



ANCIENT CHRISTIAN TEXTS

LECTURES ON
THE PSALMS

Didymus the Blind

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
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LECTURES ON THE PSALMS

PSALM 20 [21]

[1] From Scripture and from common wisdom, we hold the opinion about God that he is unchangeable, that he is immutable. For the one who is completely free of quality neither undergoes change nor suffers alteration, since alteration is nothing other than qualitative change.² Not every kind of change is an alteration, but a change in quality is an alteration. To be sure, there are various kinds of change, since there are various kinds of motion. Something that comes into being changes, but this motion is not an alteration. Something that grows changes, but this is not an alteration, either, for this kind of motion involves an addition and increase of quantity. When someone, however, becomes zealous for virtue after being wicked or becomes wicked after being virtuous, he undergoes a qualitative alteration, as when, again, someone passes from sickness into health, and vice versa.

So then, we understand words in relation to the content of the subject about which they are spoken. God is not composed of members, since he is not composite at all. For this reason, in his case sitting, rising, walking, the turning away of his face, and the manifestation of his face are accessory descriptions. So, in order to preserve the faith by means of these

descriptions that are assigned to him, one must receive them in a manner worthy of God.

Some, by their words and their forceful style, debase what is signified. For example, some dare to arrive at such a degree of naivete or impiety as to consider God to be manlike because of things written in a figural sense. And they claim that God has hands, members, feet, a visible appearance, and the rest. But if we understand the following on each occasion: of whom, and again, from whom these things are spoken, we can refer the difficulties back to the thing that is being identified, to the thing being made known.

Unless we comprehend them in a manner that is worthy of God, we cannot have a godly opinion about them, according to one of the Twelve Prophets. In a certain place, he says, "Are not his words good with him, and have they not proceeded upright?"³ Unless they are "with him," with him in mind, they are not good. Come! When you hear about sleep, wakefulness, and repentance, and you do not understand such things with him in mind, the things said about him have not proceeded uprightly with him! But when you receive such things with him, the words, walking uprightly with him and having been filled with the Spirit, do not contain anything harmful and trifling. In the Gospel the Savior said, "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God."⁴ You are wrong when you claim that God does not create the universe out of nonbeing. Indeed, some say as

¹Didymus the Blind, *Psalmekommentar (Tura-Papyrus)*, vol. 1, *Kommentar zu Psalm 20–21*, ed. M. Gronewald, L. Doutreleau, and A. Gesché, PTA 7 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1969), begins here. Numbers in brackets in the text refer to page numbers in *Psalmekommentar*.

²For an excellent discussion of these key terms and their place in Didymus's interpretation of the Psalms, see Richard Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 43–48.

³Mic 2:7 NETS.

⁴Mt 22:29 NRSV.

follows: “Creating follows after being, since some substrate must first exist. The dead are unable to partake of resurrection.”⁵ Since they do not understand the words together with the power of God, for this reason they crash against them. God can bring things into being out of nonbeing, and he can cause corruptible bodies to change. He is speaking to the Sadducees. One who presumes [2] to understand the Scriptures is wrong when he is ignorant of God’s meaning, which relates to the one about whom and by whom they are spoken.

However, the one for whose benefit I have said these things, I will mention in an excursus from the following lecture. Our Savior and Lord is God and man at the same time. He is always God, but he was not always man, for before the creation he was God but not man. And he would undertake this for our salvation. On the one hand his becoming man has a cause; on the other his being God has no cause, save only because of his own existence and the essence of his generation. For I understand the saying “I live because of my Father”⁶ as follows. He is not saying this: “The Father gives me life,” as the Eunomians wish. Rather, he is saying this in the same sense as when someone says, “I am rational for this reason, because I have a rational father,” and, “I am mortal for this reason, because I have a mortal father.” And that is true. The word *hoti* provides an explanatory principle. Since he lives because of the Father, therefore, he is called “life,” not as one derived from life, but as the source of life and the one who causes everyone to participate in it. For we say that the Living One has life. We also call him the life that is not derived from life, for life does not participate in life but *is* life itself. In this way, then, he lives “because of the Father.”

⁵The Sadducean teaching about the impossibility of a resurrection is here related to a “nameless heresy” (PsT 3) against which Didymus warns his audience throughout this introduction.

⁶Cf. Jn 6:57.

