus muniatur dirigis, ut pudeat non cito subire opus quod cito subeundum, citius explendum fides amica praesumat.

Moreover, they hand down that he [Mark] was of the Israelite nation and sprung from a priestly lineage; and after the passion and resurrection of the Lord the Savior, he was imbued with the evangelical faith and sacraments by the preaching of the apostles, and was of their number of whom Luke writes that "also a great multitude of priests was obedient to the faith." Wherefore, as one instructed in the legal edicts, he showed beforehand the best order of living in all things to the nation which he was calling to the faith. But also he showed the canonical observance of Easter, which was to be imitable for all the Churches of Christ.

About to write on whose Gospel at your exhortation, most beloved of bishops Acca, and also that of many other brothers, as the Lord has given, we shall take care to set down things collected here and there, especially those which we have found in the examples of the venerable Fathers. But also we shall interpose some of our own in imitation of their sense, where it shall seem opportune. And I suppliantly beseech the reader, that if he should judge these little works of ours worthy of transcription, a diligent writing should preserve the annotation of their names which are placed above in the margin, just as it is certain was practiced in the exposition of the Gospel of the blessed Luke, which we composed many years ago, the grace of God helping. May celestial grace always protect your holiness praying for us. But also this before all things I entreat in the Lord of all who shall perhaps read these things, that for my fragilities of both body and mind, they would deign to exist as intercessors before the pious Judge.

EPISTLE IX

, TO ACCA. *On the Gospel of Luke.*

To the most blessed and very much desired Lord Bishop Acca, Bede, a humble priest, [sends] eternal greeting in the Lord!

Truly wonderful it is, and wonderfully true, the sentence of the illustrious teacher, that "charity believes all things, hopes all things." For having sent letters to me, you say that you ask me to write some things for you, and while asking, and the response of my consent not yet having been received, you set the seal of a preface to little works still sought as if already acquired and perfectly finished. The foundation not yet having been cast, the material not even brought, you yourself, as if the building of so great a labor were already completed, direct the keys by which the entrance may be fortified, so that it may be a shame not to enter quickly upon a work which a friendly faith presumes must be quickly entered upon, and more quickly fulfilled.

Non haec certe alia quam indubitata mutui fiducia facit amoris, quae de amico pectore (ut dictum est) omnia duntaxat quae fieri possunt credit, omnia sperat. Unde et ego mox lectis tuae dulcissimae sanctitatis paginulis injecti me operis labori supposui, in quo (ut innumera monasticae servitutis retinacula praeteream) ipse mihi dictator simul notarius et librarius existerem. Aggregatisque hinc inde quasi insignissimis ac dignissimis tanti muneris artificibus, opusculis Patrum, quid beatus Ambrosius, quid Augustinus, quid denique Gregorius vigilantissimus (juxta suum nomen) nostrae gentis apostolus, quid Hieronymus sacrae interpret historiae, quid caeteri Patres in beati Lucae verbis senserint, quid dixerint, diligentius inspicere satagi; mandatumque continuo schedulis, ut jussisti, vel ipsis eorum syllabis, vel certe meis, breviandi causa, sermonibus, ut videbatur, edidi. Quorum quia operosum erat vocabula interserere per singula, et quid a quo auctore sit dictum nominatim ostendere, commodum duxi minus e latere primas nominum litteras imprimere, perque has viritim ubi cujusque Patrum incipiat, ubi sermo quem transtuli desinat, intimare, sollicitus per omnia, ne majorum dicta furari, et haec quasi mea propria componere dicat.

Multumque obsecro, et per Dominum legentes obtestor, ut si qui forte nostra haec qualiacunque sunt opuscula transcriptione digna duxerint, memorata quoque nominum signa, ut in nostro exemplari reperiunt, affigere meminerint. Nonnulla etiam quae (ut verbis tuae sanctitatis loquar) mihi auctor lucis aperuit, proprii sudoris indicia, ubi opportunum videbitur, annexui. Qui in legis divinae meditatione etsi non (ut ipse scripsisti) dies noctesque pervigiles ducere sufficio, non parum tamen studii me in Scripturis impendisse non dubito, et ea solum quae mihi auctor lucis aperire dignatus est, non in hoc tantum opusculo, sed in omni prorsus lectione potuisse videre, id est, recte sentiendo dignoscere.

Quod vero ais movere quosdam quare in Apocalypsis nova interpretatione Matthaum leoni, Marcum homini assignarim, intueri debuerant quicumque illi sunt quos hoc movet, quod non hoc mea nova, sed antiqua patrum explanatione traditum dixi. Neque enim mihi a meipso ita visum; sed ita a beato Augustino expositum fuisse memoravi, et paucis etiam unde hoc affirmaret adjunxi. Cujus non ab re est si ipsa quoque verba ponentes, quid de evangelistis vel typis eorum animalibus senserit ostendamus, quibus et illud nostrum opus ab injusta vituperatione salvetur, et hoc praeposita tanti doctoris auctoritate firmetur.

Certainly nothing other than the indubitable mutual confidence of love does these things, which (as has been said) believes from a friendly heart at least all things which can be done, and hopes all things. Whence also I, as soon as the little pages of your sweetest holiness were read, submitted myself to the labor of the enjoined work, in which (to pass over the innumerable restraints of monastic servitude) I myself existed for myself at once dictator, notary, and librarian. And the little works of the Fathers having been aggregated from here and there, as if most distinguished and most worthy craftsmen of so great a gift, I was busy to look into more diligently what the blessed Ambrose, what Augustine, what finally the most vigilant Gregory (according to his name), the apostle of our nation, what Jerome, the interpreter of sacred history, what the other Fathers felt and said in the words of the blessed Luke; and I published it continuously committed to schedules, as you commanded, either in their very syllables, or certainly in my own words for the sake of brevity, as it seemed [good]. Of whom, because it was laborious to intersperse their names through each [passage], and to show by name what was said by which author, I judged it convenient to print from afar in the side the first letters of their names, and through these to intimate to each one where each of the Fathers begins, and where the speech which I have translated ends, anxious through all things, lest anyone should say that I steal the sayings of the elders and compose these as if my own.

And much I beseech, and through the Lord I adjure those reading, that if any should perhaps judge these little works of ours, such as they are, worthy of transcription, they should remember to affix also the mentioned signs of names, as they find in our exemplar. Also some things which (to speak in the words of your holiness) the Author of light opened to me, signs of my own sweat, I have annexed where it seemed opportune. I who, although I am not sufficient to spend watchful days and nights (as you yourself wrote) in the meditation of the divine law, yet I do not doubt that I have spent not a little study in the Scriptures, and have been able to see those things alone which the Author of light deigned to open to me, not only in this little work, but in every reading whatsoever, that is, to discern by feeling rightly.

But as to what you say moves certain people, why in the new interpretation of the Apocalypse I assigned Matthew to the lion, [and] Mark to the man, whoever those are whom this moves, they ought to have considered that I said this not as my own new thing, but as handed down from the ancient explanation of the Fathers. For neither did it seem so to me from myself; but I recalled that it had been so explained by the blessed Augustine, and I even added a few things whence he might affirm this. Of whom it is not out of place if, placing also his very words, we show what he felt concerning the evangelists or their animal types, by which both that work of ours may be saved from unjust vituperation, and this [work] may be confirmed by the prefixed authority of so great a teacher.

Cum ergo multa pulchre et eximie de evangelistis in libro de Consensu eorum primo praemisisset, jungit inter caetera dicens: Et quamvis singuli suum quemdam narrandi ordinem tenuisse videantur, non tamen unusquisque eorum velut alterius praecedentis ignarus voluisse scribere reperitur, vel ignorata praetermisisse quae scripsisse alius invenitur, sed sicut unicuique inspiratum est, non superfluum cooperationem sui laboris adjunxit. Nam Matthaeus suscepisse intelligitur incarnationem Domini secundum stirpem regiam, et pleraque secundum hominum praesentem vitam facta et dicta ejus. Marcus enim subsequutus tanquam pedissequus et brevior ejus videtur. Cum solo quippe Joanne nihil dixit, solus ipse perpauca, cum solo Luca pauciora, cum Matthaeo vero plurima, et multa pene totidem atque ipse verbis sive cum solo sive cum caeteris consonante.

Lucas autem circa sacerdotalem Domini stirpem atque personam magis occupatus apparet. Nam et ad ipsum David non regium stemma secutus ascendit, sed per eos qui reges non fuerunt, exit ad Nathan filium David, qui nec ipse rex fuit. Non sicut Matthaeus, qui per Salomonem regem descendens caeteros etiam reges ex ordine persecutus est, servans in eis (de quo postea loquimur) mysticum numerum. Dominus enim Jesus Christus, unus verus rex et unus verus sacerdos, illud ad regendos nos, hoc ad expiandos, has duas personas apud Patres singillatim commendatas suam figuram egisse declaravit.

Secundum hominem quippe Christus (inquit) et rex et sacerdos effectus est. Cui dedit Deus sedem David patris sui ut, regni ejus non esset finis, et esset ad interpellandum pro nobis mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Jesus. Non autem habuit tanquam breviatorem conjunctum Lucas, sicut Marcum Matthaeus, et hoc forte non sine aliquo sacramento, quia regum est non esse sine comitum obsequio. Unde ille qui regiam personam Christi narrandam susceperat, habuit sibi tanquam comitem adjunctum qui sua vestigia quodammodo sequeretur.

Sacerdos autem quoniam in sancta sanctorum solus intrabat, propterea Lucas (cujus circa sacerdotium Christi erat intentio) non habuit tanquam socium subsequenter, qui suam narrationem quodammodo breviaret. Tres tamen isti evangelistae in his rebus maxime diversati sunt, quas Christus per humanam carnem temporaliter gessit. Porro autem Joannes ipsam maxime divinitatem Domini qua Patri est aequalis, intendit, eamque praecipue suo Evangelio quantum inter homines sufficere credidit, commendare curavit.

When therefore he had premised many things beautifully and excellently concerning the evangelists in the first book of *On the Harmony of them*, he joins among other things, saying: "And although they each seem to have held a certain order of their own in narrating, yet each one of them is not found to have willed to write as if ignorant of the other preceding, or to have omitted things ignored which another is found to have written, but just as it was inspired to each, he added the not superfluous cooperation of his labor. For Matthew is understood to have undertaken the incarnation of the Lord according to the royal lineage, and most things done and said by Him according to the present life of men. For Mark follows as if his attendant and abbreviator. Since indeed with John alone he said nothing, he himself alone [said] very few things, with Luke alone fewer, but with Matthew very many, and many almost with as many words as he, whether harmonizing with him alone or with the others.

But Luke appears more occupied about the priestly lineage and person of the Lord. For he even ascends to David himself not having followed the royal stem, but through those who were not kings, he goes out to Nathan the son of David, who himself was not king. Not as Matthew, who descending through Solomon the king also followed the other kings in order, preserving in them (of which we speak later) a mystic number. For the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true king and the one true priest, declared that these two persons commended individually among the Fathers acted as His figure, the one for ruling us, the other for expiating [us].

"According to the man indeed," he says, "Christ was made both king and priest. To whom God gave the seat of David His father so that there should be no end of His kingdom, and He should be the mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Moreover, Luke did not have an abbreviator joined as a fellow, as Mark [was to] Matthew, and this perhaps not without some sacrament, because it is of kings not to be without the service of companions. Whence he who had undertaken to narrate the royal person of Christ had as if a companion joined to himself who should follow his footsteps in a certain way.

But the priest, since he entered alone into the Holy of Holies, therefore Luke (whose intention was about the priesthood of Christ) did not have a following companion as it were, who should abbreviate his narration in a certain way. Yet these three evangelists were mostly conversant in those things which Christ did temporally through human flesh. Furthermore, John intended the very divinity of the Lord by which He is equal to the Father, and took care to commend it especially in his Gospel as much as he believed to suffice among men.

Itaque longe a tribus istis superius fertur, ita ut hos videas quodammodo in terra cum Christo homine conversari, illum autem transcendisse nebulam qua tegitur omnis terra, et pervenisse ad liquidum coelum, unde acie mentis acutissima atque firmissima videret in principio verbum Domini apud Deum, per quod facta sunt omnia, et ipsum agnosceret carnem factum ut habitaret in nobis.

Item post aliquanta: Unde mihi videntur, inquit, qui ex Apocalypsi illa quatuor animalia ad intelligendos quatuor evangelistas interpretati sunt, probabilius aliquid attendisse illi qui leonem in Matthaeo, hominem in Marco, vitulum in Luca, aquilam in Joanne intellexerunt, quam illi qui hominem Matthaeo, aquilam Marco, leonem Joanni tribuerunt. De principiis enim librorum quamdam conjecturam capere voluerunt, non de tota intentione evangelistarum, quae magis fuerat perscrutanda. Multo enim congruentius ille qui regiam Christi personam maxime commendavit, per leonem significatus accipitur. Unde et in Apocalypsi cum ipsa tribu regia leo commemoratus est, ubi dictum est: Vicit leo de tribu Juda. Secundum Matthaeum enim et magi narrantur venisse ab Oriente ad regem quaerendum, et adorandum, qui eis per stellam natus apparuit, et ipse rex Herodes regem Christum formidat infantem, atque ut eum possit occidere tot parvulos necat.

Quat autem per vitulum Lucas significatus sit propter maximam victimam sacerdotis, neutri dubitaverunt. Ibi enim a sacerdote Zacharia incipit sermo narrantis. Ibi cognatio Mariae et Elisabeth commemoratur. Ibi sacramenta primi sacerdotii in infante Christo impleta narrantur. Et quaecunque alia possunt diligenter adverti, quibus appareat Lucas intentionem circa personam sacerdotis habuisse.

Marcus vero qui neque stirpem regiam neque sacerdotalem vel cognationem vel consecrationem narrare voluit, et tamen in eis versatus ostenditur quae homo Christus operatus est, tantum hominis figuram in illis quatuor animalibus significasse videtur. Haec autem animalia tria, sive leo, sive homo, sive vitulus, in terra gradiuntur. Unde isti tres evangelistae in his maxime occupati sunt quae Christus in carne operatus est, et quae praecepta mortalis vitae exercendae carnem portantibus tradidit. At vero Joannes supra nubila infirmitatis humanae velut aquila volat, et lucem incommutabilis veritatis acutissimis atque firmis-simis oculis cordis intuetur.

Haec beati Augustini pauca de pluribus excerpta testimonia ad repellendam querulorum calumniam epistolae praefationis inserui, quae et prisco nostro operi (ut dictum est) tutelam defensionis exhibeant, et praesenti signaculum non ignobile praefigant. Orantem pro nobis sanctam paternitatem vestram gratia superni adjutoris conservare atque ad defensionem Ecclesiae suae sanctae semper corroborare dignetur.

