RIMBERT

The Life of Saint Anskar

Vita S. Anscharii

SABBATISMUS

Rimbert (c. 830–888)
Vita S. Anscharii · The Life of Saint Anskar

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Preface. To the Monks of Old Corbie

To the most holy lords, the fathers and brethren who serve as soldiers of God in the most sacred monastery of Corbie, to be remembered with singular veneration and loved in the love of Christ, the sons and disciples of the most reverend Father ANSKAR pray, in the Lord of lords, for the unending peace and salvation of everlasting happiness.

Long delighted, by the grace of the Lord, with the gift of a good shepherd, formed by his preaching and example, upheld by his merits and intercessions, and now at last left desolate by the loss of his presence, we weigh carefully what we must mourn for ourselves and what we must rejoice in for him. For this true worshipper of God, keeping himself from every evil work and abiding in the modesty of simplicity, gave us sure confidence that, taken from this world, he came without delay to God, whom he always loved with all devotion and towards whom his mind was always turned. Therefore we believe that we must truly rejoice at the prize of his reward; but for our own desolation we must needs make supplication, that we who in human terms are bereft of so great a shepherd may deserve to be defended from heaven by divine help. For, set

amid the manifold straits of affliction, we now truly feel what we have lost, and we understand well enough what we have to grieve for on our own account. While he lived, we believed that we lacked nothing. Kings honoured his holiness, the shepherds of the Churches revered it, the clergy imitated it, the whole people admired it; and while all proclaimed him holy and just, we too, as the body of such a head, seemed worthy of veneration and praise because of his goodness. But now, deprived of so great a gift, we do not presume upon our own merits; rather we tremble with a fearful heart lest, as our sins deserve, we begin to lie open to the bites of wolves. For the world, which is seated in wickedness, seeks rather to overthrow what is just and holy than to raise up what is devout; and the devil, the enemy of the human race, the holier and more devout the life he sees anyone lead, the greater the effort with which he sets every adversity against him, that he may destroy what is holy and, by cunning persuasion and wicked designs, take it away lest it be imitated by others. So we, sighing amid fearful dangers, though we fear manifold evils in this present time, yet believe that divine help will not fail us, unworthy as we are. Therefore with suppliant hearts we ask and beseech your most devout holiness to remember us and deign to intercede for us with the Lord, that his mercy may not now forsake us, but that our most kind helper may drive all harm away from us, and that he who does not desert those who hope in him may be our refuge in tribulation. Trusting, then,

in his presence, placing our hope in his mercy, and leaving to his judgement what will befall us and how we are to stand in the future, we praise and give thanks with all the affection of heart and mind for the grace of his goodness, who granted us, even for a time, to enjoy so great a patron. To your most holy fatherhood also we return boundless thanks, because by your kindness and leave we were found worthy to have such a Father: whoever is willing to imitate his example will in some manner have a heavenly way of life on earth. Whoever remembers his teaching will be able to walk without straying in the way of God's commandments. Whoever heeds the counsels of his exhortation will take care to beware of the snares of the enemy. We have therefore resolved to set down in writing the memory of this most holy Father, and to make known to your reverence in writing how he lived among us and what came to our knowledge about him, so that your affection too may join us in praising the divine clemency shown in this blessed man, and his most holy devotion may become an example of salvation to those who wish to imitate it.

HERE BEGINS THE LIFE

2. The boy Anskar is called back from empty games by a sign from heaven.

The holiness of the devout life of the most blessed Father Anskar began, by the gift of divine grace, to grow from his earliest years, and at every stage of his age it multiplied its increase

in virtues. For from infancy he was inspired from heaven by spiritual revelations, and by the grace of the Lord was often admonished by visitations from on high, so that, separating his mind from earthly things, he might long with his whole heart for the things of heaven. These revelations he had made known to some of us who were closer to him, but on the condition that they should reveal them to no one during his lifetime. These we have chosen, to the praise of the Lord, to insert into this work after his death, so that all who read may recognise with what grace the Lord deigned to correct his servant from his earliest years and thereafter to glorify him through the merits of good works that followed. He used to relate that in the time of his boyhood, when he was about five years old, his mother, a woman most devout in the fear of God, died, and not long afterwards his father sent him to school to learn letters. When he had been placed there he began, as is natural at that age, to behave childishly with his companions, and to give himself to idle running about and games rather than to apply himself to learning his lessons. And while he was thus given to the ways of childhood, it seemed to him one night that he was in a place exceedingly miry and slippery, so that he could get out of it only with great difficulty; and beside that place was a most pleasant road, on which he saw advancing a lady, as it seemed, resplendent in all adornment and dignity, and many other women clothed in white, among whom was his mother. When he recognised her, he wanted to

run to her; but he could not easily get out of that muddy and slippery place. When that company of women had drawn near to him, it seemed to him that she who appeared to be the lady of the others, and whom he believed without any doubt to be holy Mary, said to him: "Son, do you wish to come to your mother?" And when he had answered that he longed to, she went on: "If you wish to share in our will, you must flee all vanity, give up childish games, and keep yourself in seriousness of life. For we greatly abhor all that is vain and idle; and no one who delights in such things can be in our company." After this vision, then, he at once began to conduct himself more gravely and to avoid the company of children, and to busy himself more strictly with reading, meditation and other profitable things, so that his companions marvelled greatly that he had so suddenly changed to another way of life.

3. AS A MONK, HEARING OF THE DEATH OF CHARLES, HE GROWS MORE FERVENT.

After this he received the tonsure among you, and had been placed under monastic discipline; and when he had grown into youth, as human frailty crept upon him, he began little by little to grow cold in the rigour of his former purpose. Meanwhile it happened that he heard of the death of the most excellent lord, the Emperor Charles, whom he had formerly seen glorious in great power and whom he had heard to have ruled the sceptre of the kingdom laudably and with great wisdom. Struck with exceeding fear

and dread at the passing of so great an emperor, he began to come back to himself and to call to mind the words of the admonition of the holy Mother of God; and so, putting aside all levity, he began to languish with love of divine compunction, and, turning himself wholly to the service of God, he gave himself to prayer, vigils and abstinence.

4. IN ECSTASY HE IS LED BY THE SAINTS INTO PURGATORY.

While this true athlete of God persevered in these exercises of virtue, and in this abiding seriousness the world was becoming dead to him and he to the world, the holy day of Pentecost came; and as the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was poured out upon the apostles on that feast, illumined and gladdened his mind also (as we believe), it seemed to him that same night that he was to die as if by a sudden mishap, and that at the very moment of death he had called upon holy Peter the apostle and blessed John the Baptist to help him. And as his soul, so it seemed to him, went forth from the body and at once appeared in another, most beautiful bodily form, free from all mortality and care, at that same moment of death and wonder the men already named appeared. One of them was older, with white hair, straight and thick, a ruddy face, a somewhat sorrowful countenance, a garment white and coloured, and short of stature; he recognised him at once, with no one telling him, as holy Peter. The other was young,

taller in stature, his beard just growing, his hair darkish and somewhat curly, his face lean, his countenance joyful, clothed in silk; and he fully believed him to be holy John. These two stood about him, one on either side. His soul, once gone forth, seemed to itself to be at once in a boundless brightness with which the whole world was filled; and through that brightness the saints just named led him in a wonderful and unspeakable manner, without his labouring in any way. When they had come to a certain place which he knew most surely, with no one telling him, to be the fire of purgatory, they left him there; and there he suffered many things, but above all he seemed to endure the thickest darkness, the most terrible oppression and suffocation; and with all memory taken from him, he was scarcely able to think of this one thing: how any punishment could be so terrible. When he had been tormented there for three days, as he thought (a span that seemed to him longer than a thousand years because of the immense pain), the men already named returned, and, standing again on either side of him, rejoicing with far greater gladness than before and moving in all things much more sweetly, they led him on, walking with motionless step and by no bodily path, through a still greater brightness, if one may say so.

5. THEN INTO PARADISE.

And, to use his own words: "I saw," he said, "from afar, the various orders of the saints, some nearer, some farther off, standing towards the

east yet looking towards the east, and praising him who appeared in the east; some worshipped with heads bowed, others with faces upturned and hands outstretched. When we had come to the place of the east, behold, the twenty-four elders, as it is written in the Apocalypse, appeared seated on their thrones, a very wide entrance being left open; and they too, looking reverently towards the east, poured forth unspeakable praises of the Lord. The praises of those singing together gave me the sweetest refreshment; but after my return to the body I could in no way retain them. In that place of the east itself there was a wondrous splendour, light unapproachable, of exceeding and immeasurable brightness, in which was every most precious colour and every delight; and all the orders of the saints, who stood rejoicing round about, drew their joy from it. That splendour was of such greatness that I could behold neither its beginning nor its end. And although I could look all around, far and near, I could not behold what was within, in that immensity of light, but saw only its surface; yet I believed that he was there of whom Peter says: on whom the angels desire to look (1 Pet 1:12). For from him proceeded a boundless brightness, by which all the length and breadth of the saints was illumined. He too was in some manner in all, and all in him; he surrounded all without, he ruled all within by satisfying them; he protected them from above, he sustained them from below. Sun and moon did not shine there at all, nor were heaven and earth seen there. Nor was that

brightness such as to dazzle the eyes of those who beheld it, but such as to satisfy the eyes most pleasingly. And when I say that the elders were seated, they were seated in some manner in him: for nothing bodily was there, but all things were incorporeal, though having the appearance of bodies, and therefore unspeakable. Around those who were seated a splendour proceeding from him spread, like the rainbow in the clouds.

6. HE LEARNS THAT HE WILL BE A MARTYR; HOW.

"When, therefore, I had been presented by the men already named before that immensity of light, where the majesty of almighty God seemed to me to be, with no one showing me, a most sweet voice, clearer than any sound, which seemed to me to fill the whole world, came forth from that same majesty and spoke to me, saying: 'Go, and you shall return to me crowned with martyrdom.' At that voice the whole assembly of the saints, who were praising God on every side, fell silent and worshipped with faces bowed. Yet I did not see at all any form from which that voice was formed. After that voice I grew sad, because I was compelled to return to the world, but, assured by the promise that I would come back, I went back from there with my guides; and they, both going and returning, said nothing to me, but looked upon me with as tender an affection as a mother gazes upon her only son. And so I returned to the body. In going and returning there was neither toil nor delay, for wherever we

were bound, we were there at once. And though I seem to have told something of so great a sweetness of sweetnesses, I confess that the pen can in no way express as much as the mind feels. Nor does the mind itself feel it as it was: for it seemed to me to be that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man (1 Cor 2:9)." By this vision, then, which we have related in his own words just as he dictated it, the servant of God was both terrified and consoled; and he began to exercise himself more carefully in the fear of God, to cleave more ardently from day to day to good works, and to take hope from the mercy of God that he himself would arrange some occasion by which he might attain the palm of martyrdom. Yet because this did not come about bodily, under the threatening sword, we shall explain more fully, when we come to tell of his death, how by God's mercy it was fulfilled in the mortification of the cross, which he constantly bore in his body for the honour of Christ's name.

7. AS MASTER OF THE SCHOOL HE IS ADMONISHED BY CHRIST TO CONFESS HIS SINS.

After this, when he was master of the school at Saint Peter's, he had made it his custom, going to and returning from the cloister, to spend time in private prayer in the oratory of blessed John the Baptist. And two years after the vision described above, it seemed to him one night that he had turned aside into that same oratory to

pray. When he had risen from prayer, behold, a man came in through the door, tall of stature, dressed in the manner of the Jews, comely of countenance; and from his eyes the splendour of the Godhead, like a flame of fire, shone forth. Beholding him, and putting aside all hesitation, he believed him to be Christ the Lord, and, running forward, fell at his feet. And as he lay prostrate on his face, the other commanded him to rise. And when he had risen and stood reverently before him, unable to look into his face for the exceeding splendour that flashed from his eyes, he spoke to him in a gentle voice, saying: "Tell your iniquities, that you may be justified (Isa 43:26)." The servant of God answered him: "Lord, what need is there to tell you? You know all things, and nothing is hidden from you." He replied: "I do indeed know all things, but I wish men to confess their sins to me for this reason, that they may receive forgiveness." When he had declared to him all that he had done from infancy, and had afterwards cast himself down in prayer while the other stood upright, he said: "Fear not, for I am he who blots out your iniquities (Isa 43:25)." After these words he who had appeared withdrew; and the man of God, waking from sleep and strengthened in confidence that his sins were forgiven, exulted with boundless joy.

8. HE SEES THE SOUL OF FULBERT CAUGHT UP INTO HEAVEN.

It was at that time too that there happened what is very well known to your reverence: a

little boy in the school named Fulbert, struck by a companion with a writing tablet, was brought even to death. Over this the servant of God was greatly saddened, that such negligence had occurred among those under him while they were in the care of his teaching. But as the hour of the boy's death drew near, the man of the Lord happened to be lying asleep on his bed, when behold, he saw in his sleep the boy's soul taken from the body and borne to heaven by the ministry of angels, and himself, by God's arrangement, accompanying it in a wonderful and unspeakable manner. And when they had entered the secret places of heaven, he saw the boy's soul led into a dwelling of purple and placed among the ranks of the martyrs. And there it was given him to know that, because the boy had borne patiently enough the wound inflicted on him, and, loving his brother's soul even unto death, had interceded most kindly for the one who struck him, the divine goodness had rewarded his patience and kindness by numbering him among the choirs of the martyrs. And this was shown to him so swiftly, at the very hour of the boy's death, that while the child was still dying, the venerable Father Witmar (who was then directing the boys' school with him, and is present as a witness of this) woke him for this very purpose and told him of his pupil's death; and he answered that he knew it already. This the grace of the Lord surely granted him to see for his consolation, so that, since he was so deeply grieved over the matter,

he might lighten the sorrow of his heart by the salvation of the boy.

9. HE MOVES FROM OLD CORBIE TO THE NEW, WHERE HE BECOMES MASTER AND TEACHER

How greatly the man of God, inspired from heaven by these and very many other revelations and visions, afterwards grew among you in the grace of holiness and goodness will be better proved by the testimony of those of you who were present then. But since we wish to relate what was done among us, it seems that we must first inquire, for the sake of those who may know less of the matter, on what occasion he withdrew hither from the place of his stability; and, since he had been offered to God among you and had promised obedience there, by what prompting he moved to these parts and was raised among us to the office of bishop. We have thought it necessary to write this lest anyone should perhaps put down to fickleness what the man of God undertook at the prompting of divine compunction and out of love of pilgrimage for the salvation of souls. Some time ago, then, a monastery was begun in these parts, that is, in Saxony, which by the authority and direction of your holiness was both first founded and in course of time, by God's gift, happily completed; and it took a name borrowed from the place of your dwelling, so as to be called New Corbie. To this place, then, the servant of God was first sent together with others of your brethren, to fulfil there the office of teaching; and

in this he was found so approved and acceptable in everything that, by the choice of all, he also preached the word of God publicly to the people in church. And so it came about that he became the first master of the school in that place, and also the teacher of the people.