He is man, then, because of something, but he is not God because of anything. Both, however, converge at the time of his appearance. By “appearance” I do not always mean the one in the flesh, for he willed many appearances; he is always appearing! At least, that is how I have understood the saying in Micah: “And you, O Bethlehem, house of Ephatha, are the very least. One from you shall come forth for me, and his goings forth are from of old.”⁷ For in a sense, after coming forth from the Father, he did not appear for the first time when there was need of his saving administration. There is need of his going forth when and where it happens. For this reason, the prophet spoke not of one but of many goings forth. “Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she gives birth.”⁸ Indeed, Scripture is not exalting women who give birth, but it speaks of one who gives birth: the one who is signified by the passage. Strictly speaking, one who gives birth is not one who receives sperm, becomes pregnant, gives the child form, and contains it; rather, she generates the child herself. For this reason he has come from a woman. None of the rest of us came from a woman, but all came through a woman, and all are from men. For the woman comes from the man, and the man through the woman.

This also must be said, that genealogies are impassively, wisely, and piously produced when they are derived from fathers, for the genealogy that stems from women is discredited. She alone, then, who gives birth without a husband, has truly “given birth.” And because of this the Savior has come from a woman, not through a woman, even though many others come who do not say “from Mary” but “through Mary.” [3] In this way, many proclaim docetism.

Now, he is God from the Father, and without a cause, while he is man from David

⁷Cf. Mic 5:2 (5:1).

⁸Mic 5:3 (5:2).

and Mary and with a cause. He has come for the salvation of the world: to destroy death, to give many things to mortals that they had lost because of their own indolence.

Why, then, am I saying these things? The things said about the Savior manifest his divinity. And all that is proclaimed about his divinity is inapplicable to any other, since he is unique. However, the virtuous actions that concern the Man⁹ as a man apply in a certain sense to the righteous also. The virtuous become imitators of the Man. However, they do not imitate the divinity—for this is unholy to say—they imitate the Man.

Therefore, whatever is said about the Man could also be said about angels and perfect men. On the other hand, whatever is said about the divinity will be said neither of angels nor holy men. I am not saying that Wisdom, or the radiance of God's glory, or the exact impression of the divine being, or the only-begotten Son of God is a kind of created being. Rather, whatever is said about the Man could be said about others. For example, "You are trying to kill me," because I am "a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God."¹⁰ Many others also spoke the truth after they learned it from God. He, however, did so more often; he did so more weightily; he did so incomparably. And again, "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me."¹¹ Others also speak the truth; for if we grant that no one spoke the truth except Christ himself, we yield ground to the nameless heresy.¹²

There is a certain nameless heresy that seems to be born or to have come into being by means of books. And many people own books and systematic treatises that say the following: that the truth has never appeared among men except during the Savior's appearance. For "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."¹³

But look where their argument brings them! Since they desire the ancient Scripture and the Prophets not to be from God, they say that the truth had never come to men except when the appearance of Christ had taken place. And when they say these things, they split apart the one divinity, and they claim that the Creator of the world before the appearance is one person, and they seek for another as the Father of Christ.

But we do not say this, that the truth was at one time suppressed. The truth always sends forth testimonies about itself. And it is the province of humans either to perceive it or not to perceive it. In the case of the perceptible sun, just as it happens that the one who closes his eyes does not see it, and we certainly do not conclude that there is no sun, so we do not say that the truth had at one time not come among men, because we do not wish to split the Scripture in two. And I say, if you consider the fruits of a fruit tree—such as the fruits of a fig tree—it is necessary for the fruits to be distinct from each other as soon as you separate them from their stalk. So then, it is impossible for the instruction of the Gospel [4] to have brought the truth to men, and that which is called "old" before Christ's appearance not to have brought illumination in the truth. Clearly they inferred from the different fruits a different quality as well—not that there is a different divinity, but this follows from their absurd first principle.

When, therefore, the Savior says, "I am the truth,"¹⁴ and "shepherd,"¹⁵ and "gate,"¹⁶ and the

⁹Didymus does not employ the abstraction "humanity" to speak of what would later be termed Christ's human nature. He refers to the Man assumed by the Word. Throughout I capitalize the word to distinguish the humanity of the Savior from the humanity of others.

¹⁰Jn 8:40 NRSV.

¹¹Jn 8:45 NRSV.

¹²More literally, to "give mortar to" or "build up" the nameless heresy. As described in the next paragraph, the nameless heresy has much in common with forms of Gnosticism, especially the Gnostic system proposed by Marcion.

¹³Jn 1:17 NRSV.

¹⁴Jn 14:6.