Therefore he is carried far higher than those three, so that you may see those in a certain way conversing on earth with the man Christ, but him to have transcended the cloud by which all the earth is covered, and to have arrived at the liquid heaven, whence he might see with a most acute and most firm edge of mind in the beginning the Word of the Lord with God, through which all things were made, and should recognize Him made flesh so that He might dwell in us."

Likewise after some things: "Whence to me they seem," he says, "who interpreted those four animals from that Apocalypse for understanding the four evangelists, to have attended to something more probable who understood the lion in Matthew, the man in Mark, the calf in Luke, the eagle in John, than those who attributed the man to Matthew, the eagle to Mark, the lion to John. For they willed to take a certain conjecture from the beginnings of the books, not from the whole intention of the evangelists, which had more to be searched. For much more congruously he who most commended the royal person of Christ is accepted as signified by the lion. Whence also in the Apocalypse the lion was commemorated with the royal tribe itself, where it was said: 'The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered.' For according to Matthew both the magi are narrated to have come from the East to seek and adore the king, who appeared born to them through a star, and King Herod himself fears the infant King Christ, and so that he might be able to kill Him he kills so many little ones.

That however Luke was signified by the calf on account of the greatest victim of the priest, neither have doubted. For there the speech of the narrator begins from the priest Zechariah. There the kinship of Mary and Elizabeth is commemorated. There the sacraments of the first priesthood are narrated as fulfilled in the infant Christ. And whatever other things can be diligently observed, by which it may appear that Luke had his intention about the person of the priest.

Mark indeed, who willed to narrate neither the royal nor the priestly lineage or kinship or consecration, and yet is shown conversant in those things which the man Christ wrought, seems to have signified only the figure of the man in those four animals. Moreover these three animals, whether the lion, or the man, or the calf, walk on the earth. Whence these three evangelists were mostly occupied in those things which Christ wrought in the flesh, and what precepts for exercising mortal life He delivered to those bearing flesh. But truly John flies like an eagle above the clouds of human infirmity, and beholds the light of incommutable truth with most acute and most firm eyes of the heart."

These few testimonies of the blessed Augustine, excerpted from many, I have inserted in the letter of preface to repel the calumny of the querulous, which may both exhibit a protection of defense to our ancient work (as was said) and may prefix a not ignoble seal to the present [one]. May the grace of the supernal Helper deign to preserve your holy fatherhood praying for us and always to corroborate it for the defense of His holy Church.

EPISTOLA X

, AD ACCAM. *De expositione Actuum.*

Domino in Christo desideratissimo et vere beatissimo Accae episcopo, Beda, perpetuam in Domino salutem.

Accepi creberrimas beatitudinis tuae litteras, quibus me commonere dignatus es, ne mentis acumen inerti otio torpere et obdormire permittam, sed meditandis scrutandisque quotidie Scripturis vigil atque indefessus insistam, et post expositionem Apocalypseos sancti evangelistae Joannis, quam fratris nostri Eusebii rogatu tribus libris complexam, mox tibi transcribendam destinavi, in explanationem quoque beati evangelistae Lucae, juxta vestigia Patrum, quantum valeam sudoris impendam. Quod quia facere necdum potui, et operis, videlicet, immensitate perterritus, et obstrepentium causarum (quas tu melius nosti) necessitate praepeditus, ne tamen tuae postulationis contemneretur auctoritas, quod interim potui, feci. Misi enim opusculum in Actus apostolorum, quod ante non multos dies editum, et velocissime quantum tempus dederat, ne tua sacrosancta voluntas impediretur, emendatum membranulis indideram. Ubi ea quae vel mystice gesta vel obscurius dicta videbantur, prout potui dilucidare tentavi. In quo me opusculo cum alii plurimi fidei catholicae scriptores, tum maxime jovit Arator sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae subdiaconus, qui ipsum ex ordine librum heroico carmine percurrens, nonnullos in eodem metro allegoriae flores admiscuit: occasionem mihi tribuens, vel alia ex his colligendi, vel eadem planius exponendi. Actus igitur apostolorum (ut beatus Hieronymus ait) nudam quidem sonare videntur historiam, et nascentis Ecclesiae infantiam texere; sed si noverimus eorum scriptorem Lucam esse medicum, cujus laus est in Evangelio, animadvertimus pariter omnia verba illius animae languentis esse medicinam. E quibus nos aliqua juxta modulum nostrae parvitatis exposituri, primo admonere curabimus ipsum evangelistam Lucam, ut dictum est, juxta traditionem veterum Ecclesiae tractatorum, medicinae artis fuisse peritissimum, et magis Graecas litteras scivisse quam Hebraeas.

LETTER X

, *TO ACCA. On the exposition of Acts.*

To the most desired and truly most blessed bishop Acca in Christ, Bede [sends] eternal salvation in the Lord.

I have received your most frequent letters, your blessedness, in which you have deigned to advise me not to allow the sharpness of my mind to grow dull and fall asleep in sluggish leisure, but to insist as one watchful and tireless in daily meditating and searching the Scriptures, and after the exposition of the Apocalypse of the holy evangelist John, which at the request of our brother Eusebius I have comprised in three books and have soon destined to be transcribed for you, to spend also as much sweat as I am able in the explanation of the blessed evangelist Luke, following the footsteps of the Fathers. Because I have not yet been able to do this, both terrified by the immensity of the work, and hindered by the necessity of obstructing causes (which you know better), yet lest the authority of your request should be despised, I have done what I could in the meantime. For I have sent a little work on the Acts of the Apostles, which, published not many days ago and corrected as quickly as time allowed, lest your most holy will should be hindered, I had committed to parchments. Wherein I have attempted to elucidate those things which seemed either mystically done or more obscurely said, as I was able. In which little work, as many other writers of the Catholic faith have helped me, so especially has Arator, subdeacon of the holy Roman Church, who running through the same book in order in heroic verse, mixed in some flowers of allegory in the same meter: providing me the occasion either of collecting other things from these, or of explaining the same more plainly. The Acts of the Apostles therefore (as the blessed Jerome says) seem indeed to sound a bare history, and to weave the infancy of the nascent Church; but if we know that their writer was Luke the physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, we perceive likewise that all his words are medicine for a languishing soul. From which we, about to expose some things according to the measure of our smallness, will first take care to advise that the evangelist Luke himself, as was said, according to the tradition of the ancient treaters of the Church, was most skilled in the art of medicine, and knew Greek letters more than Hebrew.

Unde sermo ejus tam in Evangelio quam in Actibus apostolorum, compitior est, et saecularium redolet eloquentiam, magisque testimoniis Graecis utitur quam Hebraeis. Ex quo accidit, quod maxime miror, et propter ingenii tarditatem vehementissimo stupore percussus nescio perscrutari, qua ratione cum in Hebraica veritate a diluvio usque ad Abraham decem generationes inveniantur, ipse Lucas qui Spiritu sancto calamum regente nullatenus falsum scribere potuit, undecim generationes juxta septuaginta Interpretes adjecto Cainam, in Evangelio ponere maluerit. Ideo autem in Evangelii prooemio dicit sibi visum esse ex ordine diligenter scribere, quoniam hoc multi conati sunt. Sed eos debemus accipere, quorum in Ecclesia multa exstat auctoritas, quia id quod conati sunt, implere minime potuerunt. Iste autem non solum usque ad resurrectionem assumptionemque Domini perduxit narrationem suam, ut in quatuor auctoribus evangelicae Scripturae dignum suo labore haberet locum, verum etiam deinceps quae per apostolos gesta sunt, quae sufficere credidit ad aedificandam fidem legentium vel audientium, ita scripsit, ut solus ejus liber fide dignus haberetur in Ecclesia de apostolorum Actibus narrantis, reprobatis omnibus qui non ea fide qua oportuit facta dictaque apostolorum scribere ausi sunt. Eo quippe tempore scripserunt Marcus et Lucas, quo non solum ab Ecclesia Christi, verum etiam ab ipsis adhuc in carne manentibus apostolis probari potuerunt. Nam Domini nutu gerebatur ut non solum apostoli qui viderant, sed et discipuli qui auditu didicerant, facta Christi dictaque conscriberent, quatenus sequentibus Ecclesiae doctoribus ea quae non viderant praedicandi scribendique fiducia pariter et auctoritas praeberetur. Actus vero apostolorum, et praecipue beati Pauli, cujus individuus in peregrinando comes exstitit beatus Lucas, sicut videbat ipse, composuit. Quorum contextus omnis, quantum ex aliorum historiis animadvertere potuimus, continet annos viginti octo, id est, Tiberii Caesaris annos sex, Caii annos quatuor, Claudii annos quatuordecim. Cujus principis Petrus apostolus Romam venit, et in quarto anno fame facta, octavo anno sunt Judaei Roma expulsi. Item Neronis quatuor annos, quorum duos extremos beatus Paulus Romae in libera mansit custodia. Ex quo intelligimus in eadem urbe librum esse compositum. Itemque, ut per Judaeorum quoque reges eadem tempora discernam, Herodes, Philippus, et Lysanias Tetrarchae praefuerunt annis sex; Herodes rex qui et Agrippa qui Caesaraeae periit, annos septem; Agrippa filius ejus, sub quo Paulus Romam missus est, annos quindecim. Cujus restant usque ad subversionem Jerosolymorum anni duodecim. Haec distinctius exsecutus sum, ut cum ejusdem libelli revolas historiam, quid sub quo tempore gestum sit evidenter agnoscere possis.

Whence his speech, both in the Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, is more polished, and savors of secular eloquence, and he uses Greek testimonies more than Hebrew. From which it happens, what I most wonder at, and struck with most vehement stupor on account of the slowness of my wit I know not how to search out, by what reason when ten generations are found in the Hebrew truth from the flood until Abraham, Luke himself, who with the Holy Spirit ruling his pen could in no way write false, preferred to place eleven generations in the Gospel according to the seventy Interpreters, with Cainan added. But he says in the prooemium of the Gospel that it seemed to him to write diligently in order, because many have attempted this. But we ought to accept those whose authority is great in the Church, because they were least able to fulfill that which they attempted. But he not only led his narration as far as the resurrection and assumption of the Lord, so that he might have a place worthy of his labor among the four authors of the evangelical Scripture, but also thereafter he so wrote those things which were done by the apostles, which he believed to suffice for building the faith of those reading or hearing, that his book alone was held worthy of faith in the Church as the narrator concerning the Acts of the Apostles, all those being reprobated who dared to write the deeds and words of the apostles not with that faith which was fitting. For Mark and Luke wrote at that time when they could be approved not only by the Church of Christ, but even by the apostles still remaining in the flesh. For it was governed by the nod of the Lord that not only the apostles who had seen, but also the disciples who had learned by hearing, should write the deeds and words of Christ, so that equal confidence and authority of preaching and writing might be provided to the following teachers of the Church for those things which they had not seen. But he composed the Acts of the Apostles, and especially of the blessed Paul, of whom the blessed Luke existed as an inseparable companion in journeying, just as he himself saw. The whole context of which, as much as we have been able to perceive from the histories of others, contains twenty-eight years, that is, six years of Tiberius Caesar, four years of Gaius, fourteen years of Claudius. Under which prince the apostle Peter came to Rome, and in the fourth year, a famine having occurred, in the eighth year the Jews were expelled from Rome. Likewise four years of Nero, of which the two last the blessed Paul remained at Rome in free custody. From which we understand that the book was composed in the same city. And likewise, that I may discern the same times through the kings of the Jews also, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias the Tetrarchs presided for six years; King Herod who is also Agrippa who perished at Caesarea, seven years; Agrippa his son, under whom Paul was sent to Rome, fifteen years. Of whom twelve years remain until the subversion of Jerusalem. These things I have followed out more distinctly, so that when you revolve the history of the same little book, you may be able to recognize evidently what was done under what time.

Misi autem et explanatiunculam epistolae beatissimi evangelistae Joannis, cujus maximam partem ex homiliis sancti Augustini latissima suavitate diffusis compendiosus brevior excerpsi. Nonnulla vero in calce etiam proprio sudore subtexui. In quo utroque opere si quid utilitatis inveneris, Dei donis ascribe. Si quid superflui, meae fragilitati compatere. Intercedentem pro nobis beatitudinem vestram Dominus omnipotens ad regimen. Ecclesiae perpetuo conservet incolumem.

EPISTOLA XI.

Praefatio de Retractatione Actuum.

Scimus eximium doctorem ac pontificem Augustinum, cum esset senior, libros Retractationum in quaedam sua opuscula, quae juvenis condiderat, fecisse, ut quae ex tempore melius, crebro ex lectionis usu ac munere supernae largitatis didicerat, non ut de prisca confusus imperitia, sed ut de suo magis profectu gavisus monimentis inderet litterarum, ac posteris legenda relinqueret.

Cujus industriam nobis quoque pro modulo nostro placuit imitari, ut post expositionem Actuum apostolorum, quam ante annos plures rogatu venerabilis episcopi Accae, quanta valuimus solertia, conscripsimus, nunc in idem volumen brevem retractationis libellum condamus, studio maxime vel addendi quae minus dicta, vel emendandi quae secus quam placuit dicta videbantur.

In quo etiam quaedam quae in Graeco sive aliter, seu plus aut minus posita vidimus, breviter commemorare curavimus. Quae utrum negligentia interpretis omissa vel aliter dicta, an incuria librariorum sint depravata sive relicta, nondum scire potuimus. Namque Graecum exemplar fuisse falsatum, suspicari non audeo; unde lectorem admoneo, ut haec ubicunque fecerimus, gratia eruditionis legat, non in suo tamen volumine velut emendatos interserat, nisi forte ea in Latino Codice suae editionis antiquitus sic interpretata repererit.

Nam et Hieronymus pleraque testimonia Veteris Instrumenti, ut Hebraica veritas habet, edocet; nec tamen haec ita in nostris Codicibus aut ipse interpretari, aut nos emendare voluit.

Moreover, I have also sent a little explanation of the epistle of the most blessed evangelist John, the greatest part of which I, a compendious abbreviator, have excerpted from the homilies of Saint Augustine diffused with the widest sweetness. But some things I have also subjoined in the end by my own sweat. In which both works if you find anything of utility, ascribe it to the gifts of God. If anything superfluous, have compassion on my fragility. May the almighty Lord preserve your blessedness interceding for us in safety forever for the governance of the Church.

LETTER XI.

Preface concerning the Retraction of Acts.

We know that the eminent teacher and bishop Augustine, when he was older, made books of Retractions on certain of his little works which he had produced as a young man, so that those things which he had learned better over time, frequently from the use of reading and by the gift of supernal bounty, he might commit to the monuments of letters and leave to be read by posterity, not as if confused by former unskillfulness, but as if rejoicing more in his own progress.

It has pleased us also to imitate his industry according to our measure, so that after the exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, which we wrote several years ago at the request of the venerable bishop Acca with what skill we were able, we may now produce in the same volume a short little book of retraction, chiefly with the study either of adding those things which were less said, or of correcting those things which seemed said otherwise than was pleasing.