10. ON WHAT OCCASION HE WAS SENT TO DENMARK WITH KING HARALD, AT THE REQUEST OF LOUIS THE PIOUS.

After this it happened that a certain king, Harald, who held part of the kingdom of the Danes, was set upon with hatred and enmity by the other kings of that land and driven from his kingdom. He went to the most serene Emperor Louis, asking that he might be granted his help so as to be able to win back his kingdom. The emperor kept him at his side and, both in person and through others, urged him to accept Christianity, so that there might be greater friendship between them and the Christian people might come the more readily to the help of him and his men if both worshipped the one God; and at length, by the gift of divine grace, he converted him to the faith, and when he had been washed in holy baptism, he himself received him from the sacred font and adopted him as his son. When he wished to send him back to his own land, so that, protected by his help, he might seek again the borders of his kingdom, he began to inquire diligently whether he could find some man of holy devotion who could go with him and remain constantly with him, and be to him and his people a teacher

of saving doctrine, to strengthen them in receiving the faith of the Lord. The emperor therefore began to discuss this in a public assembly of his nobles, with the priests and his other faithful men, and to ask all of them earnestly to find him someone both willing and worthy for such a work.

11. THE BRETHREN DISAPPROVE OF HIS PILGRIMAGE, THOUGH WALA CONSENTS.

When all declared that they knew of no man of such devotion as would be willing to undertake so dangerous a pilgrimage for the name of Christ, there arose Wala, at that time the venerable abbot of your monastery, who told the emperor that he knew of one monk in his monastery who burned with great ardour for divine religion and longed to suffer much for the name of God; he praised both his learning and his character and declared him well suited to this work, but testified that he did not know whether he would be willing to bear such a pilgrimage. What more need be said? At the king's command Anskar was summoned to the palace, and the abbot told him all that had passed and disclosed what he was called for. He answered that he was ready for the service of God in everything that might be laid upon him under obedience. Brought, then, before the emperor, and asked by him whether he was willing, for the name of God, to become Harald's companion in order to preach the Gospel among the peoples of the Danes, he answered firmly that he was entirely willing. And when the abbot

added that he would by no means lay so heavy a burden on him by command, but that if he chose it of his own free will this would please him, and he would give him leave by his authority, he answered no less that he both chose it and was resolved to carry it out by every means. When this had been declared publicly and was known to all who lived in the abbot's household, many began to marvel at so great a change in him: that, leaving his homeland and his kinsfolk, and the sweetest affection of the brethren with whom he had been brought up, he should wish to seek out foreign nations and live among strangers and barbarians. Many also cursed him for it and assailed him with reproaches; some tried to call him back from his purpose. But the man of God remained immovable in the resolve he had begun. And while the abbot went to the palace every day, he stayed at home, shunned the company of all, and, choosing for himself a solitary spot in a vineyard nearby, gave himself to prayer and reading.

12. AUTBERT JOINS HIM.

There was also then with the lord abbot a brother of your monastery named Autbert, who, seeing him so anxious and sad, keeping himself apart every day and seeking no one's company or conversation, began to feel for him. And one day, going to the place in the vineyard where he sat alone, he began to ask him whether he truly wished to undertake that pilgrimage. Supposing that he was asking not out of compassion but

rather out of guile, he answered: "What concern is this of yours? Do not trouble my mind with such questioning." But the other assured him that he intended no deceit whatever in the matter, but rather truly wished to know whether he meant to persevere in the purpose he had set before him. Then, welcoming his goodwill, he replied: "I have been asked whether I am willing, for the name of God, to go to foreign peoples to preach the Gospel of Christ; I have by no means dared to resist this proposal; rather I long with all my strength that the means of going may be granted me, and no one will be able to turn my mind from this intention." Then the brother answered him: "And I will never let you go alone; for the love of God I desire to set out with you, if only you will obtain for me the leave of the lord abbot." When this devout agreement had been settled between them, he went to meet the abbot on his return and told him that he had found a companion who was willing to go with him on this journey of his own accord. When the abbot asked who he was, and he named Brother Autbert, the abbot was amazed and astonished, never thinking that one who was of noble lineage in the world and at that time close to him, and was regarded as the steward of his household next after himself, would wish for such things; nevertheless he summoned him and questioned him about it. He answered that he could not possibly allow Anskar to go alone, but that for the name of Christ he wished to be his comfort and help, if he had his leave and that of the brethren.

The lord abbot answered that he would give him leave if he chose this journey of his own accord, but that he would assign them no companion from his household to serve them, unless perhaps they themselves could persuade someone to go with them of his own will. The venerable abbot did this not from want of affection, but because it seemed abominable and unjust that anyone should be compelled against his will to live among pagans.

13. BOTH SET OUT FOR DENMARK WITH HARALD. THEY ARE WELL RECEIVED AT COLOGNE. THEY REACH THE BORDERS OF THE DANES.

After this both were brought to the king; and he, delighted with their will and desire, gave them vessels for the church's ministry, chests and tents, and the other provisions that seemed necessary for so long a journey; and he commanded them to go with Harald, charging them to devote the greatest care to his faith and to labour constantly, by devout exhortation, that he and his men who had been baptized with him should not be led back by the devil's prompting into their former errors, and at the same time to urge others vigorously, by the word of preaching, to receive Christianity. Dismissed by the emperor, then, they had no companion to do them any service, since no one of the abbot's household would go with them of his own accord, and he would not compel anyone to it against his will. Harald too, to whom they had been entrusted, being still

untaught and a neophyte, did not know how servants of God ought to be treated. His men also, lately converted and brought up very differently, paid them little attention. Undertaking this pilgrimage, then, with great difficulty, they came to Cologne, where the venerable bishop of that time, Hadebald, taking pity on their need, gave them an excellent ship in which to stow their belongings, with two little cabins very well fitted out. When Harald saw it, he chose to stay with them in that same ship, so that he had one cabin and they the other; and so friendship and goodwill began to grow between them, and from then on his men too served them more attentively. From there they went on by way of Dorestad and, passing through the neighbouring lands of the Frisians, came to the borders of the Danes. And because King Harald could not for the time being remain peacefully in his own kingdom, the emperor gave him a benefice beyond the Elbe, so that he might stay there whenever it was necessary.

14. THEY INSTRUCT THE PAGANS AND OPEN SCHOOLS FOR BOYS. AUTBERT DIES AT CORBIE.

The servants of God, then, living with him, sometimes among Christians and sometimes among pagans, began to devote themselves to the word of God and to urge whomever they could towards the way of truth. Many were converted to the faith by their example and teaching, and those who were being saved in the Lord

increased daily. Inspired by divine love to spread the religion of their devotion, they also began to seek out with care boys whom they might buy and bring up for the service of God. Harald also placed some of his own people under their care to be taught; and so it came about that in a short time they established a school there of twelve boys or more. They also gathered to themselves other servants and helpers from here and there, and their fame and religion in the name of God began to grow more fruitfully. When they had remained in this holy purpose for two years or more, it happened that Brother Autbert was afflicted by a grievous illness. For this reason he was taken from there to New Corbie, and, as his long sickness grew worse, he ended his last day there at Eastertide, by a happy passing (as we believe), just as had been revealed to him beforehand by the Lord.

15. WHEN THE SWEDES ASK FOR PREACHERS, ANSKAR IS SENT TO THEM BY LOUIS, FIRED WITH THE DESIRE TO SUFFER BY A HEAVENLY VISION.

Meanwhile it happened that envoys of the Swedes came to Louis, who, among the other matters of their embassy, made known to the most merciful emperor that there were many in their nation who desired to receive the worship of the Christian religion. And their king, they said, was well enough disposed to allow priests of God to be there; only they hoped to obtain from his generosity that he would send them suitable

preachers. Hearing them, the most religious emperor was overjoyed, and began once more to seek men to send to those parts, who might find out whether that people was ready to believe, as the envoys had said, and begin to hand on to them the worship of the Christian religion. And so it came about that the most serene emperor again began to consult with your abbot whether he might perhaps find one of his monks willing to go to those parts for the name of Christ, or at least one who would stay with Harald, so that the one who was with him, Anskar the servant of God, might undertake that mission. For this reason it came about that he was summoned from there to the palace by the king's command. And he was told not to shave before he came into the emperor's presence. The man of God, knowing full well beforehand what he was being called for, began to burn with all the fervour of his heart in the love of God, and to count it all joy if he might be allowed to devote himself to winning souls. And whatever opposition or adversity might befall him on such a journey, he resolved in his heart to bear patiently for Christ; nor did he carry any doubt in his heart about such a work, since he was consoled by the gift of a divine vision which he had seen beforehand. For at the time mentioned above, when he was living among you and had already been inspired from heaven by two visions, it seemed to him one night that he had come into a house where many of the order of preachers stood ready for the office of preaching; and before them he was suddenly

rapt in ecstasy of mind, and saw that the brightness of an immense light, sent down from heaven above the rays of the sun, shone round about him. And as he wondered what this might be, a voice, almost like the one he had related that he heard in the first vision, came to him, saying: "Your sin is forgiven." Inspired by the divine Spirit, as we believe, he answered him, saying: "Lord, what do you wish me to do?" And again the voice sounded, saying: "Go and proclaim the word of God to the nations." Pondering this vision in his mind, the servant of God rejoiced gladly in the Lord, seeing that what he had been commanded was already in part fulfilled, and desiring, to heap up still more his labour, to proclaim the word of God to the Swedes as well.

16. HE IS GIVEN WITMAR AS COMPANION, GISLEMAR TAKING HIS PLACE IN DENMARK. HE IS ROBBED BY PIRATES.

Brought, then, before the emperor and asked by him whether he was willing to undertake this mission, he answered freely that he was ready for whatever the emperor should decree by his authority to lay upon him for the name of Christ. Then, by God's providence, the venerable abbot found him a companion from your brotherhood, Dom Witmar, well worthy and willing for so great a work. And to be with Harald he appointed the most devout Father Gislemar, proved in faith and good works and most fervent in zeal for God. He undertook, then, the mission laid on him by the emperor: to go to the regions of the

Swedes and find out whether that people was ready to believe, as the envoys had made known. What evils and how grievous he suffered on that mission, Father Witmar, who was there, will be better able to tell. Let it be enough for us to relate this much: that when they were about halfway on their journey, they fell in with pirates. The merchants who were travelling with them defended themselves manfully and at first won the victory; but in a second encounter they were defeated and overcome by the same pirates, who took from them their ships and all they had, and they themselves barely escaped, fleeing to land on foot. There they lost the royal gifts which they were to have carried there and all that they had, except some small things which they happened to be able to take and carry with them as they leapt from the ship. Among these losses, plundered by the pirates, were almost forty books which they had gathered for the service of God. When this had happened, and some were minded to turn back and others to go on, the servant of God could by no means be turned aside from the journey he had begun; rather, leaving to God's will whatever might befall him, he resolved by no means to return until he learnt, at God's bidding, whether leave to preach could be had in those parts.

17. KINDLY RECEIVED BY THE KING OF SWEDEN, HE HAPPILY UNDERTAKES THE CONVERSION OF THE PEOPLE.

After this, travelling with great difficulty on foot along a very long road, and crossing by boat

the seas that lay between where it was fitting, they came at length to a port of their kingdom called Birka, where they were kindly received by their king, who was named Björn, when his messengers had reported why they had come. Having learnt the purpose of their mission, and having discussed the matter with his faithful men, he gave them, with the like wish and consent of all, leave to remain there and preach the Gospel of Christ, granting freedom to whoever wished to seek their teaching. So the servants of God, with eager hearts, seeing that what they had longed for had turned out well, began to proclaim the word of salvation to the people living there. And there were many who favoured their mission. Many Christian captives too were held among them, who rejoiced that at last they could share in the mysteries; and it was proved that everything was truly as their envoys had made known to the most serene emperor, and not a few devoutly sought the grace of baptism. Among them the prefect of the town and the king's counsellor, very dear to him, named Herigar, received the gift of holy baptism and stood most firm in the Catholic faith. He built a church on his own inherited land and exercised himself most devoutly in the service of God. Various signal deeds of this man are recorded, and many proofs of his unconquered faith are attested, which we shall set out more clearly in what follows.

18. ANSKAR REPORTS THE MATTER TO THE EMPEROR.

When they had spent a year and a half among them, the servants of God returned to the most serene emperor with sure proof of their mission and with letters drawn up by the king's own hand in their fashion; and, received by him with honour and with the greatest kindness and goodwill, they told him how great things the Lord had done with them, and that a door of faith had been opened in those parts for the calling of the nations. Hearing this, the most devout emperor rejoiced with immense joy; and recalling at the same time what had already been begun long before among the Danes for the worship of God, and giving praise and thanks to almighty God, he was kindled with the ardour of faith and began to consider how he might establish an episcopal see in the regions of the North, that is, at the edge of his empire, from which it would be fitting for a bishop residing there to visit those parts often for the sake of preaching, and from which also all those barbarous nations might more easily and more abundantly receive the sacraments of the divine mystery. While he pursued this concern with watchful care, he learnt from some of his faithful men that when his father of glorious memory, the Emperor Charles, had subdued all Saxony by the sword, brought it under the yoke of Christ and divided it into bishoprics, he had committed the farthest part of that province, which lay to the north beyond the Elbe, to the protection of none of the bishops, but had decided to reserve it in order to establish there an archiepiscopal see, from which, by the grace of the Lord,

the spread of the faith might advance to foreign nations as well. For this reason he had first had a church consecrated there by a bishop of Gaul named Amalarius. Afterwards he committed that parish to a priest named Heridag, to govern it specially; and he would by no means allow the neighbouring bishops to have any authority over that place. He had also arranged for this priest to be consecrated bishop, but his own swift passing from this light prevented it.