¹⁵Jn 10:11.

¹⁶Jn 10:9.

rest, these names and the things signified by them cannot be shared with creatures. But when he says, "I am a man,"¹⁷ when it is said of him that he is righteous—"You killed the righteous one,"¹⁸ says Peter—these names relate both to men and to angels.

In the case of the word *king*, understand it in the same way. Since there is a certain kingdom that is naturally connected with the Word, neither acquired nor able to be lost, he is the "kingdom" in person. And just as he is not called righteous because he possesses righteousness but rather is righteousness itself, so also he is king not by virtue of his coronation, but is in person king from the King, as he is God from God. He also has an acquired kingdom, which he wished to have when he appeared, that he should destroy those who war against the human race and lead them into their lawful dominion so that they might be ruled justly. Therefore, when he says, "But I was established king by him, on Sion, his holy mountain,"¹⁹ he is not speaking about his innate and eternal kingdom, but of the one he has received for our sake.

In God's case, *kingdom* means instruction. There was one instruction before his appearance, which I said that he produces from within himself as God the Word, and there is another instruction that exists for other purposes. This latter one, then, has a beginning and an end. For example, it was said in one of the Twelve Prophets, "And the Lord will reign from Zion from now until the age."²⁰ The words *from* and *until* designate time. But when it is said of a man that he reigns from this time until that, this implies his deficiency, for before the time from which he began his reign, he was not a king, and when his reign comes to its end, he is no longer a king. We do not say this about the Savior,

however; on the contrary, he reigned from the time when he took up his rule by coronation, but he reigns no longer when this rule of his accomplishes its goal. Indeed, that other kingdom of his exists in himself. As divinity does not befit him because of another, so neither does this kingdom, nor does holiness. "God is our King from of old."²¹ And the kingdom from of old exists for his own sake. Again, "Your kingdom is a kingdom of all the ages."²² This is said in reference to God the Word. The Word has a kingdom that neither begins nor ends, for "the Lord is king throughout the age, forever and beyond."²³ The writer was at a loss to signify what was beyond time and the age, and he said, "and beyond." We understand the word *beyond* in this way: even if you assume another age, he still reigns, and if you take another still, he continues to reign, and if you take all the ages, he still reigns. From this it is shown that his rule is without end. For the kingdom that he had in his condescension will be ended [5] at some time and has received a beginning. For it exists because of something, because of the salvation of the world, for the taking away of "the sin of the world."²⁴ And just as a doctor is continually a doctor from the time when he has the profession and for as long as he practices medicine, yet in relation to his patient he has a beginning and an end of his being the doctor of that person any longer, when the patient is brought into health and into a treatable condition. You can say the same things about instructions as well. A person is a teacher from the time when he has received knowledge. And he becomes an instructor of someone when he dedicates himself to him. And when that other person is instructed and completely receives the knowledge that the teacher has, he is finished being his teacher.

¹⁷Cf. Jn 8:40.

¹⁸Cf. Acts 3:14-15.

¹⁹Ps 2:6 (2:6 NETS).

²⁰Mic 4:7.

²¹Ps 74:12 (73:12 NETS).

²²Ps 145:13 (144:13 NETS).

²³Ex 15:18.

²⁴Jn 1:29 NRSV.

And in a way it is a virtue of a teacher to cease at some time from being the teacher of others, for when he has perfected them he teaches them no longer. If, however, a person always remains the teacher of someone, no one is perfected by him in the teaching.

Therefore, when people hear such passages and do not understand the Scriptures in this way—for example, “when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father,”²⁵ he rules no longer in this way. For it is not that he rules no longer in an absolute sense; rather, he rules no longer in this way.

In our passage a king and his kingdom are named, for *the king will be made glad by your power, O Lord*. If we receive this expression in relation to God the Word, he himself is found to be both king and power, for “Christ is the power of God”²⁶ and “the power of the Most High”—which is himself—“overshadowed”²⁷ Mary, in order that she should become pregnant and become the mother of the temple.²⁸ If instead we wish to understand the power as coming from God the Word, we take the word *king* as indicating the Lord’s Man. This one is made glad by God’s power. Did his appearance not accomplish things for which one must rejoice and be glad? These accomplishments have not come from the side of the Man toward the power, but rather from the side of the power toward the Man. In any case, so says Paul, insisting that the resurrection of the Savior took place in this way: “He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God.”²⁹ We do not say that life lives from the power of God, nor that power lives from the power of God. “Being put to death,” therefore, “in the flesh, he was made alive in the spirit.”³⁰

He is put to death in the flesh; he is not put to death in his divinity.