In which we have also taken care to commemorate briefly certain things which we saw placed in the Greek either otherwise, or more or less. Whether these things were omitted or said otherwise by the negligence of the interpreter, or depraved or left by the carelessness of the librarians, we have not yet been able to know. For I do not dare to suspect that the Greek exemplar was falsified; whence I advise the reader that wherever we have done these things, he should read them for the sake of erudition, yet not intersperse them in his volume as if corrected, unless perhaps he should find those things so interpreted from of old in the Latin Codex of his edition.

For Jerome also teaches very many testimonies of the Old Instrument as the Hebrew truth has them; nor yet did he himself will to interpret these things thus in our Codices, nor did he will us to correct them.

Verbi gratia: Non aspiciam hominem ultra, et habitatorem, quievit generatio mea; et: Erit sepulcrum ejus gloriosum; et: A finibus terrae laudes audivimus; et: Omnis qui occiderit Cain, septuplum punietur: dicit in Hebraeo haberi: Septem vindictas absolvet; et: Ab alis terrae; et: Requies ejus gloriosa; et: Habitatorem quietis, generatio mea ablata est, quae sic apud Hebraeos haberi lectorem voluit, eruditionis solummodo, non autem emendandi gratia, nosse

EPISTOLA XII

, AD EUSEBIUM. *Dilectissimo fratri Eusebio Beda salutem.*

Apocalypsis sancti Joannis, in qua bella et incendia intestina Ecclesiae suae Deus verbis figurisque revelare dignatus est, septem mihi (frater Eusebi) videtur esse divisa periochis.

In quarum prima, post praefationem copiosam, ad roborandam fidem fragilium, ac Domini passiones, et posteriores glorias enumeratas, similem Filio hominis Ecclesia cernit indutum: qui commemoratis his quae specialiter in septem Asiae gesta vel gerenda sint Ecclesiis luctas describit et palmas. Ubi sexto loco consulto subjiciendos Ecclesiae Judaeos, et tentationem orbis universi futuram, seque promisit cito esse venturum: septimo autem tepidam ponit Laodiceam: Filius enim hominis veniens, putas inveniet fidem in terra?

In secunda autem periocha, descriptis in sede Dei quatuor animalibus, et viginti quatuor senioribus, agnum videt, apertis septem libri signati sigillis, conflictus et triumphos Ecclesiae reserare futuros. Ubi juxta consuetudinem libri istius, usque ad sextum numerum ordinem custodit; et praetermisso septimo recapitulat, ac duas narrationes, quasi ordinem secutus, septimo concludit. Sed et ipsa recapitulatio pro locis intelligenda est. Aliquando enim ab origine passionis, aliquando a medio tempore, aliquando de sola ipsa novissima pressura, aut non multo ante dicturus recapitulat. Illud tamen fixum servat, ut a sexto recapitulet.

Tertia vero periocha, sub specie septem angelorum tuba canentium, varios Ecclesiae describit eventus.

For example: "I shall not behold man further, and the inhabitant, my generation has rested"; and: "His sepulcher shall be glorious"; and: "From the ends of the earth we have heard praises"; and: "Every one who shall kill Cain shall be punished sevenfold": he says that in the Hebrew it is had: "Seven vengeance he shall absolve"; and: "From the wings of the earth"; and: "His rest [shall be] glorious"; and: "The inhabitant of rest, my generation is taken away," which things he willed the reader to know to be thus had among the Hebrews for the sake of erudition only, not however for the sake of correcting.

LETTER XII

, *TO EUSEBIUS. To the most beloved brother Eusebius, Bede [sends] salvation.*

The Apocalypse of Saint John, in which God deigned to reveal the internal wars and fires of His Church with words and figures, seems to me (brother Eusebius) to be divided into seven periods.

In the first of which, after a copious preface for strengthening the faith of the fragile, and the passions of the Lord and subsequent glories being enumerated, the Church beholds [one] similar to the Son of man clothed: who, those things having been commemorated which are specially done or to be done in the seven Churches of Asia, describes the struggles and the palms. Where in the sixth place he promised that the Jews are to be subjected to the Church by counsel, and that there would be a temptation of the universal world, and that he was quickly about to come: but in the seventh he places tepid Laodicea: "For the Son of man coming, do you think He will find faith on earth?"

But in the second period, four animals and twenty-four elders having been described in the seat of God, he sees the Lamb, seven seals of the signed book having been opened, reveal the future conflicts and triumphs of the Church. Where according to the custom of this book, he keeps the order as far as the sixth number; and the seventh being passed over he recapitulates, and concludes two narrations in the seventh, as if having followed the order. But the recapitulation itself is to be understood according to the places. For sometimes he recapitulates from the origin of the passion, sometimes from the middle time, sometimes about to speak of that very last pressure alone, or not much before. Yet he keeps this fixed, that he recapitulates from the sixth.

But the third period, under the species of seven angels sounding the trumpet, describes the various events of the Church.

Quarta, sub figura mulieris parturientis, et draconis eam persequentis, ejusdem Ecclesiae labores et victorias aperit, et utrique militiae praemia digna rependit. Ubi septem quoque angelorum dicta commemorantur, et facta, et ipsi non pariter, ut supra. Hunc enim mystica solertia numerum pene ubique servat, cum et moris sit ejusdem Joannis, in Evangeliiis quoque et Epistolis nihil tepide et breviter dicere.

Quinta autem periocha per septem angelos septem plagis novissimis terram perfudit.

Sexta damnationem meretricis magnae, id est, impiae civitatis.

Septima, ornatum uxoris agni, sanctam, videlicet, Jerusalem de coelo a Deo descendentem ostendit.

Septem quoque regulas Tychonii, viri inter suos eruditissimi, quibus ad intelligendas Scripturas studiosi plurimum adjuvantur, breviter commemorandas putavi.

Harum prima de Domino et ejus corpore est, quando a capite ad corpus vel a corpore transitur ad caput, et tamen ab una eademque persona non receditur. Una enim persona loquitur dicens: Sicut sponso imposuit mihi mitram, et sicut sponsam ornavit me ornamento; et tamen quid horum capiti, quid corpori, id est, quid Christo, quid Ecclesiae conveniat, utique intelligendum est.

Secunda est de corpore Domini bipertito, vel potius de Domini corpore vero atque simulato, ut sancto Augustino magis appellari placuit.

Dicit enim Ecclesia: Fusca sum et speciosa sum; sed utrumque se esse dixit, propter communionem sacramentorum, et propter temporaneam commistionem intra una retia piscium bonorum et malorum. Tabernacula quippe Cedar ad Ismaelem pertinent, quia non erit haeres cum filio liberae.

Tertia est de promissis et lege, quae alio modo, de spiritu et littera, vel de gratia et mandato potest appellari.

Haec sancto Augustino magna quaestio magis quam regula quae solvendis est quaestionibus adhibenda, videtur. Ipsa est enim quam non intelligentes Pelagiani, vel condiderunt suam haeresim, vel auxerunt.

Quarta est de specie et genere. Species enim pars est; genus autem totum, cujus ea pars est.

Sicut unaquaeque civitas, pars est totius provinciae, et unaquaeque provincia, pars est totius orbis. Unde et in notitiam vulgi verba ista venerunt, ut etiam idiotae intelligant quid specialiter, quid generaliter in quocunque praecepto imperiali sit constitutum.

The fourth, under the figure of a woman bring forth and of a dragon persecuting her, opens the labors and victories of the same Church, and repays worthy rewards to both armies. Where also the sayings and deeds of seven angels are commemorated, and themselves not equally, as above. For he keeps this number by mystic skill almost everywhere, since it is also of the custom of the same John to say nothing tepidly and briefly in the Gospels also and Epistles.

The fifth period however poured the earth through seven angels with the seven last plagues.

The sixth [period shows] the damnation of the great harlot, that is, of the impious city.

The seventh shows the adornment of the wife of the Lamb, namely, the holy Jerusalem descending from heaven from God.

I have also thought that the seven rules of Tychonius, a man most learned among his own, by which the studious are very much helped toward understanding the Scriptures, are to be briefly commemorated.

The first of these is concerning the Lord and His body, when the transition is made from the head to the body or from the body to the head, and yet one and the same person is not departed from. For one person speaks saying: "As a bridegroom he has placed a miter on me, and as a bride he has adorned me with an ornament"; and yet what of these fits the head, what the body, that is, what Christ, what the Church, is certainly to be understood.

The second is concerning the bipartite body of the Lord, or rather concerning the true and simulated body of the Lord, as it more pleased Saint Augustine to be called.

For the Church says: "I am black and I am beautiful"; but she said herself to be both, on account of the communion of the sacraments, and on account of the temporary commingling of good and bad fish within one net. Indeed the tabernacles of Kedar pertain to Ishmael, because he shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.

The third is concerning the promises and the law, which in another way can be called concerning the spirit and the letter, or concerning grace and the mandate.

This seems to Saint Augustine a great question rather than a rule which is to be applied for solving questions. For it is this very thing which the Pelagians, not understanding, either founded their heresy or increased it.

The fourth is concerning species and genus. For the species is a part; but the genus is the whole, of which that is a part.

Just as each city is a part of the whole province, and each province is a part of the whole world. Whence also these words have come into the notice of the common people, so that even unlearned people understand what is specially, what generally constituted in whatever imperial precept.

Fit hoc etiam de hominibus, sicut ea quae de Salomone dicuntur, excedunt ejus modum, et potius ad Christum et Ecclesiam, cujus ille pars est, relata clarescunt.

Nec species semper exceditur. Saepe enim talia dicuntur, quae vel ei quoque, vel ei fortasse tantummodo aptissime congruant.

Sed cum a specie transitur ad genus, quasi adhuc de specie loquente Scriptura, ibi vigilare debet lectoris intentio.

Sextam regulam Tychonius recapitulationem vocat. Sic enim dicuntur in Scripturis quaedam, quasi sequantur in ordine temporis, vel rerum continuatione narrentur, cum ad priora quae praetermissa sunt latenter narratio revocetur. Sicut in Genesi quod dicitur: Isti filii Noe in tribubus et linguis suis. Ab his divisae sunt insulae gentium super terram. Et statim: Erat autem omnis terra labii unius et sermonum eorundem. Ita dictum videtur, tanquam eo jam tempore quo dispersi fuerunt una fuerit omnibus lingua, cum potius recapitulando latenter adjungeret: Qualiter sint linguae divisae.

Septima ejusdem regula est, de diabolo et ejus corpore. Aliquando enim in diabolum dicitur, quod non in ipso, sed in ejus corpore poscit agnosci, sicut Dominus beato Job, ejusdem hostis fraudes et vires exponens, inter alia dicit: Numquid ad te preces multiplicabit, aut loquetur tibi mollia? Non enim ipse diabolus legitur uspiam poenitentiam acturus, sed corpus ipsius quod damnatum in fine dicturum sit: Domine, Domine, aperi nobis.

Has ergo regulas non in Apocalypsi tantum, id est, in revelatione sancti Joannis apostoli, quam idem Tychonius et vivaciter intellexit, et veridice satisque catholice disseruit, praeterea duntaxat loca, in quibus suae partis, id est, Donatistarum schisma defendere nisus, persecutiones, quas ipsi a religioso Valentiniano principe, videlicet, ut haeretici, pertulerunt, Ecclesiis eorum et plebibus, domibusque et possessionibus sub Catholicorum manum contraditis, sacerdotibus exsilio retrusis, deflet, et martyria vocans, has in eadem gloriatur Apocalypsi fuisse praedictas; verum in omni quoque Scriptura canonica, et praecipue prophetica, easdem vigere regulas, quisquis vigilanter intenderit, inveniet.

Cujus quidem auctoris et nos in hoc opere sensum secuti, nonnulla quae extrinsecus posuit, breviandi causa, omisimus, plura vero quae illi, utpote viro ingenioso, et qui, sicut de eo dictum est, veluti rosa in spinis effloruit aperta, nec quaesito digna videbatur, quantum vel magistrorum traditione, vel memoria lectionis, vel etiam captu nostri sensus attingere potuimus, superadjicere curavimus.

Nam et hoc in praeceptis habemus, ut percepta talenta cum usuris referamus ad Dominum.

This happens also concerning men, just as those things which are said concerning Solomon exceed his measure, and rather shine forth when referred to Christ and the Church, of which he is a part.

Nor is the species always exceeded. For often such things are said which clearly fit either him also, or perhaps him alone.

But when the transition is made from species to genus, as if the Scripture were still speaking of the species, there the intention of the reader ought to be vigilant.

Tychonius calls the sixth rule recapitulation. For thus some things are said in the Scriptures as if they followed in the order of time, or are narrated in a continuation of things, when the narration is secretly recalled to the prior things which were passed over. Just as in Genesis what is said: "These [are] the sons of Noah in their tribes and tongues. From these were divided the islands of the nations over the earth." And immediately: "But all the earth was of one lip and of the same speeches." It seems so said as if at that time in which they were dispersed there was one language for all, when rather he was secretly subjoining by recapitulating: how the languages were divided.

The seventh rule of the same is concerning the devil and his body. For sometimes that is said against the devil which is required to be recognized not in himself, but in his body, just as the Lord, exposing the frauds and strengths of the same enemy to the blessed Job, says among other things: "Will he multiply prayers to you, or speak soft things to you?" For the devil himself is nowhere read as about to do penance, but his body, which being damned in the end is about to say: "Lord, Lord, open to us."

These rules, therefore, not only in the Apocalypse, that is, in the revelation of Saint John the apostle, which the same Tychonius both understood vigorously and discussed truthfully and catholically enough—except only those places in which he, having strove to defend the schism of his own party, that is, of the Donatists, bewails the persecutions which they bore from the religious prince Valentinian, namely, as heretics, their churches and peoples, houses and possessions having been delivered over into the hand of the Catholics, their priests pushed back into exile, and calling them martyrdoms, he glories that these were predicted in the same Apocalypse; but truly in all canonical Scripture, and especially prophetic, whoever shall vigilantly attend will find these same rules to flourish.

Following indeed the sense of which author in this work, we have omitted some things which he placed extrinsically, for the sake of abbreviating, but more things which to him, as a man of genius and who, as was said of him, flourished like a rose among thorns, seemed open and not worthy of search, as much as we have been able to attain either by the tradition of masters, or by memory of reading, or even by the grasp of our own sense, we have taken care to superadd.

For we have this also in the precepts, that we should refer the received talents with interest to the Lord.

Cumque opus memoratum in tres libellos revelandae mentis gratia findi placuisset, nescio quo enim modo, ut beatus Augustinus ait, ita libri termino reficitur lectoris intentio, sicut labor viatoris hospitio. Nihilominus tamen ut facilior quaerentibus inventio redderetur, eadem capitulorum intemerata series, juxta quod in ipso libello quondam praepositis brevibus distinxeram, per omnia videbatur esse servanda.