19. HE OBTAINS THE SEE OF HAMBURG, DESIGNATED BY CHARLES AND ESTABLISHED BY LOUIS. HE IS CONSECRATED ARCHBISHOP.

After the death of that emperor of so great memory, when his son, namely the Emperor Louis already mentioned, had been set on the throne of his kingdom, at the suggestion of certain persons he divided that part of the province which lay beyond the Elbe into two, and entrusted it for the time being to two neighbouring bishops. For he did not pay sufficient heed to his father's arrangement in this matter, or else he was entirely unaware of it. But now that this occasion had arisen, since the faith of Christ had begun by the grace of God to bear fruit in the regions of the Danes and the Swedes, having learnt of his father's wish, and lest any part of his endeavour remain unfinished, with the consent of the bishops and a great gathering of the synod he established an archiepiscopal see in that farthest region of Saxony beyond the

Elbe, in the city of Hamburg, to which the whole Church of the Nordalbingians should be subject, and to which should belong authority over all the northern regions, to appoint bishops or priests to be sent into those parts for the name of Christ. To this see, then, the emperor had our lord and Father Anskar solemnly consecrated archbishop by the hands of Drogo, bishop of Metz and at that time archchaplain of the high and holy dignity of the palace, in the presence of the archbishops Ebbo of Reims, Hetti of Trier and Otgar of Mainz, together with many other prelates assembled at the imperial diet; with the bishops Helingaud and Willerich also present, consenting and consecrating with them, to whom those parts of that diocese had been entrusted. And because that diocese was situated in dangerous places, lest it should in some way perish through the threatening savagery of the barbarians, and because it was in every respect small, he gave to his mission a monastic cell in Gaul called Torhout, to serve that same see in perpetuity.

20. CONFIRMED BY GREGORY IV, HE IS MADE LEGATE TO THE PEOPLES OF THE NORTH.

And so that all this might keep the enduring strength of permanence, he sent him with honour to the Apostolic See, and through his envoys, the venerable bishops Bernold and Ratold and the most illustrious Count Gerold, he had the whole arrangement made known to the most holy Pope Gregory for confirmation. And he con-

firmed it, both by the authority of his decree and by the gift of the pallium, after the manner of his predecessors; and he appointed Anskar, there in his presence, as legate among all the surrounding peoples of the Swedes and Danes, and also of the Slavs and of the other nations settled in the regions of the North, together with Ebbo, archbishop of Reims, who had earlier received that same legation; and before the body and confession of the holy apostle Peter he gave him public authority to preach the Gospel; and lest any of this should in future be made void, he smote with the sword of anathema all who should resist or oppose, or in any way plot against, these holy endeavours of the most pious emperor, and condemned the guilty to everlasting punishment with the devil's portion. Now, as we have said, this same legation had earlier been entrusted by the authority of Pope Paschal to Ebbo, archbishop of Reims. For he, inspired (as we believe) by the divine Spirit, burned with a most fervent desire for the calling of the nations, and above all of the Danes, whom he had often seen at the palace and grieved to see deceived by the devil's error; and for the name of Christ he longed to give himself and all he had for the salvation of the nations. The lord emperor had also given him a place beyond the Elbe called Welanao, so that whenever he went to those parts he might have a place to stay there. He came to that place many times, and for the winning of souls he spent much in the regions of the North, and joined very many to the

Christian religion and strengthened them in the Catholic faith.

21. HE RECEIVES BISHOP GAUTBERT AS HIS HELPER, AND OTHERS FROM OLD CORBIE.

After the ordination of our lord and Father Anskar related above, it seemed necessary to them, as they conferred together about that legation, that someone should be ordained as his helper to carry out the office of the episcopal ministry in the regions of the Swedes: for in a land lying so far away a bishop ought to be present in person, and he alone was hardly sufficient for both places. With the consent and will of the emperor, therefore, the venerable Ebbo sent to the regions of the Swedes a kinsman of his named Gautbert, chosen for this work and adorned with the episcopal dignity; he gave him abundantly vessels for the church's ministry and the necessary means, both from his own resources and from the king's gift, and, as one who had earlier received the office of preaching there by apostolic authority, he appointed him as legate among the peoples of the Swedes in his own stead. To him also the most merciful emperor afterwards, at the suggestion of the same venerable bishop Ebbo, gave the cell which Ebbo had built at the place called Welanao, as a place of refreshment, that it might serve the ministry of his office in perpetual stability. So Gautbert, whom those who consecrated him called Simon, in honour of the apostle's name, came to the regions of the Swedes and was received with honour by both king and people;

and with the goodwill and accord of all he began to build a church there and to preach the Gospel of the faith publicly; and there was joy of salvation among the Christians living there, and from day to day the number of believers increased. Meanwhile our lord and shepherd too was zealously fulfilling his office in the diocese entrusted to him and in the regions of the Danes, and by the example of his good life he drew many to the grace of the faith. He also began to buy some boys of the Danish and Slav peoples, and to ransom others from captivity, to bring them up for the service of God. Some of them he placed in the cell of Torhout to be brought up; and with him here were holy Fathers and masters of ours from your community, by whose teaching and training the renown of divine religion happily grew among us.

22. WHEN HAMBURG IS LAID WASTE BY PIRATES, ANSKAR BEARS THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS PATIENTLY.

But while these things were being done in both regions in a praiseworthy manner and worthily of God, it happened that pirates came unexpectedly and surrounded the city of Hamburg with their ships. Since this happened unexpectedly and suddenly, there was no time to gather the people of the district; for the count who at that time held the governorship of the place, the most illustrious Bernhar, was then absent. The lord bishop, who was there with those in the city itself or living in the suburb, wished at first, when he heard of their coming, to hold

the place until greater help should come; but as the pagans pressed on and the city was already besieged, seeing that they could not be resisted, he made arrangements for the precious relics of the saints to be carried away. And so, his clergy scattered in flight this way and that, he himself barely escaped, without even his cloak. The people too, leaving the place and wandering hither and thither, many fled, some were captured, and very many were killed. Then the enemy, having sacked the city and plundered everything in it and in the neighbouring village, since they had arrived in the evening, remained there that night with the following day and night; and so, when everything had been burnt and plundered, they departed. There the church, built with wonderful workmanship under the direction of the lord bishop, together with the cloisters of the monastery, wonderfully laid out, was set on fire. There the library which the most serene emperor had bestowed on our Father, most excellently written, perished in the fire together with many other books; and so everything he had had there, whether in vessels for the church's ministry or in other treasures and goods, was carried off by the enemy's assault, either by plunder or by fire, so that they left him as it were naked. For almost nothing had been carried out beforehand, nor was anything saved then, except what each one in flight happened to snatch up and could perhaps take away with him. For all this our lord and most holy Father was in no way troubled in mind, nor did he sin with his lips; but having lost

as it were in a moment almost all that he had been able to gather or put into the fabric of buildings from the beginning of his episcopate, he often repeated those words of blessed Job: The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).

23. GAUTBERT IS HARASSED BY THE SWEDES; NITHARD IS SLAIN.

When these things had happened in this way, and the lord bishop and his people were in many afflictions and calamities, and the brethren of his community, going round various places with the most holy relics, wandered this way and that and nowhere settled in peace, the scheming of the wicked one prevailed, and it came about by the devil's prompting that the people of the Swedes, inflamed with the heat of zeal, began to persecute Bishop Gautbert by treachery; and it happened that a part of the people, by common agreement, broke into the house where he was staying in order to plunder it, and slew with the sword his nephew, named Nithard, and, striking him down out of hatred for the Christian name, made him (as we believe) a martyr of God. Gautbert himself, with the other companions who were with him, they bound, and plundering all they could find among them, they drove them from their borders, loaded with insults and reproaches; this, however, was done not by the king's command but only by a conspiracy of the people. But the clemency of the divine majesty by no means al-

lowed this to go unpunished: almost all who took part were punished within a short time, though in different ways. Much could be said of them; but lest we weary our readers, we have taken care to mention only one, so that from his ruin it may be made plain with what punishment the rest were requited.

24. THE SWEDES ARE PUNISHED.

There was a powerful man in that land whose son had been in that conspiracy with the others, and he brought into his father's house what had fallen to him from the spoils taken there. After this his wealth began to dwindle, and his cattle and household to perish; the son himself, struck by divine vengeance, died; and his wife too, with a son and a daughter, died not long after. When he saw himself bereft of all his goods except one little son, the wretched man began to dread the anger of the gods, and turned over in his mind that he was suffering all this through offending some god. For this reason, as is the custom there, he went to a soothsayer, asking him to tell him which god he had offended and how he ought to appease him. The man, having performed the rites he was accustomed to observe in such worship, told him that all their gods were well disposed towards him, but that the God of the Christians was utterly hostile to him: "Christ," he said, "has thus brought you to ruin; and because something that was consecrated to him is kept hidden in your house, therefore all these evils which you have suffered have come upon you;

nor will you be able to be freed from them as long as it remains in your house." Hearing this, and anxiously pondering what it might be, he remembered that his son had brought a certain book into his house from those spoils. Struck with exceeding dread at this, and since there was then no priest present there, not knowing at all what to do with the book, he by no means dared keep it with him any longer. At last, having with difficulty found a plan, he brought it before the people who lived in that village and told them what he had suffered. And when they all said they knew of no counsel in the matter and were afraid to receive or keep any such thing in their houses, he, dismayed at the thought of keeping it longer with him, wrapped it decently and tied it to a fence, declaring that whoever wished might take it from there; and he vowed to the Lord Jesus Christ a voluntary satisfaction for the guilt he had incurred. A certain Christian took the book from there and brought it into his house, and from his mouth we learnt these things too; he afterwards became a man of great faith and devotion, so that later, among us, he learnt the psalms by heart without letters. In this way, then, the others too were punished, by death, by pestilence or by loss of their goods; and it was clear to all that those who had presumed to treat the holy bishop of God and his people shamefully and to plunder them had felt the most grievous vengeance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

25. AFTER SEVEN YEARS ANSKAR SENDS ARDGAR TO THEM.

After this that place was for almost seven years without the presence of a priest; and on this account our lord and shepherd Anskar, deeply anxious and grieved, unable to bear that the faith of the Christian religion begun there should perish, and above all feeling for his son Herigar, of whom we spoke above, sent to those parts a hermit named Ardgar, and charged him to attach himself especially to Herigar. When he arrived there he was dutifully received by Herigar himself, and his presence brought great joy to the Christians who were there. And they began, as they had done at first, to seek devoutly the things of God and to keep the rite of Christianity with willing hearts. Nor did any unbeliever dare to resist his preaching, for they remembered with fear what punishment had fallen on those who had driven the servants of God out from there. And at the suggestion of Herigar, by the command and leave of the king who then reigned, he began to celebrate the mysteries of God publicly. This most faithful man Herigar, at the time when there was no priest present there, endured many insults from the unbelievers; but by the gift of divine grace, at his prayer the true faith was proclaimed by heavenly signs. Of these, as we promised, we have taken care to insert some here, so that the unconquered spirit of his faith may be made known.

26. HERIGAR, HAVING HIMSELF SUFFERED MUCH, WORKS MIRACLES.

Once, for instance, he was sitting in an assembly, a canopy having been set up in a field for the meeting; and there, when among other talk they had praised their gods, by whose favour many good things came to them, and reproached him because he alone, apart from the fellowship of all, strayed in an empty faith, he, fervent in spirit as he was, is said to have answered: "If there is so great a doubt about the divine majesty, which nevertheless ought in no way to be doubtful, let us prove by miracles which is of greater power: your many so-called gods, or my one almighty Lord Jesus Christ. See, the time for rain is here (for rain was then threatening): call you upon the names of your gods that the rain may not fall upon you, and I will call upon my Lord Jesus Christ that not one drop of rain may touch me; and whichever on this side hears those who call upon him, let him be God." When this agreement had been made between them, they all sat on one side and he with one boy on the other, and each of them began to call upon his god, while he called upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And an immense rain came down from heaven and so drenched them all with water that they seemed to have been thrown into a river with their clothes on; even the leaves of the branches of the shelter made there, falling upon them, showed that they were overwhelmed by divine power; but upon him and the boy who was with him not a single drop of rain fell. When this had happened, and they

were confounded and amazed, he said: "See, you behold who is God: do not, unhappy men, call me away from his worship; rather be ashamed of your errors and learn the way of truth."

27. FURTHER MIRACLES OF THE SAME MAN.

At another time it happened that he suffered such pain in his leg that he could not move at all from the place where he was unless he was carried. As he bore this affliction for a long time, many began to come to visit him; some urged him with exhortations to sacrifice to the gods for his recovery, others assailed him with reproaches that he was without a god and that was why he lacked health. When this had happened often, and he steadfastly resisted their evil suggestions, at last, unable to bear their slander, he answered that he would by no means seek help from empty idols, but from his Lord Jesus Christ, who could heal him of his infirmity in a moment if he so willed. And at once he called his servants and ordered them to carry him to his church; and there, placed before all who stood by, he poured out suppliant prayers to the Lord, saying: "My Lord Jesus Christ, that these wretched men may know that you alone are God and there is no other besides you, grant to me your servant in this hour the former health of my body, so that your enemies, seeing your mighty works, may be confounded in their errors and turned to the knowledge of your name. Do, I pray, what I ask, for the sake of your holy name, which is blessed for ever; let there be no confusion, Lord, for those

who trust in you." After these words, healed by divine grace, he was at once restored to perfect health, and, walking out of the church by himself, he gave thanks to God for his recovery, and, growing strong in the faith of Christ, he confounded the unbelievers more and more.

28. KING ANUND ATTACKS THE PEOPLE OF BIRKA WITH THE DANES.

About the same time it happened that a king of the Swedes named Anund, driven from his kingdom, was living in exile among the Danes. Wishing to regain the borders of what had once been his kingdom, he began to seek help from them, promising that if they followed him they could win many gifts. For he held out to them the town called Birka, because there were many rich merchants there, and abundance of every good thing, and much treasure of money. To that town he promised to lead them, where, without loss to their army, they would gain great advantage for their needs. Delighted with the promised rewards and greedy to acquire treasure, they filled twenty-one ships with men ready for battle to help him, and sent them with him. He himself had eleven ships of his own. Setting out, then, from the Danes, they came unexpectedly to that town; and it happened that their king was then far away, and the chief men and the mass of the people could not be gathered. Only Herigar, the prefect of the place, was present, with the merchants and people who lived there. Placed in great straits, they fled to the stronghold that

was nearby; and they began to promise and offer vows and sacrifices to their gods, or rather to demons, that by their help they might be saved in such peril. But because the stronghold was not very strong and they were few to resist, they sent envoys to them asking for a pledge of peace and a treaty. The king sent them word that they should pay a hundred pounds of silver for the ransom of the town, and so they would have peace. They sent it at once, as he asked, and it was received by the king.