We therefore understand that the following was said about the Man: *The king will be made glad by your power*. For if he has prevailed over the enemies and subjected them, and has given to others “authority to tread on snakes and scorpions,”³¹ this has taken place by power, for power itself empowered him, who is the temple and the king, to become “the author of salvation.”³² “You killed the Author of life.”³³ In all things he has the primacy, for it says, “that in everything he might be preeminent.”³⁴ He is second to none, nor is anyone his equal in the common things. I was saying earlier that there are things that are shared in common between the Lord’s Man and holy men. Yet none is his equal, nor is he second to anyone, for which reason he is also called “author.”

O Lord, by your power the king will be made glad. Now, this may be said about each kingdom that exists in relation to God. Abraham was a commoner, as far as his ordinary life was concerned, and it was said that he was “a king from God.”³⁵ He possessed another kingdom, then: [6] the preservation of the divine and spiritual laws. And the one who rules in this way, even if he does not govern others, rules over himself. First one must govern oneself, then others. Again, “Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you!”³⁶ “Do not suppose, O Corinthians,” he is saying—and these were haughty people who thought great things about themselves—“do not suppose that we are envious of you when you rule. We ourselves do not rule with respect to you. It is for this very reason that we do not rule: because you do not yet rule. If

²⁵1 Cor 15:24 NRSV.

²⁶1 Cor 1:24.

²⁷Cf. Lk 1:35.

²⁸“Temple” is another of Didymus’s favored ways of referring to the humanity assumed by the Word.

²⁹2 Cor 13:4 NRSV.

³⁰1 Pet 3:18.

³¹Lk 10:19 NRSV.

³²Heb 2:10.

³³Acts 3:15 NRSV.

³⁴Col 1:18 ESV.

³⁵Gen 23:6.

³⁶1 Cor 4:8 NRSV.

then you become kings, we are ready to become kings as well.”

To illustrate, certain great ones were invited by the king to a banquet. The king’s philanthropy also invited some who were inferior to those present. He said, “Let us not eat without them, lest those who come to be fed be neglected in consequence.” So, these later ones have those who both preceded them and were invited to the meal as the main guests.

In a psalm it says the following: “The righteous ones wait for me, until you respond to me.”³⁷ No one, upon obtaining things that are expected, is said to “wait for” them, but is one who has already received them and has the intention of using these things.

Each of the saints, then, is a king. And I was saying earlier that the things which are appropriate to the Man of the Savior befit the righteous as well, albeit incompletely and to a lesser degree. He says, therefore, about each saint: O Lord, by your power the king will be made glad. He did not say, “is made glad” but “will be made glad.” When the time of joyful serenity arrives, then the saint will be made glad.

This can also be said about David in particular and his human and perceptible kingdom, because he, having governed the kingdom well, will receive a reward for this. For each person, when he fulfills well those things that are entrusted to him, receives a reward for them. When he is faithful in a few things, he enters “into the joy”³⁸ of his neighbor and his God.

[20:2] *O Lord, by your power the king will be made glad.*

He calls the Savior the power that gladdens the king, since he is God the Word. I was saying just now that one must receive the

words just as their underlying realities are and not drive out these realities by forcing one’s way to the sense. The word *power* has been handled by us already. It means many things. I observe that *power* means the same thing as *strength*. But not in this way do I mean that the Savior is the power of God. I observe that *power* means “capability.” Someone will think that this signification of the word is not present in Scripture. It is. “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.”³⁹ He is speaking of the capability, for both words communicate the same thing. And so the contestant has the capability of enduring and of seizing the victorious way out. You see, this meaning is present.

And again, [7] “The power of sin is the law.”⁴⁰ The law can be transgressed. It does not have this ability by its own activity. Both well and opportunely has the apostle said in this passage, “The power of sin is the law,” for he wishes that we be in the ability of sin and not in its activity. Now, if this were said: “The power of righteousness is the law,” we would not be righteous in activity, but only in capability. And though we were capable of righteousness, we would in fact be unrighteous in our activity. Therefore, the apostle set down the propitious word, since the law has the capability of both in equal measure: to be kept and to be transgressed. But he wrote what he did because of its usefulness. The word *power* also means “capability.”

And it also signifies the army of the king: “The chariots of Pharaoh and his power he threw into the sea.”⁴¹ “A king is not saved because of much power,”⁴² because of his mighty hand and his troops.