Nostrae siquidem, id est, Anglorum gentis, inertiae consulendum ratus, quae et non dudum, id est temporibus beati Gregorii papae, semen accepit fidei, et idem quantum ad lectionem tepide satis excoluit, non solum dilucidare sensus, verum sententias quoque stringere disposui.

Nam et aperta magis brevitatis quam disputatio prolixa memoriae solet infigi.

Opto in Christo valeas, dilectissime frater, Bedaeque tui semper memor esse digneris.

EPISTOLA XIII.

AD ACCAM.

De Samuelis libri primi allegorica interpretatione.

Quaecunque enim scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum spem habeamus. Et alibi: Omnia in figura contingebant illis. Scripta sunt ad correptionem nostram, in quos fines saeculorum devenerunt.

Sed et beatus apostolus Petrus dominicae incarnationis, passionis et posterioris gloriae tempora commemorans, dicit inter caetera: Et omnes prophetae a Samuel, et deinceps qui locuti sunt, etiam annuntiaverunt istos dies.

Si enim ad nostram correptionem, doctrinam vel consolationem, omnia scripta sunt, nec soli Jeremias et Isaïas caeterique tales, qui verbis futura signaverunt, sed et Samuel, Jonas et Esdra, eorumque consimiles, qui praeterita, vel sua vel aliorum, gesta sive dicta conscribere, dies istos hoc est novae gratiae, luce radiantes insinuant, insistendum nobis summopere est, et pro suo cuique modulo Christi juvante gratia nitendum, ne ea quae propter nos scripta sunt nostro nos torpore vel incuria quasi aliena praetereant. Sed quo sensu in his correptionem, qua ratione doctrinam, quo intellectu consolationem nanciscamur, qualiter omnia dies istos loquantur et annuntient, sollicitè ac vigilanter intendamus, imitantes pro captu nostri ingenioli scribam illum doctum in regno coelorum, qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera.

And since it had pleased that the mentioned work be split into three little books for the sake of revealing the mind, for I know not in what way, as Saint Augustine says, the intention of the reader is refreshed by the end of a book, just as the labor of a traveler by an inn. Nevertheless, so that an easier finding might be rendered for those seeking, the same untainted series of chapters, according to what I had formerly distinguished by short [summaries] prefixed in the little book itself, seemed to be preserved through all things.

Thinking indeed that I ought to consult the inertia of our nation, that is, of the English, which not long ago, that is, in the times of the blessed Pope Gregory, received the seed of faith, and cultivated the same quite tepidly as far as reading [is concerned], I have disposed not only to elucidate the senses, but also to string together the sentences.

For also an open brevity is wont to be fixed in the memory more than a prolix disputation.

I wish that you may fare well in Christ, most beloved brother, and deign to be always mindful of your Bede.

LETTER XIII.

TO ACCA.

Concerning the allegorical interpretation of the first book of Samuel.

"For whatever things were written, were written for our doctrine, so that through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures we might have hope." And elsewhere: "All things happened to them in figure." "They were written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

But also the blessed apostle Peter, commemorating the times of the Lord's incarnation, passion and subsequent glory, says among other things: "And all the prophets from Samuel, and thereafter who have spoken, have also announced these days."

If indeed all things were written for our correction, doctrine or consolation, and not only Jeremiah and Isaiah and others such, who signified future things by words, but also Samuel, Jonah and Ezra, and their likes, who wrote past deeds or words, whether their own or of others, insinuate these days, that is, [days] radiating with the light of new grace, we must insist most greatly, and each according to his own measure, the grace of Christ helping, must strive lest those things which were written on account of us pass us by like alien things on account of our sluggishness or carelessness. But in what sense we may obtain correction in these, by what reason doctrine, by what understanding consolation, how all things speak and announce these days, let us attend solicitously and vigilantly, imitating according to the capacity of our little wit that scribe learned in the kingdom of heaven, who brings forth from his treasure new and old.

Nam si vetera tantummodo de thesauro Scripturarum proferre, hoc est, solas litterae figuras sequi Judaico more curamus, quid inter quotidiana peccata correptionis, inter crebrescentes aerumnas saeculi consolationis, inter innumeros vitae hujus errores spiritualis doctrinae legentes vel audientes acquirimus, dum aperto libro, verbi gratia, beati Samuelis, Elcanam virum unum duas uxores habuisse reperimus; nos maxime, quibus ecclesiasticae vitae consuetudine longe fieri ab uxoris complexu et coelibes manere propositum est, si non etiam de his et hujusmodi dictis allegoricum noverimus exculpere sensum, qui vivaciter interius castigando, erudiendo, consolando reficit?

Unde tuo crebro, dilectissime ac desiderantissime omnium qui in terris morantur antistitum, Acca, provocatus hortatu, tuis fretus orationibus, memorati prophetae, qui tunc vocabatur Videns, scripta perlustrans, si quid, donante illo qui ei multa spiritualia dedit videre, spirituale ac mysticum poteram contueri, litteris mandare curabo. Et post qualemcunque expositionem beati Lucae dictorum, quibus evangelicos, vel ipsius Domini, vel apostolorum ejus actus describit, etiam hunc sanctissimum Domino ex matris utero Nazaraeum, non minus suis in scriptis evangelistae, quam historici functum officio probare satagam, quippe qui et ipse omnia Mediatoris Dei et hominum, hominis Jesu Christi sacramenta figurato fidelis historiae, sed plenissimo designavit eloquio.

Denique, ut de caeteris taceam, sinus David, locum nativitatis, officium pastoris, ruborem ac pulchritudinem aspectus, modum unctionis, insigne virtutum, pondus tribulationum, et promissi olim regni gloriam, arcta consideres, si quanta in his singulis fidei et veritatis Evangelicae congesta mysteria sint cernas. Verum haec suo loco planius, nunc ex ordine injunctum opus, superno solum fidens auxilio, et patrum vestigia sequens, aggrediar. Et si quidem multorum, ut desidero, meus sudor utilitati et commodo profuerit, multa me donandum mercede cum illis a Domino spero; sin autem, nec mihi tamen mea solertia, quae me tanto tempore laboris hujusce otiosum esse, supervacuisve rebus animum indulgere non sinit, infructuosa existere poterit. Ergo, age, videamus, propheta Samuel, qui locutus est et annuntiavit dies istos, quod ejusdem locutionis et annuntiationis suae fecerit initium; et ex ordine disserentes, beati Petri apostolorum principis adjutorio, qui cuncta, quibus diebus sint aptanda, perdocuit, qualiter singula sint eisdem diebus aptanda, quaeramus.

EPISTOLA XIV.

De mansionibus filiorum Israel.

For if we care to bring forth only old things from the treasure of the Scriptures, that is, to follow only the figures of the letter in the Jewish manner, what do we acquire, whether reading or hearing, of correction among daily sins, of consolation among the increasing hardships of the age, of spiritual doctrine among the innumerable errors of this life, while the book being opened, for example, of the blessed Samuel, we find that Elkanah, one man, had two wives; [we] especially, for whom it is proposed by the custom of ecclesiastical life to be far from the embrace of a wife and to remain celibate, if we do not know how to carve out an allegorical sense also from these and such like sayings, which refreshes by inwardly chastising, eruditing, and consoling?

Whence provoked by your frequent exhortation, O Acca, most beloved and most desired of all bishops who dwell on earth, relying on your prayers, perusing the writings of the mentioned prophet, who then was called Seer, if I could behold anything spiritual and mystic, the one who gave him many spiritual things to see granting it, I will take care to commit it to letters. And after whatever exposition of the sayings of the blessed Luke, in which he describes the evangelical acts, whether of the Lord Himself or of His apostles, I will strive to prove also this most holy Nazirite to the Lord from his mother's womb as having functioned no less as an evangelist than as a historian in his writings, since he himself also designated all the sacraments of the Mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ, in the figured but most full eloquence of a faithful history.

Finally, that I may be silent concerning other things, if you should consider the bosom of David, the place of birth, the office of shepherd, the ruddiness and beauty of aspect, the mode of unction, the mark of virtues, the weight of tribulations, and the glory of the formerly promised kingdom, if you should see how many evangelical mysteries of faith and truth are congregated in each of these. Truly these things [I will treat] more plainly in their place, now I shall approach the enjoined work in order, trusting in supernal help alone and following the footsteps of the Fathers. And if indeed my sweat shall profit for the utility and commodity of many, as I desire, I hope to be given with them much reward from the Lord; but if otherwise, yet my own skill cannot exist unfruitful for me, which does not allow me to be idle for so great a time of this labor, or to indulge my mind in superfluous things. Therefore, come, let us see what beginning of his same speech and announcement the prophet Samuel, who spoke and announced these days, made; and discussing in order, by the help of the blessed Peter the prince of the apostles, who thoroughly taught to which days all things are to be adapted, let us seek how each thing is to be adapted to the same days.

LETTER XIV.

Concerning the stations of the children of Israel.

Domino in Christo dilectissimo et cum omni semper honorificentia nominando antistiti Accae, Beda fidelis tuus famulus.

Quasdam mihi pariter, dilectissime antistitum, non tamen unius ejusdemque difficultatis solvendas quaestiones destinando, parumper me ab inchoata beati prophetae Samuelis expositione ad Mosen Isaiamque scrutandos articulum deflectere cogis.

Quarum prima quae ad historiam praeteriti temporis respicit, aut facile fortasse clarescet, aut non magno periculo remanebit occulta.

Secunda vero, quod ad fidem pertinet futurorum, si aliter quam decet sentiatur, cavendum est ne fovea nefandissimae haereseos incurrat.

Quaeris ergo mansiones filiorum Israel, quae quadraginta et duae pariter in ultima libri Numerorum parte computantur, quot vel quibus sint annis aptandae longissimi illius itineris, quod ab Aegypto ad terram repromissionis agebatur.

Cunctis enim legentibus liquet, quamvis annos ejusdem itineris eodem prope quo et mansiones numero concludi, nequaquam tamen singulos annos in singulis castris eos fuisse commemoratos.

Ubi, sicut in omnibus soleo, tuae beatitudini promptus dico quod sentio, castra, videlicet, vel mansiones easdem trium tantummodo congruere curriculis annorum, primi, videlicet, secundi et quadagesimi, egressionis ex Aegypto.

Quorum primus continet annus mansiones certa distinctione duodecim.

Primam esse duodecima die primi mensis ingressum; ultimam solitudinem Sinai, prima die tertii mensis aditam, et per undecim menses continuos, construendi tabernaculi, docendae legis gratia, minime relictam.

Quarum, videlicet, duodecim mansionum novem solummodo liber Exodi nominatim exprimens, caeteras tres sub deserti Sin, quod esse dicitur inter Elim et Sinai, vocabulo indiscrete praeteriit.

Secundus annus complectitur mansiones viginti et unam, quibus in ordine historiae cunctis indifferenter sub solitudinis Pharan nomine comprehensis, prima solum, secunda et ultima hoc est sepulcra concupiscentiae Aseroth et Cades suo distinguuntur ex nomine; sed in catalogo mansionum pariter omnes quot numero fuerint, vel quo nomine dictae, diligenter ostenditur.

To the most beloved bishop Acca in Christ and ever to be named with all honor, Bede your faithful servant.

By sending certain questions to me likewise to be solved, most beloved of bishops, yet not of one and the same difficulty, you compel me to deflect for a little while from the begun exposition of the blessed prophet Samuel to the point of searching Moses and Isaiah.

The first of which, which looks toward the history of past time, will perhaps either easily become clear, or will remain hidden with no great danger.

But the second, as to what pertains to the faith of future things, if it should be felt otherwise than is fitting, care must be taken lest the pit of a most wicked heresy be incurred.

You ask therefore [about] the stations of the children of Israel, which are computed as forty-two likewise in the last part of the book of Numbers, to which or to what years of that longest journey, which was conducted from Egypt to the land of promise, they are to be adapted.

For it is clear to all readers that, although the years of the same journey are concluded in almost the same number as the stations, nevertheless they were by no means commemorated as single years in single camps.

Wherein, as I am accustomed in all things, I say promptly to your blessedness what I feel, namely, that the same camps or stations fit only three courses of years, namely, the first, the second, and the fortieth [year] of the egress from Egypt.

Of which the first year contains twelve stations by a certain distinction.

That the first [was] entered on the twelfth day of the first month; the last, the solitude of Sinai, entered on the first day of the third month, and through eleven continuous months, for the sake of constructing the tabernacle and teaching the law, was by no means left.

Of which twelve stations, the book of Exodus expressing only nine by name, it passed over the other three indiscriminately under the name of the desert of Sin, which is said to be between Elim and Sinai.

The second year encompasses twenty-one stations, all of which are included indiscriminately in the order of history under the name of the desert of Paran; only the first, second, and last, that is, the Graves of Lust, Hazeroth, and Kadesh, are distinguished by their own name; but in the catalogue of stations, it is diligently shown exactly how many they were in number, and by what name they were called.

Quarum prima mansio, hoc est, sepulcra concupiscentiae, secundo mense ejusdem secundi anni vicesimo secundo die mensis est introita. Anno enim secundo, ut Scriptura dicit, mense secundo, vicesimo die mensis, moverunt castra de deserto Sinai, et recubuit, inquit, nubes in solitudine Pharan, profectique sunt de monte Domini via trium dierum, donec venirent ad locum mansionis, quae merito populi carnes Aegyptias desiderantis, sepulcrorum concupiscentiae nomen accepit.

Ultima autem harum mansionum, id est, Cades, quo die vel mense ejusdem anni sit ingressa, non dicitur; sed tamen quia et ipsa in solitudine Pharan sita quia eodem anno fuerit adita, non tacetur. Scriptum est enim: Et populus non est motus de loco illo, donec, revocata Maria, profectus est de Haseroth fixis tentoriis in deserto Pharan; ibi locutus est Dominus ad Moysen dicens: Mitte viros qui considerent terram Chanaan; quod ne proxima post Haseroth mansione jussum factumque putetur, sed potius intelligatur in ultima earum quae sub Pharan solitudinis nomine continentur impletum, videamus quod infra scriptum est: Reversique exploratores terrae post quadraginta dies, omni regione circumta, venerunt ad Moysen et Aaron et ad omnem coetum filiorum Israel in desertum Pharan, quod est in Cades.

Sed et in Deuteronomio Moyses ipse loquitur populo: Cumque venissetis in Cadesbarne, dixi vobis: Venistis ad montem Amorrhaei quem Dominus Deus noster daturus est nobis, vide terram, quam Dominus Deus tuus dat tibi, ascende eam; et accessistis ad me omnes atque dixistis: Mitte viros qui considerent terram, etc.