29. HERIGAR PERSUADES THE PEOPLE OF BIRKA TO CALL UPON CHRIST.

But the Danes, taking such an agreement ill because things had not been done as they had planned, began to wish to fall upon them suddenly and plunder the place utterly and burn it, saying that any one merchant there had more than had been offered to them, and that they could by no means put up with such a trick. While they were discussing this among themselves and preparing to sack the stronghold in which the people had taken refuge, this too became known to the people. Gathering together again, since they had no strength at all to resist and no hope of refuge, they urged one another to offer greater vows and sacrifices to their gods. Angered at them, Herigar, the faithful man of the Lord, said: "Cursed by our God be your vows and sacrifices, together with your idols. How long will you serve demons and reduce yourselves to poverty, to your own ruin, with empty vows? See, you have

offered much and vowed more, and on top of that you have given a hundred pounds of silver: what has it profited you? See, they are coming to plunder all you have; they will lead your wives and your children captive, they will set fire to the stronghold and the town, and you will perish by the sword. What, then, do your idols profit you?" At these words all who were there were terrified and, not knowing what to do, answered with one voice: "Let our safety and our counsel rest on your judgement; whatever you advise us, we will do without hesitation." He said to them: "If you wish to make vows, vow and pay them to almighty God, who reigns in heaven, and whom I serve with a pure conscience and right faith. He is the Lord of all; all things are placed in his will, and there is none who can resist his rule. If, then, you seek his help with your whole heart, you will find that his almighty power will not fail you." Taking his advice, then, they went out with one accord and of their own free will into the field, as was the custom there, and vowed to the Lord Christ a fast and almsgiving for their deliverance.

30. WHEN THIS IS DONE THEY ARE DELIVERED FROM THE ENEMY'S ATTACK.

Meanwhile the king began to urge the Danes to inquire by lot whether it was the will of the gods that the place should be laid waste by them. "There are many powerful gods there," he said; "a church too was once built there, and the worship of Christ is practised there by many Christians; and he is the strongest of the gods, and able to

help those who hope in him in whatever way he wills. We must therefore of necessity inquire whether you are moved to this by the will of the gods." This they could by no means refuse, since such was their custom. The question was put to the lots, then, and it was found that they could by no means accomplish this with good fortune, and that the place had not been granted by God to be plundered by them. Again the question was put as to which direction they should go to win money for themselves, so as not to return home empty, cheated of a vain hope. The lot fell that they should go to a certain city lying far from there, in the lands of the Slavs. Believing, then, that this had been commanded them by the gods, the Danes withdrew from that place and hastened to that city by a direct course; falling upon its people, who were living in quiet and security, they took the city by arms without warning, and having seized much spoil and treasure in it, they returned home. And the king who had come to plunder them made a treaty of peace with them, returned the silver he had received from them, and stayed among them for some time, wishing to be reconciled with his people. And so the grace of the Lord, for the faith of his servant Herigar, delivered the people of that place from the enemy's attack and restored them to their goods.

31. HERIGAR URGES THE INHABITANTS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST; THEN HE DIES DEVOUTLY.

When this had happened, he set the matter before a public assembly and urged them to consider more attentively who was God, saying: "Alas, wretched men, understand now at least how vain it is to seek help from demons, who cannot come to your aid in tribulation! Receive the faith of my Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have proved to be the true God, who granted you the help of his mercy when you had no refuge. Seek no longer superstitious worship, nor appease idols with empty sacrifice. Worship the true God, who rules over all things in heaven and on earth, and submit yourselves to him; adore his almighty power." After this, the more eager as he was made the stronger in faith by the Lord's frequent benefits, he proclaimed to all publicly, wherever he was, partly with exultation, the power of the Lord and the grace of the faith. And so he carried on the good fight to the end of his life; and when the course of good works was finished, as his sickness grew worse, with the priest Ardgar standing by, he was commended to the divine clemency, received holy communion and died happily in Christ. Much more could still be said of the constancy of his faith, but because we have aimed at brevity, let what has been said suffice.

32. FRIDEBURG, CONSTANT IN THE FAITH, HAS WINE KEPT FOR HER VIATICUM.

In those times also there was among them a very devout matron, whom no perversity of the wicked could ever turn from the uprightness of her faith. Often, whenever she was in any

need, it was suggested to her that she should sacrifice to the idols after their custom; but she, immovable, did not abandon the duties of her faith, saying that it was vain to seek help from dumb and deaf images, and that it seemed to her abominable to turn again to those things which she had renounced in baptism and to break the pledge she had made to Christ. "For if it is evil," she said, "to lie to men, how much more to God? And if it is good to keep faith among men, how much more ought one who receives the faith of the Lord never to be turned from it? My Lord Jesus Christ," she said, "is almighty. If I persevere in his faith, he will be able to grant me both health and all that I may need." This devout woman, named Frideburg, praiseworthy in goodness of life and constancy of faith, prolonged the days of her life into old age. When the day of her death was already drawing near, and since the departure of Dom Simon there was then no priest there, out of love for the sacrifice, which she had heard was the viaticum of Christians, she had a little wine kept in a small vessel, and charged her daughter, on her faith, that when her last hour was at hand she should let some drops of that wine fall into her mouth, since she did not have the sacrifice, so that even in this way she might commend her passing to the grace of the Lord. That wine was kept by her for almost three years; and so it happened that the priest Ardgar came there. While he was there, she practised the devotion of her religion as long as she had strength, earnestly seeking from him the solemnities of Mass and

salutary counsel. But meanwhile, overtaken by sickness, she began to grow weak; anxious about her death, she had the priest summoned to her, and, receiving from his hand the viaticum she had longed for, she passed happily to the Lord.

33. SHE ORDERS HER GOODS TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO THE POOR. AS HER DAUGHTER CARRIES IT OUT, THE MONEY DOES NOT DIMINISH.

She, always intent on almsgiving, since she was rich in the goods of this world, had charged her daughter, named Catla, to distribute to the poor, after her departure from this light, all that was hers. "And because the poor are few here," she said, "after my death, as soon as the opportunity comes to you, sell everything that has not been distributed here, take the silver with you and go to Dorestad; there are many churches there, and priests and clerics, and a multitude of the needy. When you arrive there, look for faithful people to teach you how to distribute it, and give it all away for the good of my soul." After her mother's death, then, the daughter diligently carried out what her mother had commanded; she set out on the journey and, arriving at Dorestad, sought out devout women there to go round the holy places with her and instruct her what she should give to each. One day, when they were going round the holy places to distribute alms and half had already been given away, she said to her companions: "Now we are tired; it is better that some wine be bought to refresh us,

and then we shall finish what we have begun." So four pence were given for this, and, their strength restored, they finished what they had begun. When this was done, she returned to her lodging and put the bag in which the silver had been, now empty, in a certain place; but by the gift of heaven, going to that place again, she found it full as it had been before. Astonished at so great a miracle, she called to her the women who had gone with her before and showed them what had happened to her; and counting in their presence what was in it, she found as much as she had brought there, except for the four pence. Taking their advice, then, she went to the priests who seemed most worthy of trust there and made the miracle known to them. They, praising the grace of God for such great goodness, told her that the Lord had rewarded her labour and good intention with this. "Because," they said, "you have been obedient to your mother, kept your faith towards her unbroken and diligently carried out her alms-giving, the Lord, who rewards all good deeds, has bestowed this on you to help in your need; he is sufficient for all and needs nothing; he will repay in the heavenly kingdom all that is distributed in his name. So that you should in no way doubt that this is so, and that you should not regret the distribution of the wealth you gave, God has deigned to assure you by this miracle. By this sign believe firmly that your mother is safe with the Lord; and, admonished by this miracle, do not you either be afraid to give what is yours for Christ."

34. ARDGAR RETURNS FROM SWEDEN TO HIS SOLITUDE.

After the death of Herigar, then, the priest of God Ardgar, out of love for the solitary life he had led before, left those parts and returned to his own place; and so the Christians living there were once more deprived of the presence of a priest. From this it was made plain by clear evidence that the hermit Ardgar had been sent to those parts to strengthen the faith of Herigar and of the matron spoken of above, and likewise to commend their passing to the divine clemency, and that they might receive what they had faithfully longed for, namely the mystery of holy communion, as their last viaticum.

35. AFTER THE DEATH OF LOUIS THE PIOUS, ANSKAR IS LEFT WITHOUT THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE. HE IS DESERTED BY HIS COMPANIONS.

Now, during the events related above, it happened that the most serene Emperor Louis of good memory departed this present life by the ordering of divine judgement. After his death, when there was great disturbance over the division of the kingdom, the mission of our shepherd too began for a time to totter. For when the cell of Torhout had fallen to the share of the venerable King Charles, he removed it from the service his father had appointed, and gave it to Reginar, well known to you. And although he was often admonished about this by his most

glorious brothers the kings, and by many others too, and would by no means consent to their request, our Father then began to be worn down by want and need. Hence it came about that your brethren who were then here with him returned to your community, and many others too left him because of poverty. He alone, with the few who had stayed with him, managed as best he could; and though living in poverty, he would by no means abandon the office laid upon him.

36. THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF LOUIS, KING OF GERMANY, HE RECEIVES THE BISHOPRIC OF BREMEN, WITH THE APPROVAL OF A COUNCIL.

And the Lord, seeing his humility and the strength of his patience, since the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord (Prov 21:1), stirred the mind of our most gracious lord and sovereign, King Louis, who took up the government of this kingdom after his father, to begin to seek how he might provide him with means of support, so that he could carry out the charge of his mission. And because he had in this province no cell suitable for this mission, and there was nearby the bishopric of the Church of Bremen, then bereft of its shepherd, he resolved to give it to him. He therefore began to discuss with them, in a public assembly of the bishops and his other faithful men, whether he might lawfully do this by canonical authority. For our lord and shepherd, fearing that this might in some way be dangerous for him, and taking care that he should not be

blamed by anyone for the stain of covetousness, did not readily consent to this arrangement. At the king's command, then, this same matter was debated in a council of bishops. They showed by many earlier precedents that it could well be done: that, since the diocese to which he had been ordained was very small (for it had only four baptismal churches), and had already been laid waste many times by the raids of the barbarians, this see should be joined to it for his support.

37. PART OF THE DIOCESE IS RESTORED TO THE BISHOP OF VERDEN; HE HIMSELF KEEPS THE SEE OF HAMBURG.

But so that the bishop of Verden should not be troubled by any scruple, in that Anskar would be keeping, together with the whole diocese of Bremen, the part taken from his own bishopric beyond the Elbe, they decreed that the bishoprics both of Bremen and of Verden should be restored as they had been at first in the time of the lord Louis, and that he should hold Bremen, from which the greater part of his diocese had been taken, and which was also at that time bereft of the presence of a shepherd. When this decree had been so established by the bishops, he, at the king's command, took up the government of the diocese of Bremen. And the part of the diocese beyond the Elbe which ought to have belonged to him was taken back by Waldgar, then bishop of Verden. When this had been so for some time, the matter was debated again more carefully in another council of bishops, and it seemed to

them not good that the see to which he had been ordained should be held by another bishop (for Hamburg had then fallen to Waldgar's share); they said that it was indeed in the king's power to enlarge a small and much ravaged diocese, but that a place confirmed in episcopal dignity by apostolic authority should by no means be changed. With one accord, therefore, and with the will of the most pious King Louis, the bishops assembled there decided that our Father Anskar should receive the see to which he had been consecrated; and that if he kept anything of the diocese of Verden beyond the Elbe, he should make it good to the bishop of that see from the territory of the Church of Bremen. This was carried out by royal command and by synodal decree of the bishops, and with the will and assent of Waldgar himself, the bishop of Verden.

38. THE BISHOP OF COLOGNE AT FIRST DISAPPROVES OF THIS UNION.

Now while these things were being done, the city of Cologne, to which the diocese of Bremen was suffragan, was at that time without episcopal blessing; and because this lasted a long time, the matter had of necessity to be decided without the presence of the bishop of that place. Afterwards, however, when the venerable bishop Gunthar had been consecrated to that see, our lord and Father took care to propose this same matter to him, so that it might be confirmed by his authority too; but he was strongly opposed to it. For this reason, afterwards, when two kings,

namely Louis and Lothar, were at the city of Worms, this same matter was set out before a great gathering of the bishops of both kingdoms, in the presence of our venerable Father. And since all approved that it had been well so ordered, they all asked that Bishop Gunthar too should confirm it by his authority. At first he began to resist strongly, showing in many ways that it was not just for a suffragan see to be turned into an archiepiscopal see, and that he ought not to diminish the honour of his see in any way; but at last, when the kings themselves and all the bishops gathered there together asked him for this very thing, and said that it would be entirely lawful by reason of necessity, he answered that if it were confirmed by apostolic authority, it would be valid on his side too.

39. ENVOYS ARE SENT TO ROME, AND NICHOLAS I RATIFIES THIS UNION. THE LEGATION FOR THE NORTHERN REGIONS IS GRANTED TO ANSKAR.