Quod autem eandem mansionem secundo anno exitus de Aegypto adierunt, a qua tamen peccato murmurationis retro reverti ac multo tempore per desertum vagi errare et passim cadere meruerunt, testatur Moyses in sequentibus, dicens: Sedistis ergo in Cadesbarne multo tempore; profectique inde venimus in solitudinem quae ducit ad mare Rubrum, sicut mihi dixerat Dominus, et circuivimus montem Seir longo tempore.

Et infra: Tempus autem quo ambulavimus de Cadesbarne usque ad transitum torrentis Zared, triginta octo annorum fuit, donec consumeretur omnis generatio hominum bellatorum de castris, sicut juraverat Dominus.

Zared autem non nomen est mansionis, de illis dico quadraginta duabus, sed nomen torrentis, ad quem, sicut in Numerorum volumine legitur, transgressa tricesima octava mansione nomine Hie ab Aram venerunt.

Of these, the first station, that is, the Graves of Lust, was entered in the second month of the same second year, on the twenty-second day of the month. For in the second year, as the Scripture says, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, they moved their camp from the desert of Sinai; and the cloud, it says, rested in the wilderness of Paran, and they set out from the mount of the Lord by a three days' journey, until they came to the place of the station, which, by the merit of the people desiring the Egyptian meats, received the name of the Graves of Lust.

However, the last of these stations, that is, Kadesh, is not stated on which day or month of the same year it was entered; but nevertheless, because it is situated in the wilderness of Paran and was reached in the same year, it is not kept silent. For it is written: And the people moved not from that place, until, Miriam being called back, they set out from Hazeroth and fixed their tents in the desert of Paran; there the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Send men to consider the land of Canaan; lest this be thought to have been commanded and done at the station immediately after Hazeroth, but rather be understood to have been fulfilled at the last of those which are contained under the name of the wilderness of Paran, let us see what is written below: And the explorers of the land returned after forty days, having gone around the whole region, and they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the assembly of the children of Israel in the desert of Paran, which is in Kadesh.

But also in Deuteronomy Moses himself speaks to the people: And when you had come to Kadesh-barnea, I said to you: You have come to the mountain of the Amorite which the Lord our God is about to give us; see the land, which the Lord your God gives to you, go up to it; and you all approached me and said: Send men to consider the land, etc.

Moreover, that they reached the same station in the second year of the departure from Egypt, from which, however, by the sin of murmuring they deserved to turn back and to wander through the desert for a long time and to fall here and there, Moses testifies in what follows, saying: You sat therefore in Kadesh-barnea for a long time; and setting out from there we came into the wilderness which leads to the Red Sea, as the Lord had told me, and we went around Mount Seir for a long time.

And below: But the time in which we walked from Kadesh-barnea until the crossing of the torrent Zared, was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war from the camp was consumed, as the Lord had sworn.

Now Zared is not the name of a station, I speak of those forty-two, but the name of a torrent, to which, as is read in the volume of Numbers, they came after crossing the thirty-eighth station named Iye-abarim from the highlands.

Quem relinquentes, inquit, castra metati sunt contra Arnon, quae est in deserto et prominet in finibus Amorrhaei; quod quadragesimo anno gestum fuisse nos latet.

Qui videlicet annus, quadragesimus idem et ultimus, longissimae per desertum viae mansionis continet numero decem, quarum prima est magno labore reperta: eadem ipsa Cades deserti Sin, quam ante triginta octo annos, ut dictum est, culpa praevaricationis exigente, post se reversi reliquerant.

De qua ita scriptum est: Veneruntque filii Israel et omnis multitudo in desertum Sin, mense primo, et mansit populus in Cades, Mortuaeque est ibi Maria et sepulta est in eodem loco.

Cumque indigeret aquam populus, coegerunt adversum Moysen et Aaron, etc., ad id quod scriptum est: Haec est aqua contradictionis, ubi iurgati sunt filii Israel contra Dominum et sanctificatus est in eis.

Notandumque quod eandem Cades in deserto Pharan et in deserto Sin Scriptura sitam referat.

Unde conjici datur consueto more locorum partem deserti Pharan, ubi Cades est, specialiter Sin appellari.

Sin autem non ipsa est, quam mox transgresso mari Rubro inter Elim et Sinai pertransiere, sed alia prorsus, aliisque apud Hebraeos scripta elementis.

Secunda vero eadem quadragesimi anni mansio est mons Hor, in quo occubuit Aaron prima die quinti mensis; ultima, campestris Moab super Jordanem contra Jericho, ubi Deuteronomium meditantes manserunt usque dum post mortem Moysi, Josue duce. prima die decimi mensis sicca fluvii Jordanis profunda transirent.

Fiunt ergo omnes mansiones primi anni duodecim, secundi viginti et una, ultimi et ipsa vicesima prima quae est Cades et aliae novem, id est simul omnes quadraginta et duae: ubi diligentius intuendum quare legislator tanta solertia trium annorum conscripto catalogo reliquas maluerit praeterire silentio, ita ut tanto temporum vel potius saeculorum spatio distincta mansionum loca sub contextu continuae narrationis quasi mox subinvicem succedentia connectat: Egressique de Hebrona castra metati sunt in Asiongaber. Inde profecti venerunt in desertum Sin, haec est Cades. Egressi de Cades, castra metati sunt in monte Hor; cum superiora sollicitius inquisita doceant eos secundo suo profectionis anno de Asiongaber venisse et post longos triginta et octo annorum anfractus, derelicta tandem eadem Cades venisse in montem Hor, nequaquam hoc frustra, sed magni mysterii gratia taliter actum conscriptumque debet intelligi, ubi salvo subtiliore tractatum moraliter puto sentiendum.

Quodque mansionum contextus earundem qui de servitute Aegyptia liberatos ad terram promissionis provehit,

Leaving which, it says, they pitched camp against Arnon, which is in the desert and stands out in the borders of the Amorite; which we are aware was done in the fortieth year.

Which year, namely, the same fortieth and last, contains ten stations of the longest journey through the desert, of which the first was found with great labor: the very same Kadesh of the desert of Zin, which thirty-eight years before, as has been said, the fault of prevarication demanding it, they had left behind when they turned back.

Concerning which it is thus written: And the children of Israel and all the multitude came into the desert of Zin, in the first month, and the people remained in Kadesh, and Miriam died there and was buried in the same place.

And when the people needed water, they gathered against Moses and Aaron, etc., up to that which is written: This is the water of contradiction, where the children of Israel quarreled against the Lord and He was sanctified in them.

And it should be noted that the Scripture refers to the same Kadesh as being situated in the desert of Paran and in the desert of Zin.

From which it is given to be conjectured that, by the custom of places, the part of the desert of Paran where Kadesh is, is specifically called Zin.

Now Zin itself is not that which they passed through immediately after crossing the Red Sea between Elim and Sinai, but entirely another, and written with other letters among the Hebrews.

The second station indeed of the same fortieth year is Mount Hor, in which Aaron died on the first day of the fifth month; the last, the plains of Moab upon the Jordan opposite Jericho, where, meditating on Deuteronomy, they remained until, after the death of Moses, under the leadership of Joshua, on the first day of the tenth month they crossed the dry depths of the river Jordan.

There are, therefore, all the stations: twelve of the first year, twenty-one of the second, and of the last, Kadesh itself and nine others, which is the same twenty-first, that is, all forty-two together: where it should be more diligently considered why the legislator, having written the catalogue of three years with such skill, preferred to pass over the rest in silence, so that he connects the places of the stations, separated by such a space of times or rather of ages, under the context of a continuous narrative as if succeeding one another soon after: And departing from Hebronah they pitched camp in Ezion-geber. Setting out from there they came into the desert of Zin, this is Kadesh. Departing from Kadesh, they pitched camp on Mount Hor; although the things more carefully inquired into above teach that they came from Ezion-geber in their second year of setting out, and after long windings of thirty-eight years, having finally left the same Kadesh, they came to Mount Hor, by no means was this done or written in vain, but for the sake of a great mystery it ought to be understood as having been so acted and recorded, where, saving a subtler treatment, I think it should be felt morally.

And that the context of the same stations,

sicut beatus Hieronymus in libro super iis dictato enucleatius exponit, altipetax est spiritualium ascensio virtutum, quibus Ecclesia Christi, quibus quaeque anima fidelis spe libertatis ad supera de hac convalle lacrymarum ad dispositum sibi locum, hoc est, ad videndum Deum deorum in Sion, festina satagit ascendere, donec salvo nostri boni operis incessu proficimus de virtute in virtutem quasi castra quaedam mansionesque, Deo duce, rectissimas Dei conspectu dignissimas per desertum mundi sitientis agamus.

At quoties vitiis quibuslibet subripiantibus a coepto veritatis calle deviamus, non statim ad altiores virtutum gradus ascendere possumus, sed interim ab infimis miserae mentis defectibus, paulatim superiora debeamus poenitendo repetere, donec dignis poenitentiae fructibus actis perveniamus reduces ad illum de quo lapsi sumus modum culmen quod ad tempus iter agere virtutum, exuti veteri homine cum actibus ejus et induti novo qui secundum Deum creatus est in justitia et sanctitate: quod mors et funeratio patrum peccantium in deserto ibidemque adultae natae significat juventutis alacritas, quae, fluvio mortis devicto, digna sit regnum supernae promissionis intrare.

Ita enim fit in renovata nostrae bonae conversationis inventute. sicut Aquilae, tanta jam ac talia malignis spiritibus gratiae spiritualis ac sic intermissum occurrentes valeamus firmare castra supernorum profectuum, quae non solum divino respectui grata, sed et spiritualium patrum sint scriptis ac laude dignissima.

Haec de prima tua quaestione, charissime, quia plana videntibus et historico sunt transacta cursu, mox lectis tuae beatitudinis epistolis rescribere satagemus.

De Prophetarum autem testimonio quod pariter exponendum misisti, si quid Deo concedente memoria dignum sentire poterimus, et ipsum tibi quantocius non celare curabimus.

Orantem pro Ecclesia sua sanctam beatitudinem vestram sancta et individua Trinitas incolumem custodiat.

EPISTOLA XV.

De eo quod ait Isaias: «Et claudentur ibi in carcere et post dies multos visitabuntur.»

Domino beatissimo et intima semper charitate venerando, sancto antistiti Accae, Beda, humillimus servorum Christi, salutem.

which leads those liberated from Egyptian servitude to the land of promise, as the blessed Jerome in the book dictated upon these things more clearly explains, is a high-seeking ascension of spiritual virtues, by which the Church of Christ, by which every faithful soul, with the hope of liberty towards the things above, strives to ascend from this valley of tears to the place appointed for itself, that is, to see the God of gods in Zion, until, with the safe pace of our good work, we progress from virtue to virtue as if through certain camps and stations, with God as leader, most righteous and most worthy of the sight of God through the desert of a thirsty world.

But as often as any creeping vices turn us aside from the begun path of truth, we cannot immediately ascend to the higher degrees of virtues, but meanwhile from the lowest defects of a wretched mind, we ought gradually to repeat the things above by repenting, until, having performed worthy fruits of repentance, we arrive back at that state from which we fell, to the summit which we should for a time travel the journey of virtues, having put off the old man with his acts and put on the new who was created according to God in justice and holiness: which the death and burial of the sinning fathers in the desert and the alacrity of the youth grown up and born in the same place signifies, which, the river of death being conquered, is worthy to enter the kingdom of the heavenly promise.

For so it happens in the renewed youth of our good conversation, as of the eagle, being able to strengthen such and so great camps of heavenly progresses against the malignant spirits of spiritual grace and so interrupted.

These things concerning your first question, dearest one, because they are plain to those who see and have been transacted by a historical course, we have busied ourselves to write back as soon as the letters of your blessedness were read.

Concerning the testimony of the Prophet, however, which you sent to be explained likewise, if we can feel anything worthy of memory, God granting, we will take care not to hide that itself from you as soon as possible.

May the holy and individual Trinity keep your holy blessedness safe, praying for His Church.

EPISTLE XV.

Concerning that which Isaiah says: "And they shall be shut up there in prison, and after many days they shall be visited."

To the most blessed lord and always to be venerated with intimate charity, the holy bishop Acca, Bede, the humblest of the servants of Christ, greeting.

Quoniam quidem, primae tuae propositioni festinato respondens, secundam, quae mihi videbatur obscurior, opportunius rebar ex tempore considerandam; nunc ergo de illa juxta mei ingenioli sensum, quod catholicae et absque scrupulo fidei dici et intelligi possit exponam. Quaeris enim (quod prorsus quaesitu dignum, nescio autem an a meis similibus est quaerendum) quomodo intelligendum sit quod de die judicii scribens Isaias dicit inter caetera: Et erit in die illa, visitabit Dominus super militiam coeli in excelso et super reges terrae qui sunt super terram, et congregabuntur in congregationem unius fascis in lacum et claudentur ibi in carcere, et post multos dies visitabuntur, et erubescet luna, et confundetur sol cum regnaverit Dominus exercituum in monte Sion et in Jerusalem et in conspectu senum suorum fuerit glorificatus. Ad hoc autem quaerendum admonitum te asseris ex lectione tertii nostri in Samuelem libelli, ubi infixum in capite Goliae lapidem super aeterna neque unquam penitus excutienda diaboli et angelorum sociorumque ejus poena interpretantes, hujusce sententiae memoriam fecimus, non tamen haec quomodo intelligenda sit, sed quomodo intelligenda non sit edisserentes, id est, quia nequaquam post multos dies sint liberandi quibus in ultimo examine dicatur: Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum. Neque enim sibi contrarius esse potest idem ipse propheta, qui alibi dicit: Et videbunt cadavera virorum qui praevaricati sunt in me; vermis eorum non morietur, et ignis eorum non exstinguetur. Sin autem, qualiter intelligenda sit quaeritur, palam tuae sanctitati, domine in Christo dilectissime, profiteor nequaquam ausum dicere quod intellexerim quid in hac sententia senserit et sentiri voluerit propheta Isaias. Sed tamen, quid ipse pure, ut reor, et catholice sentiam tibi praecipienti pandere non abnego. Primo diligentius inspiciens quid de hac beatus Hieronymus in suo illo pulcherrimo in eundem prophetam opere loquebatur: «Quod autem sequitur (inquit): Et post multos dies visitabuntur, videtur applaudere amicis meis, qui diabolo et daemonibus dant poenitentiam, quod multa post tempora a Domino visitentur; sed considerent quia non dixerit aperte Scriptura divina, visitabuntur a Domino, vel, Visitabuntur ab angelis, sed absolute, Visitabuntur. Ex qua ambiguitate verbi et remedium potest intelligi et correptio quod, postquam justi praemia receperunt, illi in poenis perpetuis visitentur.