When this answer had been received, and all his suffragans too had consented to the same, the most pious King Louis, wishing both to increase his father's alms in every way and to have what he himself had arranged made valid in every respect, sent the most reverend Solomon, bishop of the city of Constance, to the Apostolic See for this very purpose; and with him our lord and Father Anskar, since he could not go in person, sent his son, our brother Nordfrid, a priest. They were received most graciously by the holy

Pope Nicholas, and set out to him plainly and clearly the charge of their embassy. He, weighing prudently and carefully in his mind what they said, and judging by God's inspiration that this arrangement was just for the winning of the souls of the heathen, confirmed our king's will by his authority. In order, then, to show more plainly the matter as he worked it out with great care, we have decided to insert his own words. For when he had recapitulated fully and briefly the cause of Anskar's legation and the other matters related above, he went on: "The document of this delegation, of his authority and of his receiving of the pallium, sealed according to the custom of the holy Roman Church, has been sent to us by our son Louis through the most holy bishop Solomon. From the tenor of that document we have found that these things were just as the piety of the said king made known to us through a faithful man, namely Bishop Solomon. Therefore, following in the footsteps of so great a pontiff, our predecessor Gregory, and recognising all the provision there laid down as worthy of God, we have decided to confirm the wish of great princes, namely of the Emperor Louis of blessed memory and of his son of the same name, the most excellent king, both by the precept of this apostolic authority and by the gift of the pallium, after the manner of our predecessors: so that, founded upon so great an authority, the aforesaid Anskar, first archbishop of the Nordalbingians, and after him his successors, devoting themselves to winning the peoples, may stand the stronger against

the temptations of the devil. To our son Anskar himself, as legate among all the surrounding peoples of the Swedes and Danes, and also of the Slavs, and among the others settled in those parts wherever the divine goodness shall open a door, we grant public authority to preach the Gospel; and we decree that the see of the Nordalbingians itself, called Hamburg, consecrated in honour of the Holy Saviour and of his holy and spotless Mother Mary, shall henceforth be archiepiscopal. And we ordain, under the solemn warning of the divine judgement, that after the death of the oft-named Archbishop Anskar a person always fit for so great an office, a bishop and an energetic preacher, be chosen to succeed him. But because King Charles, brother of the oft-named King Louis, after the death of his father, the Emperor Louis of pious memory, took away from the aforesaid place called Hamburg the monastery called Torhout, situated in western Francia, on the ground that after the division among the brothers it seemed to lie within his kingdom (the monastery which his father had given to the bishop and his clergy for their support and sustenance), all the ministers of the altar, so it is said, began to withdraw: for, as the necessary means failed, they withdrew from those peoples, and through this deed the legation to the nations came to a halt; and the metropolis of Hamburg itself was left almost deserted. While these things were happening, the bishop of the diocese of Bremen, which is said to adjoin this one, died. And when the oft-named king saw that this diocese

was vacant and that the new foundation was failing, and moreover that both these Churches, by God's hidden judgement, had been greatly weakened by the savagery of the barbarians, he began to seek how the Church of Bremen might be united to and placed under the new archiepiscopal see, with our decree confirming this wish. For this reason it has been referred to us for confirmation through the oft-named venerable envoy, Solomon, bishop of the city of Constance, and we have been asked to strengthen it by our authority. We, then, weighing it with careful examination, judge that it will be useful, because of the pressing need and the gain of souls shown among the nations. For we do not doubt that all things which are shown to be profitable to the Church and do not conflict with divine precepts are lawful and ought to be done, above all in the planting of so new a Christianity, in which various chances are wont to occur. Wherefore, by the authority of almighty God and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by this our decree, we decree, in accordance with the wish of the most reverend King Louis, that the aforesaid dioceses, namely of Hamburg and of Bremen, shall henceforth be not two but one, and be so called, and be subject to the see which by the decree of our predecessor was raised to archiepiscopal rank; provided only that the part taken from the bishopric of Verden be restored to it out of the possessions of the Church of Bremen. And let no archbishop of Cologne henceforth claim for himself any authority in that diocese. Nay rather, we

urge him and all worshippers of the true religion without exception to be a help and comfort to those who carry out this sacred legation, so that by the grace of this kindness they may deserve to receive the full reward from him who said: Go, teach all nations (Mt 28:19), and so forth; Whoever receives you receives me (Mt 10:40). Accordingly, all that has been assigned by our beloved son King Louis to this office worthy of God, his pious wishes, we too confirm by our authority. And because the misfortunes of the past make us cautious for the future, we smite with the sword of anathema anyone who opposes or contradicts, or in any way plots against, these pious endeavours of ours, and we condemn the guilty to everlasting punishment with the devil's portion: so that, zealous as we are for the apostolic dignity, after the manner of our predecessors, and for the cause of God, we may be more safely defended against adversaries on every side."

40

By these decrees and ordinances of the most holy Pope Nicholas, then, the Church of Bremen, joined and united to the see of Hamburg, which had earlier been constituted a metropolis, became archiepiscopal.

41. ANSKAR, ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH HORIK, KING OF THE DANES, BUILDS A CHURCH WITH HIS CONSENT, AND FREEDOM IS GRANTED TO THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

But since we have spoken of these matters in anticipation, concerning the settlement of that diocese thus confirmed (for much time passed after he took up the government of that see before it was confirmed by apostolic authority), let us return to what was done earlier. For when he had taken over the diocese of Bremen, he began once more to burn inwardly in spirit, since he now had something to give, if he could accomplish anything in the regions of the Danes for the name of Christ. Hence he often visited Horik, who alone then held sole rule over the kingdom of the Danes, and strove to win him over with gifts and whatever services he could, so that with his leave he might be able to exercise the office of preaching in his kingdom. Several times, too, he was sent to him on an embassy from the king, and he carried out zealously and faithfully whatever concerned treaties of peace and the advantage of both kingdoms. For this reason, having come to know the faithfulness and goodness of the holy man, King Horik began to hold him in great affection and veneration, to make glad use of his counsel and to treat him in all things as his closest friend, so that he was allowed to be present even at his secret meetings, when he discussed the affairs of the kingdom with his counsellors. And whatever had to be settled by treaty between the people of this land, that is, the Saxons, and his kingdom, he would have confirmed on no other pledge than his, saying that whatever Anskar had approved and guaranteed to him was to him the most trustworthy of all. Having gained

this friendship, he began also to persuade him to become a Christian. And he listened kindly to all that Anskar made known to him from divine Scripture, and praised it as altogether good and truly salutary, and said that he took great delight in it and would gladly gain the grace of Christ. After such professions, the most holy Father began patiently to suggest to him that he should grant to Christ the Lord this favour, which would be most pleasing to him: to allow a church to be built in his kingdom, where a priest might be present at all times to impart the seeds of the divine word and the grace of baptism to all who wished to receive them. This he granted with the kindest goodwill, and in a port of his kingdom very well suited for it and nearest to this region, called Schleswig, where merchants gathered from every quarter, he allowed him to build a church, granting a place where a priest might live, and giving leave at the same time for anyone in his kingdom who wished to become a Christian.

42. WHY SOME PUT OFF BAPTISM, AND HOW OTHERS RECEIVED IT TOGETHER WITH BODILY HEALTH.

Having obtained this leave, then, our lord bishop at once carried out what he had long desired; and when a priest had been placed there, the grace of God began to grow more fruitfully in that place. For there were many Christians there before who had been baptized either at Dorestad or at Hamburg, some of whom were reckoned among the leading men of that town, and they

rejoiced that they had been given the opportunity to practise their Christianity. Following their example, many others too, both men and women, abandoned the superstitious worship of idols, were converted to the faith of the Lord and were baptized. And there was great joy in that place, so that the people of this land, and merchants both from here and from Dorestad, sought out that town freely and without any fear (which had not been permitted before), and by this means there was an abundance of every good thing there. And although many who were baptized there lived on, yet a countless multitude of those clothed in white ascended from there to the kingdom of heaven. For they gladly received the sign of the cross in order to become catechumens, so that they might be allowed to enter the church and attend the sacred offices; yet they put off receiving baptism, judging it good for themselves to be baptized at the end of their lives, so that, cleansed by the saving bath, they might enter pure and spotless through the gates of eternal life without any delay. Many among them too, held fast by illness, when they saw that they had sacrificed to the idols for their health in vain, and their kinsfolk despaired of them, took refuge in the mercy of the Lord and vowed to become Christians; and when a priest had been summoned and they had received the grace of baptism, they were at once made whole by the divine bounty. And so the mercy of God grew in that place, and a multitude was converted to the faith of the Lord.

43. ANSKAR, HAVING ASKED HORIK'S LEAVE, AND GAUTBERT DECLINING, UNDERTAKES THE MISSION TO THE SWEDES ONCE MORE.

Meanwhile our lord and Father Anskar, grieving with deep affection for the people of the Swedes too, because they were then bereft of the presence of a priest, began to ask King Horik, who was his closest friend in everything, that with his help he might seek out the borders of that kingdom. He received this request too with the greatest goodwill and promised to do everything accordingly. For this reason our lord bishop began to discuss this very matter with Bishop Gautbert, saying that it was necessary to try again whether that people, admonished by God, might perhaps allow priests to remain with them, lest the faith of Christ begun in those parts should someday perish through their negligence. But Bishop Gautbert, who was also called Simon, answered that, having been driven out from there, he did not dare go back to that place; nor could it be very profitable, but rather more dangerous, if, remembering what had happened before, they should stir up some disturbance against him; it seemed to him more fitting that the one should go who had first undertaken this mission and who had been treated there with the greatest kindness. He himself would send his nephew with him, to remain there if an opportunity for preaching were found, and to carry out the priestly office among them. Having settled this between them, they came into the presence

of the most gracious King Louis, told him of the matter and begged that with his leave it might be allowed to be done. When he asked whether they were of one mind in this wish, he received this answer from the venerable bishop Gautbert: "In the service of God," he said, "we have always been and are of one mind, and we desire with one accord that this be done." And so the most serene king, always willing in God's cause, in accordance with what had been agreed between them, laid this mission upon our most devout shepherd for the name of Christ, entrusting him also with messages on his own behalf to the king of the Swedes, as his father too had done.

44. HE IS ENCOURAGED BY A HEAVENLY VISION.

Our most devout Father, then, began to prepare himself for this journey, and was urged on by a more fervent spirit to accomplish it as quickly as possible. For he believed that this too had been laid upon him from heaven, being filled with the memory of a vision which he had seen before. It seemed to him that he was very anxious about this journey, and that he came to a place where there was a great complex of buildings and various dwellings; and there someone came to meet him and spoke to him, saying: "Do not be grieved beyond measure about the journey that troubles you and about the things in your heart; for there is a prophet here who will make you certain about all these things; and so that no doubt may linger in your mind about this, I will tell you who

that prophet is. A certain most renowned abbot, Adalhard: he is now the prophet sent to you by the Lord, who will announce to you the things that are to come." Hearing this, he was gladdened in mind and seemed to answer him: "Lord, where shall I find him?" And he said: "You will find him with labour, nor is it permitted to you to tell anyone." Then it seemed to him that he went round the dwelling seeking him, and pondered in his mind. "If," he said, "without being asked by me, he tells me what is in my mind, then I shall know that he is a true prophet." Coming, then, to a most beautiful dwelling, he saw him there sitting on his throne, and at once recognised him. And he at once began to prophesy, and, looking intently at him, began to say: "Hear, O islands, and give heed, you peoples from afar (Isa 49:1). The Lord called you from the womb, from the body of your mother he remembered your name, and he made your mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand he protected you, and made you like a chosen arrow; in his quiver he hid you, and said to you: You are my servant, for in you I will glory (Isa 49:1–3)." When he had said this, he stretched out his arm and began to raise his right hand towards him. Seeing this, Anskar came to his knees, hoping that he wished to bless him. But he went on: "I have given you as a light to the nations, that you may be their salvation to the end of the earth (Isa 49:6). Kings shall see, and princes shall rise up, and they shall worship your God and the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you (Isa 49:7)." Since the servant of God had seen this vision long

before that journey, he held it certain in his mind that he was being urged by God's command to go to those parts; and above all in the word that was said to him, Hear, O islands, because almost the whole of that country lies in islands. And in what was added, You shall be their salvation to the end of the earth, because the end of the world lies in the regions of the North, in the lands of the Swedes. Lastly, the word that was changed at the end from the prophet Jeremiah, namely for he will glorify you, fed in him the greatest ardour of desire, because he thought that it signified the palm of martyrdom once promised to him.

45. COMMENDED BY HORIK TO THE KING OF THE SWEDES, HE COMES TO SWEDEN, WHICH IS IN TURMOIL AT THE PROMPTING OF DEMONS.

As he was about to undertake this journey, he had with him an envoy of King Horik, together with his token, who was charged to give this message on his behalf to the king of the Swedes, named Olof: that the servant of God who, sent on the part of King Louis, was coming to the borders of his kingdom was well known to him in every respect, and that he had never in his life seen so good a man nor ever found such faithfulness in any mortal; and that therefore, knowing his most holy goodness, he had granted him everything he wished to arrange in his kingdom for the sake of the Christian religion; and he asked Olof likewise to allow him in his kingdom the practice of Christianity which he wished to establish, since

he would do nothing but what was good and right. Pursuing the journey he had undertaken, after nearly twenty days spent at sea, he came to Birka, where he found the king and a multitude of the people thrown into confusion by a great error. For at the devil's instigation, who foresaw in every way the coming of the blessed man, it happened at that very time that a certain man arrived there saying that he had been present at an assembly of the gods who were believed to possess that land, and had been sent by them to announce this to the king and the people. "You," they said, "have long had us well disposed towards you, and for a long time, by our help, you have held the land where you dwell in great abundance, in peace and prosperity; and you have paid us the sacrifices and vows that were due, and your services have been pleasing to us. But now you withhold the customary sacrifices and offer your freewill vows more sluggishly; and, what displeases us more, you are bringing in a foreign god over you. If, then, you wish to have us well disposed towards you, increase the sacrifices you have omitted and pay greater vows; and do not receive among you the worship of another god, whose teaching is contrary to ours, nor devote yourselves to his service. Furthermore, if you desire to have more gods, and we are not enough for you, we unanimously admit Eric, once your king, into our fellowship, that he may be one of the number of the gods." This devilish message, publicly announced, disturbed the minds of all at the coming of the lord bishop, and great error

and turmoil had confounded the hearts of them all. For they had set up a temple in honour of the king who had died long before, and had begun to offer vows and sacrifices to him as to a god.

46. THOUGH HIS FRIENDS ADVISE AGAINST IT, HE INVITES THE KING TO A BANQUET; THE KING APPROVES THE MISSION, ON CONDITION OF A CASTING OF LOTS.

When the lord bishop arrived there, he began to ask his friends, whom he had known there in former days, how he should approach the king on this matter. They all opposed it with all their might, declaring that his mission could achieve nothing whatever on that occasion; rather, if he had anything of value, he ought to give it for this purpose, that he might escape from there alive. To them he said: "No, I will give nothing here to ransom my life; for if my Lord has so ordained, I am ready to undergo torments here and to suffer death for his name." While he was in the greatest anxiety over this, at length, having taken counsel, he invited the king to his lodging. Giving him a banquet, he offered him such gifts as he could and set before him the charge of his mission; for the reason for his coming had already been made known to the king through Horik's envoy and through the lord bishop's faithful friends who lived there. Delighted, then, both by the goodwill of so illustrious a man and by the gifts he had been given, the king replied that he did indeed gladly wish for what the bishop had proposed. "But before this," he said, "there were clerics here

who were driven out by a rising of the people, not by the king's command. Therefore I neither can nor dare confirm this mission of yours before I have consulted our gods by lots and have also asked the will of the people about it. Let your envoy be with me at the next assembly, and I will speak to the people on your behalf; and if, with the gods' favour, they consent to your wish, what you have asked will prosper; but if not, I will let you know that too." For such is their custom, that any public business rests on the unanimous will of the people rather than on the power of the king.

47. ANSKAR IS STRENGTHENED BY DIVINE INSPIRATION. THE LOTS FAVOUR HIS UNDERTAKING.

Having received this answer from the king, our most devout shepherd turned wholly to the Lord as his refuge, giving himself to fasting and prayer, and in contrition and affliction of heart humbling himself in the sight of God. And while he was in these straits of distress, as the day of the assembly drew near, one day during the holy solemnities of Mass, while the priest standing at the altar was blessing the sacred mysteries, a heavenly inspiration was poured into him as he lay prostrate on the ground. Strengthened inwardly by the gift of the Holy Spirit and comforted in soul with the greatest confidence, he knew that everything would turn out as he wished. So after Mass he told that same priest, who was his closest friend in all things, that he need have no fear, because

the grace of God was going with him. When the priest asked how he knew this, he answered that it had been inspired in him by God. That brother well recognised this enlightening of his mind, for he had known from many signs before that God consoled him in this way. And the outcome of the matter at once confirmed this confidence of his. For the king first gathered his chief men and began to discuss with them this mission of our Father; and they decided that the will of the gods in this matter should be sought by lots. Going out, then, into the field according to their custom, they cast lots, and the lot fell that by God's will the religion of the Christians should be founded there. One of the chief men, a friend of the lord bishop, at once made this known to him and urged him to take heart, saying: "Be strong and act manfully, for God has not refused your wish and your mission." And so, taking confidence, he rejoiced in the Lord, gladdened in his inmost spirit.

48. THE ASSEMBLY TOO GIVES ITS CONSENT.

Then, when the day of the assembly had come, which was held in the town of Birka already mentioned, the king, as is their custom, had the purpose of their mission proclaimed to the people by the voice of a herald. When they heard it, confused as they had been before by error, they began to be of different minds and to raise an uproar. While they were clamouring in this way, one of them, who was older in years, rose up in the

midst of the people and said: “Hear me, king and peoples. The worship of this God is already well known to many of us: we know that he can give great help to those who hope in him. For many of us have already proved this again and again, both in perils at sea and in various needs. Why, then, do we reject what we know to be necessary and useful to us? Indeed at one time some of us, going to Dorestad and perceiving that the rule of this religion would profit them, embraced it of their own free will. Now many dangers lie in the way, and through the attacks of pirates that journey has become very perilous for us. Why, then, do we not accept what is now offered to us here, which before we used to seek so far away? And since we have proved the favour of this God useful to us in many things, why should we not gladly consent that his servants remain among us? Give heed, you peoples, to our counsel, and do not cast away your own advantage. For when we cannot have our own gods well disposed towards us, it is good for us to have the favour of this God, who always and in all things can and will help those who cry to him.” When he had finished speaking thus, the whole multitude of the people became of one mind and chose that there should be priests among them, and that whatever belonged to the mysteries of Christ should be done without any opposition. So the king, rising from the assembly, at once sent his messenger together with the lord bishop's envoy, to tell him that the people had been unanimously won over to his wish and that he himself was pleased with everything; but that

he could not yet grant him full permission until he had announced the same thing to the peoples living there at another assembly, which was to be held in another part of his kingdom. Then once again our Father of blessed memory, seeking his accustomed aid, besought the divine mercy more earnestly. And behold, the time of the assembly came, and the king had the lord bishop's mission proclaimed by the voice of a herald, together with all that had been said and done at the earlier assembly. And by the bounty of divine providence the hearts of all were so united that they all praised the consent of the earlier assembly and declared that they too wished in every way to agree to these things.

49. HE RECEIVES LEAVE TO BUILD A CHURCH.

When this had been done, the king summoned the lord bishop and told him what had taken place. And so, with the unanimous will and consent of all, he decreed that churches should be built among them and priests be present, and that whoever of the people wished might become a Christian without hindrance. Our lord and shepherd then commended into the king's hands the nephew of the venerable Bishop Gautbert of whom we spoke, named Erimbert, so that, protected by his help and defence, he might celebrate the divine mysteries there. The king also gave him a plot in that same town on which to build an oratory. The lord bishop also bought another, with a house, for the priest to live in; and the king,

showing the lord bishop the kindest favour of his affection, promised that he would also be most faithful in every respect to his people in what concerned the worship of the Christian religion. And so, when by the grace of the Lord everything had been duly accomplished, the lord bishop returned home.

50. BY CONTEMPLATING THE PASSION HE LEARNS TO BEAR ADVERSITY.

Now the very great anguish of mind that he suffered on this journey our most holy Father knew beforehand, by the Lord's revelation, while the journey was being prepared. For one night it seemed to him that it was the time of the Lord's Passion, and that he was present himself when the Lord Jesus Christ was led from Pilate to Herod, and back again from Herod to Pilate; and then, when he was suffering spitting and insults from the Jews and the soldiers and, as it seemed to him, was being struck with blows over all his limbs, he could not bear to see him punished so, and ran and set himself behind his back, facing those who were striking him, and took on his own body all the blows that were being dealt him — except that the Lord, being taller in stature, seemed to rise above him by the head, and so he could not shield the head. What this vision meant, Christ's unconquered soldier did not understand until, after returning from this journey, he turned over in his mind how many insults and mockeries he had endured there, in what anguish he had been, and how many blasphemies

uttered against God he had borne there. For as far as his own will was concerned, he undoubtedly suffered there for Christ, and there Christ, in his servant, bore once again the reproaches that had been heaped upon him before. And that he could not shield the head he took to mean — since the head of Christ is God (1 Cor 11:3) — that the sufferings which the saints endure in this world for Christ touch in part the very majesty of God, who, taking them upon himself in a certain manner by suffering with them, bears them indeed for a time, but will one day judge them strictly.

51. THE SWEDES ATTACK THE CURONIANS, VICTORS OVER THE DANES.

Nor, it seems, should we pass over how the power of the Lord was made manifest to the Swedes after this journey. A certain people, living far from them and called the Curonians, had once been subject to the rule of the Swedes; but it was by then a long time since they had rebelled and disdained to be subject to them. Then the Danes, knowing at the time mentioned above that the lord bishop had already come into the regions of the Swedes, gathered a multitude of ships and went to that same country, wishing both to plunder their goods and to subject them to themselves. That kingdom had five cities. The peoples living there, learning of their coming, gathered together and began to resist manfully and to defend their own; and victory was granted them: half of the Danish host was cut down in slaughter, and they plundered half

of their ships as well, taking from them gold and silver and much booty. Hearing this, King Olof and the people of the Swedes, wishing to win a name for themselves by being able to do what the Danes had not done, and because these people had once been subject to them, gathered a countless army and went to those parts. And first, coming unexpectedly upon a city of their kingdom called Seeburg, in which there were seven thousand fighting men, they utterly laid it waste, plundered it and set it on fire. Heartened by this, they left their ships and, setting out on a five days' march, hastened with fierce hearts to another of their cities, called Apulia. In that city there were fifteen thousand warriors. When they arrived there, the townsmen shut themselves up in the city; the besiegers began to storm it from without, the besieged to fight back manfully from within: these defended it inside, those attacked it outside; and so eight days went by, as they pressed the fight every day from morning until evening, and many fell on both sides, yet neither side gained the victory.

52. HAVING CALLED ON THEIR GODS IN VAIN, THEY TURN TO CHRIST.

And behold, on the ninth day the Swedish host, worn out by the long slaughter, began to lose heart and, terrified and fearful, to think only of how they might escape from there. “Here,” they said, “we are getting nowhere, and our ships are far away.” For, as we said, it was five days' journey to the harbour where their ships lay.

Since, then, in their great distress they had no idea at all what they should do, they resolved to ask by lots whether their gods were willing to help them, so that they might either win the victory or escape from there alive. When the lots were cast, they could find none of the gods who was willing to come to their aid. When this was announced among the people, a vast wailing and groaning arose in the camp, and all their courage left them. "What shall we do, unhappy men that we are?" they said. "The gods have left us, and not one of them is our helper! Where shall we flee? See, our ships lie far off, and if we flee, these men will pursue us and destroy us to the last man. What then will become of us?" While they were in such straits, some of the merchants, remembering the teaching and instruction of the lord bishop, began to counsel them. "The God of the Christians," they said, "often helps those who cry to him, and he is most mighty to help. Let us ask whether he is willing to be with us, and let us gladly pledge him vows that will please him." So at the humble request of all the lot was cast, and it was found that Christ was willing to help them. When this had been publicly announced and became known to all, the hearts of all were suddenly so strengthened that they wished to go forward at once, fearless, to storm the city. "What," they said, "have we now to dread, or what to fear? Christ is with us; let us fight and act like men; nothing will be able to stand against us, nor shall we lack certain victory, for we have the mightiest of the gods as our helper." So they all

massed together and set out with glad and stout hearts to take the city.

53. THEY WIN THE VICTORY THROUGH A TREATY; THEY VOW FASTS; THEY DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO ALMSGIVING.

And when they had taken up their positions all around and were about to join battle, those within asked to be given leave to speak. When the king of the Swedes had agreed, they went on: "Peace now pleases us more than war, and we desire to make a treaty with you. First, whatever we won last year from the spoils of the Danes, in gold and in arms, we give to you as the gift of the treaty. Then for each of the men in this city we offer half a pound of silver; and besides, we will pay the tribute that we used to give you before; and, giving hostages, we wish from now on to be subject and obedient to your rule, as we were before." Although these things had been offered, the spirits of the young men could not yet be calmed; rather, grown more eager and undaunted, without fear, wanting only to fight, they said that they would lay waste with their arms the city and all that its people had, and carry them off as captives. But the king and the chief men, following sounder counsel, accepted their right hands and made the treaty; and having been given countless treasures and thirty hostages, they returned home with joy. Then, when peace had been made between them, the Swedes at once praised the almighty power of Christ our Lord and proclaimed with all their strength his

greatness, that he was truly great above all gods; and they began to ask earnestly what they ought to vow to him through whom they had won so great a victory. Instructed, then, by the Christian merchants who were with them, they vowed to Christ the Lord a fast pleasing to him: that when they had returned home, after they had been at home seven days, they would all alike abstain from meat for seven more; and further, when forty days had passed after that, they would by unanimous agreement likewise keep abstinence from meat for the forty days following. And so it was done: all who had been there carried out this resolution with a willing heart; and afterwards many among them, out of reverence and love for Christ, began to keep the fasts that the Christians observed, and to help any of the poor with alms (for they had learned that this was pleasing to Christ). And so, with the goodwill of all, the priest Erimbert began to carry out freely among them the things of God; and as all praised the power of Christ, devotion to the divine religion in those parts began from that time to grow, without opposition from anyone.

54. WHEN HORIK THE YOUNGER SUCCEEDS HIS FATHER, ACCESS TO THE CHURCH IS CLOSED, THEN GRANTED AGAIN AT THE KING'S WISH; LEAVE IS GIVEN TO FOUND ANOTHER.

Meanwhile it came about by the judgement of God that, when certain of his kinsmen tried to seize his kingdom with an onslaught of pirates,

King Horik was killed in battle; and with him all the chief men of that land, who had once been the lord bishop's intimates and friends, perished by the sword. After this, when Horik the Younger had been set over his kingdom, some of those whom he then had as his chief men, and who had been less well known to the lord bishop before, began to urge him to destroy the church that had been built among them and to bring to nothing the Christian religion begun there, saying that their gods were angry with them, and that such great evils had befallen them because they had received among them the worship of another and unknown god. For this reason the count of that town, namely Schleswig, whose name was Hovi, who resisted this religion above all and stirred up the king to destroy the Christian faith, ordered the church built there to be shut and forbade the practice of the Christian religion in that place; and so the priest who was there, driven by the bitterness of the persecution, withdrew. Over this the lord bishop had become exceedingly anxious and sad, because he then had none of his friends with Horik the Younger — those whom he had earlier made his intimates by the most generous gifts — through whom he could win him over to the Lord's will. So, being deprived of human help, he hastened, as was his custom, to the help of God. Nor did his hope deceive him. For the Lord comforted him in his soul with spiritual consolation, and he was made entirely certain that the religion begun there would by no means perish, as the enemies of Christ were scheming;

and so, by the Lord's will, it came about not long afterwards. For while he was planning to go to the king for this one reason alone, the grace of the Lord went before him: the king first drove that count out of the town, so that he was never afterwards able to return to his favour, and then of his own accord sent his envoy to the lord bishop, asking him to send his priest back to his own church; for he declared that he wished, no less than Horik the Elder, to earn the grace of Christ and to have the lord bishop's friendship. When this had been done, and our most reverend Father himself had also come into the king's presence with the help of the most illustrious Count Burchard — who had earlier been his helper in everything with Horik the Elder, and had great influence with both kings, being their kinsman — he was received by Horik the Younger with such favour that the king at once granted him, for his part too, everything that his predecessor had allowed to be done in his kingdom for the sake of Christianity. Moreover, he even agreed to something that had before seemed abominable to the pagans: that the church should have a bell. In another town of his kingdom too, called Ribe, he likewise granted a site on which a church might be built, and gave leave by his own authority for a priest to be present there.

55. VARIOUS MINISTERS ARE SENT TO THE SWEDES.

While these things were taking place, the venerable Bishop Gautbert sent to the people of

the Swedes a priest named Ansfrid, who was of Danish birth and had been brought up for the service of the Lord by the lord Ebbo. When he arrived there, the priest Erimbert returned from that country, and Ansfrid remained there three years or more, much sought after by all. After this, hearing of the death of the lord Gautbert, he too returned from there, and after living among us for some time he died as his illness grew worse. Upon this the lord bishop, unable to bear that the Christian faith begun there should perish, sent there a priest of his own named Raginbert, who was well suited to the task and most willing to undertake so long a journey; but as he was making his way to the port of Schleswig, by the devil's scheming he was surrounded on the road by an ambush of Danish robbers and stripped of what he had, and on the day of the Assumption of Holy Mary he too was happily brought to his end in the very course of his good will. Although this had filled the lord bishop's heart with very great grief, he could by no means be drawn back from the purpose he had begun; rather, the bishop ordained for this work another priest, of Danish birth, named Rimbert; and when he had sent him to those parts for the name of Christ, he was kindly received there by the king and the people, and by the Lord's bounty he has celebrated the divine mysteries among them freely to this day. To him, as to the other priests whom he had previously placed among the pagans, he gave the charge that he should covet or ask for nothing belonging to anyone; rather, he lovingly exhorted

them that, after the example of the blessed apostle Paul, they too should work with their hands and be content with food and clothing; yet he himself supplied them and their followers abundantly, from his own means, with whatever they needed, and besides with anything that had to be given to win friends.