Since indeed, responding quickly to your first proposition, I thought the second, which seemed more obscure to me, should be considered more opportunely at leisure; now therefore I shall set forth concerning it, according to the sense of my small talent, what can be said and understood as catholic and without scruple of faith. For you ask (a thing altogether worthy of inquiry, though I know not whether it should be asked of those like me) how it is to be understood that Isaiah, writing of the day of judgment, says among other things: And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall visit the host of heaven (*militiam coeli*) on high, and the kings of the earth who are upon the earth, and they shall be gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle into the pit, and they shall be shut up there in prison, and after many days they shall be visited; and the moon shall blush, and the sun shall be confounded, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and shall be glorified in the sight of his ancients. Moreover, you assert that you were prompted to ask this by reading our third book on Samuel, where, interpreting the stone fixed in the head of Goliath as the eternal and never to be fully shaken off punishment of the devil and his angels and companions, we made mention of this sentence, not however explaining how it should be understood, but how it should not be understood, that is, that those to whom it is said in the final examination: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," are by no means to be set free after many days. For the same prophet cannot be contrary to himself, who elsewhere says: And they shall see the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me; their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be extinguished. But if it is asked how it is to be understood, I openly profess to your holiness, most beloved lord in Christ, that I have by no means dared to say that I have understood what the prophet Isaiah felt and wished to be felt in this sentence. But nevertheless, I do not refuse to disclose to you who command it what I myself purely, as I think, and catholically feel. First, looking more diligently at what blessed Jerome was saying about this in that most beautiful work of his on the same prophet: "What follows (he says): And after many days they shall be visited, seems to applaud those friends of mine who grant repentance to the devil and the demons, that they should be visited by the Lord after much time; but let them consider that the divine Scripture has not said openly, they shall be visited by the Lord, or, they shall be visited by angels, but absolutely, they shall be visited." From which ambiguity of the word both a remedy can be understood and a correction, in that, after the just have received their rewards, those are visited in perpetual punishments.

Et tamen sciendum quod iudicium Dei humana non possit scire fragilitas, nec de poenarum magnitudine atque mensura ferre sententiam, quae Domini arbitrio derelicta est.» Quibus profecto verbis doctissimus vir et errorem redarguit eorum qui diabolum cum angelis et hominibus reprobis autumant post longa licet tempora completi examinis ultimi suppliciis eruendum, et ex prophetae dictis hoc intelligi posse demonstrat, quod postquam iustis in iudicio praemia sempiterna donentur, damnati perpetua poena reprobi incognito nobis ordine visitentur; quod autem remedium aliquantulum nacturi sunt, non tamen a tormentis omnibus solvendi, aut certe graviore adhuc correptione plectendi, quod tamen quaecumque et quantulumcunque et quandocumque venturum sit, solius aeternae iudicis scientiae pateat. Verum, qui nusquam alibi Scripturarum legimus aliquid huiusmodi sensum adest de augendis sive minuendis post diem iudicii reproborum tormentis. Namque de amba Habacuc cum propheta quidam, quasi in auxilium hujuscemodi sensus, assumunt: In ira misericordiae memor eris, hoc ambiguum, aliud vero est clara luce perspicuum: quod videlicet viratus causa praevaricationis hominibus Deus in hanc convallem lacrymarum eos de paradisi gaudiis expulerit, non tamen his sicut angelis de coelo cadentibus spem resipiscendi abstulerit, sed insuper auditorium frequentiam recuperandae salutis adhibuerit. Memoratus spiritus vadens et non rediens quod singulis nobis peccantibus, qui in seipso semper tranquillus est videatur irasci dum punit, attamen digne poenitentibus mox misereri meminerit; quod denique eidem propheta dixit enim hoc in oratione pro ignorantibus ignorantem peccanti ad oram irascens statim sit misertus oranti, cui simile est illud Psalmistae: Nunquid obliviscetur misereri Deus, aut continebit in ira sua misericordiam suam? Hoc namque et huiusmodi dicta omnia, sicut et illud: Visitabo in virga iniquitates eorum, et addam plagas vestras septuplum, et caetera talia, certum est quod huius saeculi, in quo misericordiam et iudicium sancti Domino cantant, statui convenient. Incertum autem si et futuri, in quo fit quod in alio psalmo Deo dicitur: Quia tu reddes singulis secundum opera eorum, quia, inquam, manifeste Scriptura aliquid post universale iudicium talis futurae mutationis non dicit, est [F. sunt] qui illum prophetae versiculum, quo clausos in carcerem laci reges terrae post multos dies visitaturos [F. visitandos] perhibet, non post longum tempus consummati novissimi examinis, sed in ipso examine putent adimplendum.

And yet it must be known that human frailty cannot know the judgment of God, nor pass sentence concerning the magnitude and measure of punishments, which has been left to the Lord's arbitration." By which words indeed the most learned man both refutes the error of those who affirm that the devil, with the angels and reprobate men, is to be rescued from the punishments of the last examination, albeit after long times, and demonstrates that it can be understood from the prophet's words that after everlasting rewards are given to the just in the judgment, the reprobates damned to perpetual punishment are visited in an order unknown to us; whether they are to obtain some small remedy, yet not to be released from all torments, or certainly to be punished with a still heavier correction, which however, of whatever kind and how great soever and whenever it is to come, lies open only to the knowledge of the eternal Judge. But truly, we who have nowhere else in the Scriptures read anything of this kind of sense regarding the increasing or diminishing of the torments of the reprobate after the day of judgment. For when some assume from the prophet Habakkuk, as if in aid of this kind of sense: In wrath thou shalt remember mercy, this is ambiguous; but another thing is clear as daylight: namely, that God, being angry because of transgression, expelled men from the joys of paradise into this valley of tears, yet he did not take away from them, as from the angels falling from heaven, the hope of repenting, but moreover provided a frequent audience for recovering salvation. The mentioned spirit going and not returning, because to each of us who sin, he who in himself is always tranquil seems to be angry while he punishes, yet he soon remembers to have mercy on those who worthily repent; which indeed the prophet said in a prayer for those ignorant, that being angry for a moment with the ignorant sinner, he immediately had mercy on the one who prayed, to which that saying of the Psalmist is similar: Will God forget to show mercy, or will he in his anger shut up his mercies? For it is certain that this and all such sayings, like that: I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and I will add sevenfold to your plagues, and other such things, agree with the state of this age (*saeculum*), in which the saints sing of mercy and judgment to the Lord. But it is uncertain if it also applies to the future [age], in which that which is said to God in another psalm happens: For thou shalt render to every man according to his works; because, I say, the Scripture does not manifestly say anything of such a future change after the universal judgment, there are those who think that that verse of the prophet, in which he says that the kings of the earth shut up in the prison of the pit are to be visited after many days, is to be fulfilled not after a long time from the consummated last examination, but in the examination itself.

Quia, videlicet, homines majorum scelerum rei, per multos ante iudicium dies congregati in lacum miseriae, in ipso iudicii tempore sint per resurrectionem ad modicum evocandi de lacu, mox peracto iudicio cum recepto corpore eundem recludendi in lacum. Cujus visitationis post multos dies futurae, id est, resurrectionis et iudicii advenientis tempore, sequentes quoque versiculi complebunt; quibus dicitur: Et erubescet luna et confundetur sol cum regnaverit Dominus exercituum in monte Sion, etc. Haec etenim in die iudicii futura, quando et gloriam regni sui universis et beatitudinem suae visionis sanctis ostensurus est Christus. Loquitur et prophetia saepe et apertius evangelica Scriptura, dicente Domino: Sed in illis diebus, post tribulationem illam sol contenebrabitur et luna non dabit splendorem suum, et stellae coeli erunt decedentes, et virtutes quae sunt in coelis movebuntur, et tunc videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus cum virtute multa et gloria. Neque hoc quod dicitur: Et erit in die illa, visitabit Dominus, putet quisquam huic assertioni contrarium, quasi non possit dici in die illa futurum quod multis ante iudicium diebus constet implendum. Solet namque Scriptura de die iudicii loquens non solum diem illam, sed et horam illam nuncupando praecurrentia proxime ante iudicium tempora signare. Denique et Joannes apostolus, tam longo ante diem iudicii tempore scribens, ait: Filioli, novissima hora est, et, sicut audistis, quia Antichristus venit. Nunc autem Antichristi multi facti sunt, unde scimus quia novissima hora est. Et ipse Dominus in Evangelio cum diceret: Qua die autem exiit Lot a Sodomis, pluit ignem et sulphur de coelo et omnes perdidit, secundum haec erit qua die Filius hominis revelabitur, continuo subjunxit, et ait: In illa hora qui fuerit in tecto et vasa ejus in domo, ne descendat tollere ea, et qui in agro similiter non redeat retro. Videbatur enim ut, die revelationis praemissa, protinus horam illam subjungeret, non aliam debuisse horam intelligi quam eam qua ipsa revelatio contingeret. Attamen, hora nominata, Dominus non ea quae in die revelati iudicii futura, sed quae ante diem revelandi iudicii essent facienda signavit. Neque enim pluendi Domino ignem et sulphur de coelo quisquam in Sodomis ad poenitentiam commissorum recurrere, sicut nec ad augmentationem eorumdem procurrare spatium temporis habuit, neque Filio hominis revelato aliquis facultatem sicut nec voluntatem habere poterit, vel repetendi desideria quae cum mundo superius ascendendo reliquerat, vel relinquendi fructus virtutum spiritualium quibus eatenus exercendis inservierat.

Because, namely, men guilty of greater crimes, gathered into the pit of misery for many days before the judgment, are at the very time of the judgment to be called forth from the pit for a little while through resurrection, and soon after the judgment is finished, they are to be shut up again in the same pit with the body they have received. The following verses also will be fulfilled at the time of this visitation to come after many days, that is, of the resurrection and the coming judgment; in which it is said: And the moon shall blush and the sun shall be confounded when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, etc. For these things are to be in the day of judgment, when Christ is to show both the glory of his kingdom to all and the blessedness of his vision to the saints. Both prophecy often speaks and the evangelical Scripture more openly, the Lord saying: But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall be falling, and the powers that are in heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. Nor should anyone think this which is said: And it shall be in that day, the Lord shall visit, as contrary to this assertion, as if it could not be said that what is known to be fulfilled many days before the judgment will happen in that day. For the Scripture, when speaking of the day of judgment, is accustomed to signify the times immediately preceding the judgment by naming not only that day, but also that hour. Finally, even the apostle John, writing so long a time before the day of judgment, says: Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that Antichrist comes, even now there are become many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last hour. And the Lord himself in the Gospel, when he said: But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all, according to these things it shall be on the day when the Son of man shall be revealed, immediately added and said: In that hour, he who shall be on the housetop and his vessels in the house, let him not go down to take them, and he who is in the field likewise let him not return back. For it seemed that, the day of revelation being premised, he should immediately subjoin that hour, and no other hour ought to have been understood than that in which the revelation itself occurred. Yet, having named the hour, the Lord signified not those things which were to be in the day of the revealed judgment, but those which were to be done before the day of the revealed judgment. For neither was anyone in Sodom to have time to return for the things committed to repentance when the Lord rained fire and brimstone from heaven, just as neither to have space of time for the augmentation of the same, nor will anyone be able to have the power or the will when the Son of man is revealed, either to seek again the desires which he had left when ascending higher with the world, or to leave the fruits of spiritual virtues in whose exercise he had until then served.

Hoc est enim relictis in domo vasa descendendo tollere et operantibus in agro retro praeposterum ire cum omnes inopinatus iudicis adventus praeoccupans timere solummodo ac de operum suorum retributione cogitare compulerit. Sic ergo Apostolus in ipsis adhuc primordiis Novi Testamenti novissimam horam jam venisse testatur. Et si Dominus de die iudicii ac revelatione adventus sui faciens sermonem repente intulit, quid in illa hora cavendum, quid sit fidelibus agendum, quae tamen admonitis manifesta ratione probatur non ad ipsum iudicii advenientis articulum pertinere, sed potius ad vicina imminenti iudicii tempora, de quibus promissum fuerat: Venient dies quando desiderabitis videre unum diem Filii hominis et non videbitis, et dicent vobis: Ecce hic, et paulo post: Et sicut factum est in diebus Noe, ita erit et in die Filii hominis; edebant et bibebant, uxores ducebant et dabantur ad nuptias; ecce quanto magis propheta, qui, tot saeculorum voluminibus novi testamenti tempora praecurrens, prophetiae oculum longe ad speculandos extremi temporis eventus extendit, potuit de consummatione saeculi loquens ea pariter interserere, quae non jam instante, sed imminente adhuc ipsa consummatione futura cernebat. Unde libet paulo superiora loci huius prophetici, de quo quaestio est, diligentius inspicere, et quomodo partim ad diem iudicii, partim ad vicina iudicio tempora pertinebant, explicare. Praevaricantes, inquit, praevaricati sunt et praevagatione transgressorum praevariicati sunt. Haec ante diem iudicii fieri quis non videat, quando, sicut Dominus praedixit, scandalizabuntur multi et invicem tradent et odio habebunt invicem; et multi pseudoprophetae surgent, et seducunt multos, et cum abundabit iniquitas refrigescet charitas multorum? Deinde subjungit: Formido et fovea et laqueus super te qui habitator es terrae; et erit, qui fugerit a voce formidinis, cadet in foveam, et qui se explicaverit de fovea tenebitur laqueo; et haec, appropiante, non autem adhuc apparente, iudicio, temporibus, videlicet, Antichristi, ventura esse perspicuum est. Quis enim, veniente de coelis Domino, et resuscitatis in ictu oculi omnibus, vacuum de loco ad locum fugere, vel per diverse evadendi consilia mentem versare, quod huius vitae statui solum congruit?

For this is to take the vessels left in the house by descending and to go back preposterously from working in the field when the unexpected arrival of the judge, preoccupying all, shall compel them only to fear and to think about the retribution of their works. Thus therefore the Apostle, in the very beginnings of the New Testament, testifies that the last hour has already come. And if the Lord, making a discourse about the day of judgment and the revelation of his coming, suddenly brought in what was to be avoided in that hour, what was to be done by the faithful, which nevertheless is proved by manifest reason to those admonished not to pertain to the very moment of the coming judgment, but rather to the times near the imminent judgment, of which it had been promised: The days will come when you shall desire to see one day of the Son of man and you shall not see it, and they shall say to you: Behold here, and a little after: And as it was done in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the day of the Son of man; they ate and drank, they married wives and were given in marriage; behold how much more the prophet, who, preceding the times of the New Testament by the volumes of so many ages, extended the eye of prophecy far to speculate upon the events of the end time, could, when speaking of the consummation of the age, likewise intersperse those things which he saw to be future not yet when it was present, but when the consummation itself was imminent. Whence it is pleasing to look more diligently into the earlier parts of this prophetic passage, about which there is a question, and to explain how they pertained partly to the day of judgment, partly to the times near the judgment. Prevaricating, he says, they have prevaricated, and by the prevarication of transgressors they have prevaricated. Who does not see these things being done before the day of judgment, when, as the Lord foretold, many shall be scandalized and shall betray one another and shall hate one another; and many false prophets shall rise and shall seduce many, and since iniquity shall abound the charity of many shall grow cold? Then he subjoins: Dread and the pit and the snare are upon thee who art an inhabitant of the earth; and it shall be, that he who shall flee from the voice of dread shall fall into the pit, and he who shall explain himself from the pit shall be held by the snare; and it is clear that these things are to come in the times, namely, of the Antichrist, as the judgment approaches, but not yet appearing. For who, when the Lord comes from heaven and all are raised in the twinkling of an eye, would flee from place to place in a vacuum, or turn his mind through various plans of escaping, which agrees only with the state of this life?