56. ANSKAR IS STRENGTHENED AGAIN AND AGAIN BY EBBO. HE BEARS ADVERSITY WITH AN EVEN MIND.

Moreover, amid these many and various pressures of distress which, as we have related, he met with in this mission — though, as has been said, he was ever strengthened by inspiration not to desist from the work he had begun — he was also comforted in no small measure in this cause by the devotion of mind and the fervour of spirit of the lord Ebbo, the archbishop of Reims already mentioned, who had first undertaken this mission; for Ebbo, burning in his inmost spirit for the calling of the nations, constantly urged him to spread the grace of the faith in these parts, and earnestly admonished him not to abandon what he had begun. Spurred on by his words of exhortation and by the very great ardour of mind with which he burned for this, our blessed man unhesitatingly carried out the charge of the office entrusted to him, and no adversity or hardship could ever turn him from the work he had begun. And although that bishop's words of encouragement were countless, by which our Father was consoled with inward joy, yet he always remem-

bered the conversation they had held about this mission the last time they spoke together. For when our lord bishop, having recounted the many hardships that had befallen him, asked him what he thought about this mission, and earnestly begged him to say what comfort he could give him on this matter, he answered as if breathed upon by a prophetic spirit: "I am certain," he said, "that what we have begun to labour at for the name of Christ will bear fruit in the Lord. For such is my faith, and so I firmly believe — nay, I truly know — that, even if what we have begun among those nations should at some time be hindered in some way on account of sins, yet it will never wholly come to nothing, but will bear fruit in the grace of God and prosper, until the name of the Lord reaches the ends of the earth." Such, then, was their faith; with this will they sought the lands of foreign nations; for love of this religion they fought for the Lord, from whom they will also without doubt receive the reward of their labour. The will to this devotion never left the heart of our lord and Father, and he never ceased to pray for the salvation of the nations; nay rather, when his diocese was laid waste all around by the almost unceasing raids of pirates who came from those same nations, and his household was plundered, he nevertheless prayed continually for those who opposed him and lay in wait for him, and begged God's mercy without ceasing for the conversion of those who did him harm, asking that it should not be laid to their charge as sin that, not knowing the justice

of God and deceived by the devil's error, they were hostile to the property of Christians. And he burned with this concern to such a degree that even in his last illness he never ceased to deal with and order the affairs of his mission, until he breathed out his last breath of life. Taken from the world in this ardour for religion, he has — so we believe — entered the kingdom gloriously and happily, with a very great multitude of the faithful accompanying him, whom he had won for the Lord from the peoples of the Danes and the Swedes, the beginning of that good fight of his, the mercy of God rewarding him on the day of the resurrection of all.

57. ANSKAR, A WORTHY MONK; AS BISHOP, AN IMITATOR OF THE SAINTS. HE WEARS A HAIR SHIRT CONSTANTLY. HE LOVES SOLITUDE.

Since we have already said much about his mission and the care with which he sought to save others, it is now time to tell what he was like in himself and in what concerned the salvation of his own soul, and how he afflicted his body. How he shone among you in the monastery in every pursuit of his devotion, you know very well. Yet, as we have heard, even as a boy and a young man he seemed to the old and the aged a man to be wondered at and imitated. And once he had taken up the episcopate among us, he strove in every way to increase all that he had begun in the monastery, and to imitate the life of all the saints, but most especially that of blessed Martin. For he

wore a hair shirt next to his skin not only by day but also by night, and he strove greatly to benefit the peoples by preaching the word of the Lord. At times, however, in order to exercise himself in divine philosophy, he stayed in solitude; for this purpose he had a suitable cell built for himself, which he called a quiet place and a friend to sorrow. There he stayed with a few companions, and lived there whenever he could be free from preaching and the duties of the Church and from the disturbances of the pagans; yet in such a way that he never put his own convenience and his love of solitude before the good of the flock entrusted to him.

58. SPARING IN HIS DIET AND TEMPTED TO VAINGLORY ON THAT ACCOUNT, HE IS FREED FROM THIS VICE BY GOD. IN OLD AGE HE MAKES UP FOR HIS ABSTINENCE WITH ALMSGIVING.

Now as long as he still enjoyed something of the strength of youth, he very often took bread by weight and water by measure, especially while he was able to live in solitude. At that time, as he himself declared, he was tempted not a little by the spirit of vainglory. For the enemy of the human race was striving to infect his soul with this plague, and he seemed great in his own eyes because he abstained in this way. Saddened by this, he turned in prayer to the Lord's loving kindness and asked that by his grace he might free him from this most pernicious impiety; and so it was done. And while he was earnestly intent on

prayer for this, one night, having fallen asleep, he saw himself caught up, as it were, even to heaven, and the whole world gathered as though into a most foul valley, out of which, however, the souls of the blessed, though rarely, were caught up by the ministry of angels and led into heaven; and in that dark valley there was also shown to him a kind of seed, as it were, from which the human race takes its origin. And as he looked on all this with wonder and horror, he was told to consider from what beginning he had come into this life; and it was said to him: "What room can there be for any boasting in a man who was begotten from so base an origin in the vale of tears, and who has received whatever good he has, not from himself, but from him from whom comes every best gift and every perfect gift (Jas 1:17)?" "If, then," it said, "you are ever again tempted by any plague of vainglory, call this to mind and remember from what you were begotten, and by the grace of God you will be set free." And so it came to pass. But when he had grown old, he could no longer abstain so strictly from food; his drink, however, was always water, except that, more to avoid vainglory than to enjoy any pleasure, he would mix a little of some other drink into the water he was about to drink. And since in his old age he could not keep his accustomed abstinence, he strove to make up for it with alms and prayers and many other good works. For this reason he ransomed many captives and gave them their freedom; and some of them he had instructed in

sacred letters, to be brought up for the service of God.

59. OUT OF ZEAL FOR DEVOTION ANSKAR WRITES BOOKS. GIVEN TO TEARS, HE USES THE SAYINGS OF SCRIPTURE TO THAT END.

How zealous he was to sharpen his own devotion in the love of God is witnessed by the great volumes in our keeping which he wrote with his own hand in shorthand; they are known to contain only what pertains to the praise of almighty God and the rebuke of sins, to the praise also of the blessed and eternal life and the terror of hell, and whatever pertains to compunction and lament. Witnesses too are the brethren living among us and at New Corbie, whom he often asked for help in this work, and who sent him a number of writings of this kind. Yet nothing could ever be enough for him; he wished to spend his whole life in mourning and tears. For although compunction of heart moved him to tears, they never seemed enough to him — except that in the last year of his life, by the Lord's bounty, he obtained the grace he had long sought, of weeping whenever he wished. Indeed, from these same words of compunction, taken from Holy Scripture, he fitted a short prayer of his own to each of the psalms, which he used to call his ‘spices’, so that the psalms might grow sweet to him on this account. In these spices he cared nothing for the composition of words, but sought only compunction of heart: in them he sometimes praises the almighty power and the

judgement of God; sometimes he blames himself; sometimes he calls blessed the saints who obey God; sometimes he mourns the wretched and the sinners, than all of whom he always said he himself was worse. These, however, when others were singing with him, he used to ponder alone and in silence at the end of each psalm. Nor would he reveal them to anyone. One of us, however, who was very close to him, with great force of entreaty barely prevailed on him to dictate to him these spices as he was accustomed to sing them. He wrote them down, but made them known to no one while Anskar lived; after his death, however, he showed them to all who wished to read them.

60. HE RECITED DIFFERENT PSALMS ACCORDING TO THE PLACE AND THE TIME.

While singing the psalms he would often also work with his hands, for at such times he made nets. As for the psalms themselves, he had them arranged: which he would sing by day, which by night; which while he prepared himself for Mass; which when he had taken off his shoes and was about to go to bed. In the morning, while he put on his shoes and washed his hands, he always sang the litanies; and then, going to the church, he had three or four Masses celebrated, himself standing by and taking part in the office; but at the appointed and proper time of the day, unless some indisposition prevented him, he himself sang the public Mass.

61. GENEROUS TO THE POOR, HE ENDOWS A HOSPICE FOR THEIR SAKE. HE CARES FOR ALL. HE CARRIES A PURSE IN HIS BELT. IN LENT HE FEEDS FOUR POOR PEOPLE AND SERVES THEM.

Who could tell how very generous he was in giving alms, since he desired, according to the Lord's will, to give all that he had to those who suffered need? For wherever he knew of anyone in need, he took pains to help him as far as he could. And he gave the support of his help not only in his own diocese but also to those living in distant regions; but in particular he had established a hospital for the poor in Bremen, to which he assigned the tithes of several estates, so that there, besides the daily reception of the poor, the sick might be restored. Throughout his whole diocese he distributed for the support of the poor the tithe of the animals and of all the revenues, and the tithe of the tithes, that belonged to him; and of whatever silver or revenue of any kind came to him he set aside a tenth for the use of the needy. Moreover, every fifth year, although they had already been tithed, he again took a full tithe of all the animals for the giving of alms; and of the silver that came to the churches in the monasteries he set aside a fourth part for this same purpose. He always took the greatest care of orphans and widows; and wherever he knew there were anchorites, whether men or women, he strengthened them in the service of God by frequent visits and gifts, and took pains to help them with what they needed. He also always car-

ried a little purse of coins in his own belt, so that if ever a needy person came when the steward of his alms was not there, he himself would have something to give without delay. For he strove to fulfil in every respect that saying of blessed Job, never to make the eyes of the widow wait (Job 31:16); and so he strove to be in every way both an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame and a father of the poor (Job 29:15–16). In the season of Lent he had four poor people received for a meal every day in Bremen, two men and two women; and he himself, with the brethren, washed the feet of the men, while the feet of the women were washed in his stead, in the hospital for the poor already mentioned, by a woman consecrated to God whom he had proved in obedience to God's will and in love of religion. Again, when he went round the parishes in the manner of a bishop, before he himself went to table he had the poor brought in; he gave them water to wash their hands, handed them blessed bread and poured them drink; and when a table had been set before them, only then would he go to his own meal with his guests. And to prove by examples the tender depths of his mercy and compassion: we once saw how, when among many others he had ransomed the son of a certain widow, who had been carried off captive to a distant land, namely to the Swedes, and had brought him back home with him, and the mother, seeing her son returned, stood before him weeping for joy (as is the way of women), the bishop too was moved and began to weep no less; and at once he gave

the widow's son his freedom, restored him to his mother, and let them go home rejoicing.

62. HE KNOWS THE FUTURE BEFOREHAND; HE CONSULTS GOD IN WHAT HE MUST DO. HE LEARNS FROM HEAVEN BEFOREHAND THAT HE WILL BE THE SHEPHERD OF THE CHURCH OF BREMEN.

And because, in the words of the blessed apostle Paul, his way of life was always in heaven (Phil 3:20), he was at times enlightened on earth by heavenly revelations (as we have already said, though we have left out much), so that almost everything that was to happen to him was always made known to him beforehand, whether in a dream, or by an inward revelation in his mind, or in ecstasy. What we have called a revelation in the mind we take to be of the kind we read of in the Acts of the Apostles, where it says: The Spirit said to Philip (Acts 8:29). For in all the more important matters he had to decide, he wished to have time to reflect, and he settled nothing rashly until, enlightened by the grace of God, he perceived in his own mind what was best; and so, made certain in his mind by a visitation from on high, he arranged without hesitation what was to be done. And the things he saw in dreams, many of which have already been set down above, were so true that we do not remember any of them ever coming to nothing. To prove this, let us relate something we passed over: before he was called to the church of Bremen, one night it seemed to him that he had come into a most delightful country, where

he found the blessed apostle Peter. And while he was gazing at him in wonder, some men came asking that blessed Peter himself should appoint a shepherd and teacher for them. And when Peter had answered them, "This is the one whom you are to have as your shepherd," pointing to the lord bishop as he stood before him, it seemed to him that there was a great earthquake and that he fell to the ground, and that a voice came upon him, and a great sweetness in his mind, the anointing, that is, of the Holy Spirit, so that he felt himself made new, as it were, in the grace of Christ. And the voice that came seemed to pour out a blessing upon him. After this, as it seemed to him, the same men urged the apostle again to appoint some teacher or other for them (for they seemed to be against what he had proposed to them before); and he answered them as if indignant: "Did I not tell you that it should be this man who stands here before you? Why did you doubt? Did you not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit come down upon him for this very purpose, to consecrate him your shepherd?" At these words he awoke from sleep; and from this vision, which he saw three years before he was called to govern the church of Bremen, he became entirely certain that he was to go somewhere in the name of the Lord; but where, he did not know. But when, at the king's command, he came to the church of Bremen and learned that it was consecrated in honour of Saint Peter, and also found some who received him unwillingly, he remembered his vision; and for this reason he consented to take

that diocese under his rule. He used to declare, solemnly affirming it, that otherwise he would never have been willing to do so.

63. AT TORHOUT HE BRINGS UP BOYS OF THE NORTHMEN. HE FORESEES REGINAR'S PUNISHMENT FOR TAKING THEM AWAY FROM THERE.

At the time, too, when he held the cell of Torhout mentioned above, since all his care was for the calling of the nations, so that he might be of use to them in his mission, he had bought a number of boys from among the Northmen and the Slavs and placed them in that same cell, to be brought up and taught for the sacred service. Some of them Reginar, of whom we spoke, took away from there when that cell was given to him, and put them to his own service. The lord bishop was greatly distressed at this, and a little while afterwards it seemed to him that he had come into a certain house and found there both the venerable King Charles and Reginar himself. He rebuked them, as it seemed to him, about those boys, declaring that he had meant to bring them up for the service of almighty God, not to serve Reginar. When he had said this, it seemed to him that Reginar raised his foot and kicked the lord bishop in the mouth. When this was done, it seemed to him at once that Jesus Christ stood near him and said to the king and to Reginar alike: "Whose man," he said, "is this, whom you dishonour so shamefully? Know that this man has a Lord, and you will not go unpunished for this."

At these words they were terrified and thrown into confusion; and the lord bishop awoke. How true this showing was is witnessed by the divine vengeance that came upon Reginar himself. For not long afterwards he incurred the king's anger and lost that cell, together with everything he held from the king, and was never again able to return to his former favour.

64. HOW SOLICITOUS HE WAS FOR HIS FLOCK; GENTLE AND SEVERE IN HIS PREACHING.

But lest we seem to have passed over what and how great he was in the grace of a shepherd: in him we have indeed proved how true is what blessed Gregory said of the shepherds of the Church, taking as a figure the shepherds who kept watch over their flock at the Nativity of the Lord: "What does it mean," he says, "that the angel appeared to the shepherds as they kept watch, and the brightness of God shone round about them, if not that those above all deserve to see sublime things who know how to watch with care over faithful flocks? And while they keep loving watch over the flock, the grace of God shines upon them more abundantly." For we have proved by many experiences that the grace of God went with him in all that he did. That he, being careful in guarding his flock, was found worthy to see many sublime things, and was often inspired in his mind by a visitation from on high, we have already shown above in many instances. And as the grace of God shone forth abundantly in him

outwardly too, his preaching, though steeped in great sweetness, was in part fearful, so that it could be judged with certainty that his words were governed by a spiritual inpouring: mingling gentleness with terrors, he set before his hearers the force of the divine judgement, at which the Lord, when he comes, will appear terrible to sinners and gentle to the just. By this grace he was admirable in word and look, so that the powerful and the rich, and above all the stubborn and the insolent, regarded him as fearsome; people of middling station embraced him as a brother; and the poor revered him as a father with the most loving affection.

65. HE FORBIDS WORK ON A FEAST DAY. GOD PUNISHING THE TRANSGRESSORS

Now although he carefully shunned miraculous signs as instruments of boasting, yet even these were not lacking, though he did not seek them; and this was proved by a clear sign, namely that the Lord's command, uttered by his mouth, did not go for nothing. For once, when he was preaching to the people on the Lord's Day in Frisia, in the district of Ostergo, and among other things forbade anyone to do servile work on a feast day, some of them, stubborn and dull-witted as they are, went home and, because the weather was fine, went out into the meadow, gathered the hay and made ricks of it. When this was done, as evening came on, all the ricks that had been made that day were consumed by fire through the power of God, while those that

had been made ready on the days before and stood among them remained unharmed. At this the people living round about, seeing the smoke from afar, thought that enemies had come and were greatly afraid; but looking more carefully into the truth of the matter, they found that the stubbornness of certain men had been punished.

66. HE SECURES THE FREEING OF CAPTIVES.

Nor do we think we should pass over in silence that at one time the people of the Nordalbingians had sinned grievously; and their offence was of this kind: when some wretched Christian captives who were being ill-treated among the barbarians escaped from there and came to Christians, to these same Nordalbingians, who are known to be the nearest neighbours of the pagans, they would seize them and put them in chains; and some of them they sold again to the pagans, others they made their own slaves, or sold to other Christians. When this became known to the lord bishop, he was exceedingly troubled that so great a wickedness had taken place in his diocese; but he could not well see how it might be set right, since very many who were held to be powerful and noble among them were entangled in this most abominable crime. And while he was so deeply troubled over this, one night a divine consolation appeared to him. For it seemed to him that the Lord Jesus was in this present world, as he once was when he preached to the peoples by the teaching and the example

of his presence; and it seemed to him that he was with a multitude of the faithful, and that the lord bishop himself was with him on the same journey, glad and rejoicing; and, as it seemed to him, a terror sent by God had fallen upon all the stubborn, and the oppressed were being delivered, and there was great peace among all, so that nothing contrary seemed to be found on that journey. Strengthened by this vision, he prepared to set out himself to that people of his, with this purpose: to free by whatever means the wretched men who had been unjustly bound to slavery and sold, and, by the grace of the Lord, to forbid anyone thereafter to dare commit so great an evil. On this journey the Lord granted him such grace, and struck the stubborn with such terror of his authority, that, noble and wickedly powerful though they were, none of them dared to gainsay his command; the wretched men were sought out wherever they had been sold, and, given their freedom, were let go wherever they wished. Moreover, so that no fraud might be pleaded in this matter in future, they made an agreement that none of those who had been stained by this rapacity should clear himself by oath or by witnesses, but should submit himself to the judgement of almighty God — either the man himself who was accused of such a crime, or else the captive whom another claimed. In this deed, then, on that very journey, the Lord truly showed what he promised to his faithful, saying: Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Mt 28:20). He completed that jour-

ney with such success and joy that some of those who went with him said they had never in their lives made so good and so pleasant a journey.

67. HE HEALS THE SICK WITH OIL. HE SHUNS VAINGLORY.

How many were healed by his prayer and by anointing with oil we cannot count. For when this became known through the testimony of many, the sick used to come to him eagerly, not only from his own diocese but also from far away, asking him for the remedy of health. He himself, however, always preferred that all this should be kept hidden rather than made known. Indeed, when on one occasion there was talk in his presence of such miraculous signs, he said to one of his close companions: "If I were worthy in the sight of my God, I would ask him to grant me one sign: that by his grace he would make of me a good man."

68. A MARTYR ALL HIS LIFE. STRICKEN WITH DYSENTERY. HE GRIEVES THAT MARTYRDOM HAS BEEN SNATCHED FROM HIM.

Furthermore, though such was his life, he suffered almost constantly from bodily infirmity. Indeed his whole life was almost a martyrdom: in the very many labours within his own diocese caused by the raids and plunderings of the barbarians and also by the opposition of the malicious; and besides, in the torment of his own making, which he never ceased to inflict on

his body for the love of Christ. But what are we to do, who after so many sweet and wholesome things are compelled to relate what we cannot tell without grief? For in the sixty-fourth year of his age and the thirty-fourth of his episcopate he began to suffer from a grave bodily illness, namely a continual dysentery; and though he suffered sharply from it for many days, that is, for four months and more, and felt himself pressed towards death, he always gave thanks to God, and said that this suffering was less than his wickedness deserved, often repeating that saying of blessed Job: If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? (Job 2:10). Yet because, on account of the visions spoken of above, he had believed that he would be perfected by martyrdom rather than by such an illness, he became very sad, and began to impute it to himself and to his sins that by his own fault he had been cheated of what was, as it were, a most certain hope, often repeating the words of the Psalmist: You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right (Ps 119:137). And when he revealed this grief, lamenting, to his most faithful disciple, who was privy to his secrets, and the disciple tried earnestly to console him, saying that it had not been promised him that he would be slain by the sword, or burned with fire, or put to death in water, but that he would come to the Lord with the crown of martyrdom, he could in no way accept consolation. And when he spoke of the same matter again and again with his disciple, who shared his secrets in almost everything, and the

disciple tried with all his might to console him, striving to bring back to his memory how much he had endured in the service of God and how much bodily affliction he had borne, and that even this last illness, being so very grave and so long, could well be counted to him as martyrdom, he still would by no means accept consolation, but remained in the grief we have described.

69. HE IS COMFORTED BY GOD. HE HAS THE PRIVILEGES GRANTED TO HIM COPIED OUT, COMMENDING THEIR EXECUTION TO THE KING.

So it came about that the Lord deigned to console his servant, no longer as before by a dream, but more openly, so as to grant the remedy of his grace to so great a grief. For one day, as he was standing in the oratory at Mass, deeply troubled over this very thing, he was suddenly caught up in ecstasy and, as though awake, heard a voice which rebuked him sharply, saying that he ought by no means to have doubted God's promise, as if any wickedness could overcome the loving kindness of God. “Believe most firmly,” it said, “and do not doubt at all, that God by his grace will do both things for you: that is, he will forgive the sins over which you are now troubled, and he will fulfil all that he has promised.” Having received this consolation, he too comforted himself. And from then on he began to set everything in order in his diocese with greater care; moreover, he ordered the privileges of the Apostolic See that had been granted concerning his mission to be copied

out in many little books and sent to almost all the bishops of the lord King Louis. To King Louis himself, too, and to his son of the same name he sent the same, adding a letter in his own name in which he asked them to keep these things in mind and also to give their help as occasion required, so that the mission itself, with the help of God's grace and with their support, might bear fruit and grow among the nations.

70. HE LONGS TO DIE ON THE DAY OF THE PURIFICATION OF BLESSED MARY, AND ON ITS EVE ORDERS THREE CANDLES TO BE LIT. ON THE FEAST, AFTER MASSES HAVE BEEN SAID FOR HIM, HE WAITS FASTING FOR THE PUBLIC MASS.

Now when he had suffered from this illness for three months on end, and the Lord's Epiphany had passed, he began to long that he might be allowed to pass to the grace of the Lord on the Purification of Holy Mary. So as that feast drew near, he ordered a banquet to be prepared for the clergy and the poor, that they might feast on that most holy day. He also ordered three large candles to be made from his own wax. When they had been made, on the very eve of that feast he had them carried before him, and ordered one to be lit before the altar of Holy Mary, another before the altar of Saint Peter, and the third before the altar of Saint John the Baptist, desiring that those who had once been his guides in the vision told above should receive him as he went forth from the body. He was so worn down and wasted by that

illness that almost nothing remained of his body but bones bound by sinews and covered with skin. Yet he was always occupied in the praise of the Lord. When the day of that feast dawned, all the priests who were present celebrated Masses for him, as they had been accustomed to do every day. He himself began to arrange how the sermon to the people should be given, declaring that he would taste nothing that day until the public Mass was over. When it was finished and he had eaten and drunk a little, he strove all day long to admonish his people more earnestly and to kindle them to the service of the Lord, encouraging them to the service of God, now all together, now each one singly, as far as he was able; but his greatest care and concern was for his mission to the nations. The following night, too, he spent entire in such admonitions.

71. AFTER THE LITANIES HAVE BEEN SAID, HE RECEIVES VIATICUM FOLLOWING THE MASSES. HE REDOUBLES HIS PRAYERS FOR HIMSELF AND FOR OTHERS. HE DIES.

And when the brethren who were present were saying the litany and chanting the psalms for his departure, as is the custom, he urged them to sing also the hymn composed in praise of God, that is, the Te Deum laudamus, and the Catholic faith composed by blessed Athanasius. In the morning, when all the priests who were present had celebrated the holy solemnities of Mass for him, and he had received the communion of the Lord's body and blood, he raised his hands and

prayed that the divine loving kindness would forgive whoever had sinned against him in any way. Then he began to repeat these verses again and again: According to your mercy remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord (Ps 25:7); and: God, be merciful to me a sinner (Lk 18:13); and: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit (Ps 31:6). When he had repeated these many times and, his breath now coming short and fast, could no longer go on repeating them, he told one of the brethren to keep singing these same verses in his stead. And so, with his eyes fixed on heaven, he breathed forth his spirit, commended to the grace of the Lord.

72. ALL MOURN. THE EPILOGUE OF HIS PRAISE.

When his body had been prepared according to custom and laid on the bier, and was being carried to the church, the mourning of all seemed to break out anew, and there was but one voice of lamentation, above all of the clergy, of orphans, widows, wards and the needy. For although there can be no doubt of his salvation, who among the religious or the faithful could keep from weeping, now that he has left us desolate, he in whom alone the examples of almost all the saints of old flourished? For, to begin with the very Head of all the elect, he, poor, followed the poor Christ; with the apostles he left all things; and with Saint John the Baptist, spending his early years far from the throng of the crowds, he sought the solitude of the monastery. Then, when with the passing of

time he had grown by daily progress and gone from virtue to virtue (Ps 84:8), he was appointed, with the blessed apostle Paul, a chosen vessel to carry the name of Christ before the nations (Acts 9:15); and afterwards, with Peter, the prince of the apostles, he took up the care of feeding the sheep of Christ. What and how great he showed himself in that government is proved above all by this: that, standing between heaven and earth, a mediator between God and his neighbour, he now took part in divine vision and heavenly revelations, now ordered the deeds and the life of those entrusted to him. And he was equal to these twin wings of the active and the contemplative life because — since, according to the faith of the Gospels, the pure in heart alone are believed to be destined to see the Lord — he, chosen by him as a virgin, remained, like the holy apostle and evangelist John, a virgin in mind and body for ever; and he was moreover possessed by such charity towards all that, like the blessed protomartyr Stephen, he prayed even for his persecutors. O truly blessed man, most worthy of every tribute of praise, who was granted to be so true and so great an imitator, and alone to possess at once the virtues of so many! Holy in mind and chaste in body, he will follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev 14:4) with the virgins; persevering ever in the confession of Christ, he will have a most glorious place among the confessors; he will sit with the apostles on that lofty seat of judges in the regeneration, and judge the world he had

despised; and with the martyrs he will receive the crown of justice and the palm of martyrdom.

73. HOW HE WAS A MARTYR.

It is agreed that there are two kinds of martyrdom: one hidden, in the Church's time of peace; the other open, when the hour of persecution breaks upon her. He held both in will; the one he attained in deed. For since every day he constantly offered to God on the altar of his heart tears, vigils, fasts, the chastening of the flesh and the mortifying of carnal desires, he truly attained by his longing the martyrdom which he could not attain in a time of peace. And since he did not lack the courage to face a persecutor in the open martyrdom of the body, what he could not achieve in deed he achieved by his will. And yet we cannot altogether deny that he had this martyrdom too in deed, if, following the Apostle, we consider his great labours for the Lord: in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from his own race, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and hardship, in many watchings, in hunger and thirst, in many fastings, in cold and nakedness; besides those things that are without, his daily pressure, the care of all the churches (2 Cor 11:26–28). Who was weak, and he was not weak? Who was made to stumble, and he did not burn? (2 Cor 11:29). How then can one who was tried as in a furnace for the Lord by so many and such great adversities of body and burnings of soul rightly

be denied the name of martyr? For if only a life brought to its end by suffering were reckoned as martyrdom, the Lord would never have declared that the holy evangelist John would drink his chalice, though we know that John by no means ended his life in martyrdom. If, then, according to the Lord's word, we do not doubt that John is to be enrolled among the number of the martyrs, neither ought we to have any doubt at all about this man of whom we have spoken, so plainly holy and so truly blessed. For he was a martyr, because, in the Apostle's words, the world was crucified to him, and he to the world (Gal 6:14). He was a martyr, because amid the temptations of the devil, amid the allurements of the flesh, amid persecuting pagans, amid resisting Christians, he remained ever undaunted, unmoved and unconquered in the confession of Christ until the end of his life. He was a martyr, because, since μάρτυρ means 'witness', he was always a witness to the divine word and to the Christ-bearing name. In this matter let no one wonder that he did not attain that martyrdom which he longed for with the greatest desire and believed had been promised him; for, by the meaning of this word, it is shown that this was not what had been promised him. And surely, had he received the martyrdom of the body, some pride might perhaps have crept into his mind; and to guard against this, the divine wisdom both promised and granted him this: that nothing should be taken from his merits, and that his humility,

which is the guardian of all the virtues, should be provided for.

74

Therefore, since it is now clear from what we have recorded above how great was this man's holiness and how great his merit with God, it remains for us that, as he was in all things an imitator of Christ, so we too should strive to be imitators of him. For so it will come about that he may live with us on earth always, even to the consummation of the world, and that we, after the passing of this present life, may deserve to live with him in heaven. He will live with us on earth if the holiness of his life and the remembrance of his teaching make him present to us; and we shall live with him in heaven if, following his example, we always press on with all our desire and all our strength towards him to whom he has gone before us, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, God, for ever and ever. Amen.