Temporibus igitur, ut dixi, novissimae persecutionis aptius haec verba conveniunt: formido, etc., namque, quia habitatorem terrae praeoccupandum dicit, ipse est turbo praefatae persecutionis, de qua ad beatum Job Dominus, Antichristi gesta explicans, ait: Per gyrum dentium ejus formido; et ad discipulos in Evangelio: Erit enim tunc tribulatio magna, qualis non fuit ab initio mundi usque modo, neque fiet, vel quali formidine cupiebat liberari propheta, qui dicit: A timore inimici eripe animam meam. Notandum enim quod non ait a gladio inimici, sed a timore, inquit, inimici eripe animam meam, quia non hoc erat [F. orat] fortis martyr, ut non eum corporaliter occidat inimicus; sed hoc nimirum, ut non timeat eum qui occidit corpus, animam autem non potest occidere, ne forte hunc timendo offendat eum qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam, quod in certamine positus medio constat evenisse, qui, adversa non ferendo poenarum, vitam negabant aeternam. De qualibus hic dicitur: Et erit, qui fugerit a voce formidinis, cadet in foveam. Fugiens quippe a voce formidinis, cadit in foveam, qui, ob minas vel tormenta persecutoris, fidei constantiam deserens, Christum perdere non timet. Fuerunt autem nonnulli qui, violentia tormentorum coacti, Christum voce magis quam mente negarent, ideoque elapsi manibus tortorum, rursus, juvante fraterna compassione, redirent ad Christum, et quem prius timide negaverant, in ejus denuo fortiter confessione perstarent, culpamque apostasiae perfectissime, vel longo poenitentiae medicamento, vel etiam restaurato martyrum certamine, delebant. At quidem in martyrio lapsi, ne resipiscendo ad poenitentiam quam proposuerant veniamque redeundi tempus haberent, statim interficiebantur ardente adversario animas jugulare, non corpora, quibus apte congruit quod hic propheta consequenter adjungit: Et qui se explicuerit de fovea, tenebitur laqueo. Cum enim hujusmodi animarum necem a priscis Ecclesiae persecutoribus, membris videlicet diaboli, Christianis illatam noverimus, quis dubitet eandem multo amplius inferendam, ubi ipse malorum omnium dux et origo Satan asuum de abyso ad persequendam Ecclesiam caput extulerit? His autem propheta de proximo ante diem judicii tempore praedictis, adjicit consequenter ea quae bifariam, ni fallor, possunt rectissime intelligi, quod cataractae de excelsis apertae sunt, et concutientur fundamenta terrae, confractioe confringetur terra, contritione conteretur terra, commotione commovebitur terra, agitatione agitabitur terra, sicut ebrius. Potest enim et de ipso terrae elemento dictum accipi, quod tempore novissimo penitus a pristino statu commovendum sit.

Therefore, to the times of the last persecution these words more aptly agree: dread, etc., for, because he says the inhabitant of the earth is to be preoccupied, that very thing is the whirlwind of the aforesaid persecution, of which the Lord to blessed Job, explaining the deeds of the Antichrist, says: Around the circle of his teeth is dread; and to the disciples in the Gospel: For there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor shall be, from which dread the prophet desired to be liberated, who says: Deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy. For it should be noted that he does not say from the sword of the enemy, but from the fear, he says, of the enemy deliver my soul, because the brave martyr does not pray for this, that the enemy may not kill him corporally; but this surely, that he may not fear him who kills the body, but cannot kill the soul, lest perhaps by fearing him he offend him who can destroy both soul and body in hell, which is known to have happened to those placed in the midst of the contest, who, not bearing the adversity of punishments, denied eternal life. Concerning such as these it is said here: And it shall be, that he who shall flee from the voice of dread shall fall into the pit. Indeed fleeing from the voice of dread, he falls into the pit, who, because of the threats or torments of the persecutor, deserting the constancy of faith, fears not to lose Christ. Now there were some who, compelled by the violence of torments, denied Christ more by voice than by mind, and therefore having escaped the hands of the torturers, again, with the help of fraternal compassion, returned to Christ, and him whom they had before timidly denied, they thereafter firmly persisted in the confession of him, and most perfectly deleted the fault of apostasy, either by the long medicine of repentance, or even by a restored contest of martyrs. But indeed those who fell in martyrdom, lest by repenting they should have time for the repentance they proposed and the grace of returning, were immediately killed, the adversary burning to slaughter souls, not bodies, to whom that which the prophet consequently joins fits aptly: And he who shall explain himself from the pit shall be held by the snare. For since we have known such destruction of souls to have been inflicted upon Christians by the ancient persecutors of the Church, namely the members of the devil, who would doubt that the same is to be much more inflicted when the leader and origin of all evils himself, Satan, shall have raised his head from the abyss to persecute the Church? Now the prophet, having predicted these things concerning the time next before the day of judgment, consequently adds those things which can be most rightly understood in two ways, that the floodgates from on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth shall be shaken, the earth shall be broken with breaking, the earth shall be bruised with bruising, the earth shall be moved with moving, the earth shall be shaken with agitation like a drunken man. For it can be taken as said of the element of the earth itself, that in the last time it is to be thoroughly moved from its original state.

Possunt etiam terrae nomine homines qui in terra habitant designari, et ejusdem rationalis terrae concussio, confractio, contritio, commotio, agitatio sicut ebrii illa intelligi, de qua Dominus in Evangelio, cum dixisset: Erunt signa in sole et luna et stellis, subjunxit dicens: Et in terris pressura gentium; vel certe illa de qua mox addidit, prae confusione, inquit, sonitus maris et fluctuum arescentibus hominibus prae timore et exspectatione, quae superveniunt universo orbi. Quod autem addit propheta: Et auferetur quasi tabernaculum unius noctis et gravabit eam iniquitas sua et corruet et non adjiciet ut resurgat, specialiter ad diem judicii respicit, quando praeterit figura hujus mundi et ea quae nunc in illo est hominum conversatio transit. Qua de die novissimo intermista sententia, rursus ad ea quae diem novissimum terribilia praece-dunt, id est, ad interitum Antichristi praedicendum, sermonem convertit, Et erit, inquit, in die illa visitabit Dominus super militiam coeli in excelso et super reges terrae qui sunt super terram, et congregabuntur unius fascis in lacum et includentur ibi in carcerem. Visitabit Deus namque super militiam coeli in excelso cum, interfecto Antichristo, potentiam spirituum immundorum magna ex parte contriverit, quae militia coeli recte vocatur, vel quia ab initio de coelestibus ad ima corruens, vel quia commorata in aere, qui saepe in Scripturis coelum nuncupatur, pertinax cum humano genere bellandi studium gerit. Unde dicit Apostolus non esse nobis collectationem adversus carnem, sed adversus principatus et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in coelestibus. Et per prophetam Dominus futuram eorum perditionem describens: Inebriatus est, inquit, in coelo, gladius meus. In die ergo illa, id est, in tempore quo formido et fovea et laqueus maxime illius et ultimae tribulationis habitatorem terrae capturus est, quando gente contra gentem et regno consurgente adversus regnum, concutientur fundamenta terrae, et ipsa suis se invicem incolis impugnantibus confringetur, conteretur, commovebitur, agitabitur sicut ebrius, appropinquante et jamjamque imminente ablatione et ruina ipsius, visitavit Dominus super militiam coeli in excelso mittendo angelum de coelis, qui hominem illum peccati, filium perditionis, qui elevatur et extollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus aut quod colitur, ita ut in templo Dei sedeat, divina virtute perimatur: quod beatus papa Gregorius per Michaelem archangelum patrandum fore, ex Apocalypsi sancti Joannis intelligit, ubi scriptum est: Et factum est praelium in coelo Michael et angeli ejus praeliabantur cum dracone, et draco pugnabat et angeli ejus, et non valuerunt, neque locus inventus est eorum amplius in coelo.

There can also be designated by the name of the earth the men who inhabit the earth, and the shaking, breaking, bruising, moving, agitation like a drunken man of the same rational earth can be understood as that of which the Lord says in the Gospel, when he had said: There shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, he subjoined saying: And upon the earth distress of nations; or certainly that about which he soon added, by reason of confusion, saying, of the roaring of the sea and the waves, men withering for fear and expectation of the things which come upon the whole world. Moreover, that which the prophet adds: And it shall be taken away like a tabernacle of one night and its iniquity shall weigh it down and it shall fall and shall not add to rise again, specially respects the day of judgment, when the figure of this world passes away and that conversation of men which is now in it passes. By which sentence interspersed concerning the last day, again he turns his discourse to those terrible things which precede the last day, that is, to predicting the destruction of the Antichrist, saying: And it shall be in that day the Lord shall visit upon the host of heaven on high and upon the kings of the earth who are upon the earth, and they shall be gathered together of one bundle into the pit and they shall be shut up there in prison. For God shall visit upon the host of heaven on high when, the Antichrist being killed, he shall have crushed for the most part the power of the unclean spirits, which is rightly called the host of heaven, either because from the beginning falling from the heavenly places to the depths, or because staying in the air, which is often called heaven in the Scriptures, it carries on a persistent study of warring with the human race. Whence the Apostle says that we have not a wrestling against flesh, but against principalities and powers, against the world-rulers of these darknesses, against the spiritual things of wickedness in the high places. And through the prophet the Lord, describing their future perdition: My sword, he says, is inebriated in heaven. In that day therefore, that is, in the time in which dread and the pit and the snare are especially to capture the inhabitant of the earth in that last tribulation, when nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom, the foundations of the earth shall be shaken, and she shall be broken, bruised, moved, agitated like a drunken man by her own inhabitants attacking one another, with the taking away and ruin of her approaching and now imminent, the Lord visited upon the host of heaven on high by sending an angel from heaven, so that that man of sin, the son of perdition, who is elevated and extolled above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, may be destroyed by divine power: which the blessed Pope Gregory understands from the Apocalypse of Saint John to be performed through Michael the archangel, where it is written: And there was a battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

quod beatus papa Gregorius per Michaelem archangelum patrandum fore, ex Apocalypsi sancti Joannis intelligit, ubi scriptum est: Et factum est praelium in coelo Michael et angeli ejus praeliabantur cum dracone, et draco pugnabat et angeli ejus, et non valuerunt, neque locus inventus est eorum amplius in coelo. Visitabitur ergo super militiam coeli, cum perimetur Antichristus, quia et illo interempto, virtus spirituum malignorum, qui eum in ostendendis signis mendacibus juverant, infirmata cassabitur, et ipse non sine ratione potest inter militiam coeli deputari pro eo, quia se non solum super angelos omnes, verum etiam super omnem divinae majestatis celsitudinem exaltare praesumit. Visitabitur et super reges terrae, qui sunt, ministros, videlicet, Antichristi et factorum fraudumque ejus fautores et cooperatores, qui infimis ac terrenis mentibus impio dominantur imperio, quos dubium non est finiendo eodem furore suae tribulationis esse perituros. Juxta quod in omnibus, qui contra Ecclesiam exarserunt, bellorum auctoribus factum historiae tradunt. Notandum enim quod non ait aperte Super omnes reges terrae, sicut nec Super omnem militiam coeli; sed absolute, visitavit Deus, inquit, super militiam coeli in excelso, et super reges terrae, qui sunt super terram; unde licet haec non de generali omnium, sed de speciali quorundam hominum angelorumque malorum dejectione dicta intelligi; et congregabuntur in congregationem unius fascis in lacum, et includentur ibi in carcerem, de animabus dicitur eorum quorum, Domino visitante, corpora dabuntur in mortem, quae etsi non simul egressae de corpore, cunctae tamen suo quaeque in ordine eundem congregabuntur in fascem, ejusdem poenarum perennium concludentur [in] ergastulum. Juxta utique dispositionem districti judicis, ut qui pari mente impugnaverunt Ecclesiam, pariter suae theomachiae supplicium luant. Quod et de caeteris reprobis fieri doctores Ecclesiae tradunt, pares, videlicet, in culpis, pariter damnandos in poenis et haec esse quod de zizaniis ait Dominus: Alligate ea fasciculo ad comburendum, avaros cum avaris, luxuriosos cum luxuriosis, perjuros cum perjuris, et caeteros quoque peccatores cum similis culpae complicitibus, simul aeternis ignibus esse mergendos. Congregabuntur ergo, pereunte Antichristo, ministri deceptionum ejus in carcerem gehennalium poenarum, et post multos dies visitabuntur: tempore, videlicet, resurrectionis omnium, quando ad hoc tempus animae eorum modicum evocabuntur ab inferis ut, recepto corpore, statim expleto judicio, cum caeteris peccatoribus easdem relabantur in poenas. Neque huic nostrae assertioni, qua Antichristum ante multos dies advenientis judicii universalis dicimus occidendum, putet aliquis obsistere quod de ipso loquens Apostolus ait:

which the blessed Pope Gregory understands from the Apocalypse of Saint John to be performed through Michael the archangel, where it is written: And there was a battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. He shall be visited therefore upon the host of heaven when the Antichrist shall be slain, because he being killed, the power of the malignant spirits, who had aided him in showing lying signs, being weakened shall be brought to naught, and he himself not without reason can be deputed among the host of heaven for this, because he presumes to exalt himself not only above all angels, but also above all the height of divine majesty. He shall be visited also upon the kings of the earth, who are, namely, the ministers of the Antichrist and the favorers and cooperators of his deeds and frauds, who dominate with an impious empire with low and earthly minds, whom there is no doubt are to perish by the finishing of the same fury of their tribulation. According to which the histories hand down that it was done in all who burned against the Church, the authors of wars. For it should be noted that he does not say openly Upon all kings of the earth, just as not Upon all the host of heaven; but absolutely, God visited, he says, upon the host of heaven on high, and upon the kings of the earth, who are upon the earth; whence it is permitted to understand these things as said not of the general dejection of all, but of the special dejection of certain men and evil angels; and they shall be gathered in the gathering of one bundle into the pit, and they shall be shut up there in prison, it is said of the souls of those whose bodies, the Lord visiting, shall be given into death, which even if they did not go out of the body at the same time, all however each in its order shall be gathered into the same bundle, and shall be shut up in the prison of the same perennial punishments. According to the disposition of the strict judge, so that they who with like mind attacked the Church, likewise may suffer the punishment of their theomachy. Which the doctors of the Church hand down happens also concerning the rest of the reprobates, being equal, namely, in faults, likewise to be damned in punishments, and this to be what the Lord says of the tares: Bind them in bundles to burn, the avaricious with the avaricious, the luxurious with the luxurious, the perjurers with the perjurers, and all other sinners likewise with the accomplices of like fault, are together to be merged in eternal fires. The ministers of his deceptions, therefore, shall be gathered together in the prison of hellish punishments when the Antichrist perishes, and after many days they shall be visited: in the time, namely, of the resurrection of all, when for this time their souls shall be called forth for a little while from the lower regions so that, the body being received, immediately the judgment being completed, they may fall back into the same punishments with the rest of the sinners. Nor should anyone think that anything resists this our assertion, by which we say the Antichrist is to be killed many days before the coming universal judgment, what the Apostle says speaking of him:

Quem Dominus Jesus interficiet spiritu oris sui, destruet illustratione adventus sui; significat namque hoc dicendo Apostolus, quod tanta tamque terribili plaga sit conterenda ac finienda potestas illius diaboli, ut nulli dubium sit quin dominici adventus praesentia ad perdendam superbiam adfuerit, juxta quod et in Herode, qui Jacobum occidit et Petrum misit in carcerem, Scriptura gestum commemorat; et in caeteris Christianorum persecutoribus ecclesiasticae Historiae aequè factum produnt, vel certe interfecturum dicit eum spiritu oris Domini et illustratione adventus ejus destructurum, quia nimirum veniente eo ad iudicium novissima inimica destruetur mors, et omnis ad integrum cum eo qui habet mortis imperium, id est, diaboli satellitum, ejus potentia peribit. Namque quod non statim extincto illo homine peccati filio perditionis universale sit adventurum iudicium, Daniel Propheta testatur, qui in ultima suae prophetiae visione regni illius acta describens cum eundem regni tempora mille ducentis nonaginta diebus, id est, tribus semis annis, comprehenderit, repente intulit: Beatus qui exspectat et pervenit ad dies mille trecentos triginta quinque. Quem versiculum beatus presbyter Hieronymus his verbis exponit: «Beatus, inquit, qui, interfecto Antichristo, dies super numerum perfinium quadraginta et quinque praestolatur, quibus est Dominus atque Salvator in sua maiestate venturus.» Quare autem post interfectionem Antichristi quadraginta et quinque dierum silentium sit, divinae scientiae est, nisi forte dicamus dilatio regni sanctorum patientiae comprobatio est; sed et hoc notandum in eo quod scriptum est, Et post multos dies visitabuntur, quia ipsa multorum dierum appellatio congruentius huius saeculi temporibus assignetur, quae alterna dierum ac noctium vicissitudine multiplicantur, quam futuri, ubi cessantibus horarum discursibus, sanctis erit Dominus in lucem sempiternam, et impii, ligatis manibus ac pedibus, exteriores mittentur in tenebras. Ideoque recte sentiendum quia qui nunc infernalium tenebrarum carcere tenentur, post multos labentis huius saeculi dies visitentur, in illa utique hora in qua omnes qui in monumentis sunt audient vocem Domini et procedent, qui bona fecerunt, in resurrectionem vitae, qui vero mala egerunt in resurrectionem iudicii, cuius visitationis tempore fiet hoc quoque quod sequitur: Et erubescet luna et confundetur sol, id ipsum Domino in Evangelio attestante, qui ait: Statim autem post tribulationem dierum illorum, sol obscurabitur et luna non dabit lumen suum; et paulo post: Et tunc plangent omnes tribus terrae et videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus coeli cum virtute multa et maiestate, et mittet angelos suos cum tuba et voce magna et congregabunt electos ejus a quatuor ventis. Quod autem quasi sub eodem textu propheta subiungit in clausula dicens:

Whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; for the Apostle by saying this signifies that by so great and so terrible a plague the power of that devil is to be crushed and finished, that to none it may be doubtful but that the presence of the lord's coming was there to destroy pride, according to what the Scripture commemorates was done in Herod, who killed James and sent Peter into prison; and in the rest of the persecutors of Christians the ecclesiastical histories likewise produce, or certainly he says he will kill him with the spirit of the Lord's mouth and destroy him with the brightness of his coming, because namely when he comes to judgment the last enemy death shall be destroyed, and all together with him who has the power of death, that is, the power of the devil's satellites, shall perish to the full. For that universal judgment is not to come immediately upon the extinction of that man of sin the son of perdition, the Prophet Daniel testifies, who describing the deeds of that kingdom in the last vision of his prophecy, when he has encompassed the times of the same kingdom with one thousand two hundred and ninety days, that is, three and a half years, suddenly brought in: Blessed is he who waits and reaches to one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. Which verse the blessed priest Jerome explains in these words: "Blessed," he says, "is he who, the Antichrist being killed, waits forty and five days above the defined number, in which the Lord and Savior is to come in his majesty." Now why after the killing of the Antichrist there should be a silence of forty-five days, belongs to divine knowledge, unless perhaps we should say the delay of the kingdom of the saints is a proof of patience; but this also should be noted in that which is written, And after many days they shall be visited, because the very naming of many days is more congruously assigned to the times of this age, which are multiplied by the alternate vicissitude of days and nights, than of the future, where with the cessation of the courses of hours, the Lord shall be to the saints an everlasting light, and the impious, with hands and feet bound, shall be cast into outer darkness. Therefore it is rightly to be felt that those who are now held in the prison of infernal darkness shall be visited after many days of this passing age, in that hour indeed in which all who are in the monuments shall hear the voice of the Lord and shall come forth, they who have done good things, into the resurrection of life, but they who have done evil things into the resurrection of judgment, at the time of which visitation this also which follows shall happen: And the moon shall blush and the sun shall be confounded, the Lord himself in the Gospel attesting to this, who says: But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light; and a little after: And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty, and he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds. But that which the prophet subjoins as if under the same text in the conclusion saying:

Cum regnabit Dominus exercituum in monte Sion et in Jerusalem et in conspectu senum suorum fuerit glorificatus, magis exacto iudicii discrimine complebitur, cum ablati impiis, ne videant gloriam Dei, sancti omnes in supernae civitatis mansionem ad contemplandam perpetuo speciem sui Conditoris intrabunt. Ubi notandum quia, sicut hoc loco quasi pariter futura dicuntur quaeratis [F. quae ratio] manifesta discretim futura esse declarat, ita esse superius pariter et quasi sub unius diei iudicii articulo contexantur, quae partim imminente ipso die iudicii, partim jam apparente constat implenda. Quem enim legentium latet quin rubor lunae et confusio solis vel ante diem vel in ipso die sit futura iudicii, glorificatio autem Domini non ea qua cunctis in iudicio et iustis et iniustis apparebit, sed qua in conspectu senum suorum tantummodo, id est, electorum, revelabitur, tunc sit potius illis ostendenda, quando ibunt impii in supplicium aeternum, ipsi autem in vitam aeternam, quo tempore, si tamen in tempore dici libet quod aeternum est, non rubor lunae, non confusio solis jubar obscurat, sed, sicut alibi dicit idem propheta: Erit lux sicut lux solis, et lux solis erit septemplex sicut lux septem dierum, in die qua alligaverit Dominus vulnus populi sui et percussuram plagae ejus sanaverit. His de quaestione periculosissima, sancte antistes, pro modulo nostro expositis, repeto in fine quod in principiis dixi, quia non summe [F. sum] ausus dicere intellexisse quid propheta in ea sentire voluerit. Spero autem, superna donante gratia, quia nec textui propheticae lectionis nec rationi catholicae fidei sint inconvenientia quae de ea disputans scripsi. Sed nec me infructuosum meo lectori futurum credo in his quae scripsi, quem etsi in sanctuarium prophetici sensus introducere nescivi, ab aratro tamen haereticae deceptionis longius abduxi, praemonendo, videlicet, ne verba prophetae male interpretans, peccatores quosque criminibus suis inferni carcere semel damnatos credat aliquando visitatione divina revocandos ad veniam, quin potius suimet suorumque curam sedulus agat, quatenus expurgati a vitiis, ornati bonis operibus, diem expectent ultimam, quod et nunc prophetam et omnes Ecclesiae magistros docuisse dubium non est. Intercedentem pro nobis beatitudinem vestram superna gratia semper adjuvare dignetur!

EPISTOLA XVI.

De septem Epistolis canonicis.

When the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem and shall be glorified in the sight of his elders, shall rather be fulfilled when the judgment is finished, when the impious being taken away, lest they see the glory of God, all the saints shall enter into the mansion of the heavenly city to contemplate perpetually the face of their Creator. Where it should be noted that, just as in this place things to come are said as if equally which manifest reason declares are to be discretely future, so they are contexted above equally and as if under the moment of one day of judgment, which it is certain are to be fulfilled partly when the day of judgment itself is imminent, partly when it is already appearing. For what reader does not know that the blushing of the moon and the confusion of the sun is to be either before the day or in the day of judgment, but the glorification of the Lord not that in which he will appear to all both just and unjust in the judgment, but that in which he will be revealed in the sight of his elders only, that is, of the elect, is then rather to be shown to them, when the impious shall go into eternal punishment, but they themselves into eternal life, at which time, if however it is pleasing to speak of time which is eternal, not the blushing of the moon, not the confusion of the sun obscures the beam, but, as the same prophet says elsewhere: The light shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days, in the day in which the Lord shall bind up the wound of his people and shall heal the stroke of its plague. These things concerning the most perilous question, holy bishop, being set forth according to our measure, I repeat in the end what I said in the beginnings, that I have not at all dared to say I understood what the prophet wished to feel in it. But I hope, by the gift of heavenly grace, that those things which I have written disputing about it are not inconvenient either to the text of the prophetic reading or to the reason of the catholic faith. But neither do I believe that I will be unfruitful to my reader in those things which I have written, whom although I have not known how to introduce into the sanctuary of the prophetic sense, I have nevertheless led away further from the plow of heretical deception, by forewarning, namely, lest interpreting the words of the prophet badly, he believe that any sinners once damned to the prison of hell for their crimes are at some time by divine visitation to be recalled to pardon, but rather let him diligently take care for himself and his own, so that being purged from vices, adorned with good works, they may expect the last day, which it is no doubt that both the prophet now and all the masters of the Church have taught. May heavenly grace always deign to help your blessedness interceding for us!

EPISTLE XVI.

Concerning the seven canonical Epistles.

Jacobus, Petrus, Joannes, Judas septem Epistolas ediderunt, quas ecclesiastica consuetudo catholicas, hoc est, universales, cognominat. In quibus ideo prima Epistola Jacobi ponitur, quia ipse Jerosolymorum regendam suscepit Ecclesiam. In catalogo enim apostolorum priores solent nominari Petrus et Joannes. Verum fons et origo evangelicae praedicationis incipiens a Jerosolymis per orbem diffusa et universum. Cujus cathedrae dignitatem etiam Paulus apostolus in eo nominando venerans ait: Jacobus, Cephas et Joannes, qui videbantur columnae Ecclesiae, vel certe quia ipse duodecim tribubus Israelis, quae primae crediderunt, suam Epistolam misit, merito prima poni debuit; merito Petri secunda, quia ipse electis advenis, qui Graece dicuntur proselytae, hoc est, eis scripsit qui de gentilitate ad judaismum, de judaismo ad electionis evangelicae gratiam conversi sunt. Merito Joannis Epistolae tertio loco sunt positae, quia his scripsit ipse qui de gentibus crediderunt, cum nec natura nec professione exstitissent. Denique multi scriptorum ecclesiasticorum, in quibus est sanctus Athanasius, Alexandrinae praesul Ecclesiae, primam ejus Epistolam scriptam ad Parthos esse testantur. Merito Judae posita est ultima, quia quamvis et ipse magnus est, tribus tamen praecedentibus apostolis minor est; vel quia prima Jacobi scripta est Epistola, deinde Petri, post eas Joannis, ideo nunc usque ordinem quo scriptae sunt retinent. Constat enim quia beatus Jacobus tricesimo post passionem Domini anno suum consummavit martyrium; Petrus tricesimo octavo, hoc est, ultimo anno Neronis, passus est, et ipse in secunda sua scripsit Epistola: Certus sum quia velox sit depositum tabernaculi mei secundum quod et Dominus noster Jesus Christus significavit mihi per revelationem. Unde patet quia imminente passione hanc scripsit Epistolam, cum multo ante Jacobus migravit ad Christum. Neque vero conveniebat ejus Epistolas ab invicem separari, quas iisdem scripsit Ecclesiis. Porro Joannes multo post tempore suas Epistolas simul et Evangelium scripsit, qui post occisionem dominicam reversus de exilio turbatam se absente per haereticos reperit Ecclesiam, quos in suis Epistolis percutiens saepe cognominat Antichristos.

James, Peter, John, and Jude published seven Epistles, which ecclesiastical custom calls catholic, that is, universal. In which the first Epistle is placed under the name of James because he took upon himself the governing of the Church of Jerusalem. For in the catalogue of the apostles Peter and John are accustomed to be named first. But the source and origin of the evangelical preaching, beginning from Jerusalem, was diffused through the world and the universe. Venerating the dignity of whose chair even the apostle Paul, in naming him, says: James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be columns of the Church; or certainly because he sent his Epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel, which first believed, it rightly ought to have been placed first; rightly that of Peter second, because he wrote to the chosen strangers, who in Greek are called proselytes, that is, to those who were converted from gentility to Judaism, and from Judaism to the grace of evangelical election. Rightly the Epistles of John were placed in the third place, because he himself wrote to those who believed from the Gentiles, when they had existed neither by nature nor by profession. Finally, many of the ecclesiastical writers, among whom is Saint Athanasius, the prelate of the Alexandrian Church, testify that his first Epistle was written to the Parthians. Rightly that of Jude was placed last, because although he himself is also great, he is nevertheless lesser than the three preceding apostles; or because the Epistle of James was written first, then that of Peter, and after them those of John, therefore even until now they retain the order in which they were written. For it is certain that the blessed James consummated his martyrdom in the thirtieth year after the passion of the Lord; Peter suffered in the thirty-eighth, that is, the last year of Nero, and he himself wrote in his second Epistle: I am certain that the laying away of my tabernacle is swift, according to what also our Lord Jesus Christ has signified to me through revelation. Whence it is clear that he wrote this Epistle when his passion was imminent, since long before James had migrated to Christ. Nor indeed was it fitting that his Epistles be separated from one another, which he wrote to the same Churches. Furthermore, John much later in time wrote his Epistles and his Gospel together, who having returned from exile after the Lord's slaying found the Church disturbed in his absence by heretics, whom striking in his Epistles he often names Antichrists.