³⁹1 Cor 10:13 NRSV.

⁴⁰1 Cor 15:56 NRSV.

⁴¹Ex 15:4.

⁴²Ps 33:16 (32:16 LES2).

³⁷Ps 142:7 (141:8).

³⁸Cf. Mt 25:21, 23.

The Savior, quite apart from these significations, is called the power of God. Indeed, in a similar way that the Father is powerful—not having this from a power, but from his essence, and his essence is that in which he is powerful so that he may be called power itself—it is thus also with the Son. It says therefore, “He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God.”⁴³ Inasmuch as it befits human weakness, he submitted to a cross. God was incapable of enduring this; rather, as a man he was able to suffer this. And indeed he has suffered it but now lives from the power of God. The power of God, therefore, is Christ, since Christ is God.

The king, then, is made glad by your power. The word *king* was used in many figural senses. We have mentioned David in the historical sense, the Man who is from Mary in the anagogical sense, by whose imitation and discipleship those who imitate him become kings. And we established from the letter to the Corinthians that there is another kingdom besides the temporal one.

O Lord, then, by your power the king will be made glad. This phrase is spoken either by the Spirit-bearing man or by the Holy Spirit himself, who abides in him, for whenever the Holy Spirit says, “O Lord,” he does not say this alone and apart from a man, but he says this when he prepares someone to be a bearer of the Spirit. That person, then, is the one who says as follows: “The Lord says to my Lord,”⁴⁴ and the Savior says, “If by the Holy Spirit he called him ‘Lord,’ how is he his Son?”⁴⁵ If he is his Son, how is he a servant? And if a servant, how is he his Son? The word *Lord* reveals a kind of relation and disposition. For even when the Savior says, “The Lord created me,”⁴⁶ he is speaking suitably, since he did not say, “The Lord begot me.” Truly begetting belongs to the

Father, and creating to the Lord. Whenever he speaks of his own divinity, he does not say, “Lord,” but rather, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”⁴⁷ “My Father and I are one.”⁴⁸ *Lord* and *Father* are different words.

Often when we talk about a single quality, we join together the attributes of the quality to the condition of something as a whole, and we also join together the attributes of the whole condition [8] to a single quality. I say that knowledge knows. And it is a falsehood to say that knowledge is ignorant. The opposites are found to coexist: knowledge and ignorance. And I also say that the knowledgeable person knows. And again, people often say that the physician must not be greedy for money. Then they say that medical science understands how to avoid greed. One names the habit, without excluding the person who has the habit, and the person who has the habit, without excluding the habit. Therefore, such attributes are common both to the one who possesses the quality and to the quality that is possessed.

And we established many times from the teaching of the apostle that he calls the one who has love “love,” for when he says, “Love is never rude; it is not boastful,”⁴⁹ he calls the one who has the habit by the name of the habit. And I also say about the one who possesses love that he is beneficial. He benefits with that benefit that love bestows.

Therefore, when I say that the saint says this—the psalmist, for example—I am not separating the Holy Spirit from the one who possesses him, nor do I say that the one who possesses the Spirit says these things without the Holy Spirit. If then “David in the Holy Spirit calls him ‘Lord,’” it is in this manner so that the one who is partaken of is not sundered from the one who participates,

⁴³2 Cor 13:4 NRSV.

⁴⁴Ps 110:1 (109:1).

⁴⁵Cf. Mt 22:43-45; Mk 12:35-37.

⁴⁶Prov 8:22 NETS. The Hebrew has “the Lord possessed me.”

⁴⁷Jn 14:10 NRSV.

⁴⁸Cf. Jn 10:30.

⁴⁹Cf. 1 Cor 13:4-5.

just as knowledge is not separate from the knowledgeable person.

[20:2] *And at your deliverance he shall rejoice exceedingly.*

Just as the king is gladdened by your power, so he rejoices exceedingly at your deliverance. The deliverance and the power are the same thing, understood in two different conceptions. Power is that which maintains all things and so leads them as seems good to it. So also is deliverance: for what it does, it does for the sake of salvation; what it accomplishes among men, it does for the salvation of men.

[20:3] *You gave him the desire of his soul.*

You know that the word *him* signifies the substance, not the accidents. The desire of the soul is bad when one presupposes a wicked soul. But when I say that the soul itself has a desire, I am speaking of the desire that is essential to it. The one who makes use of this desire loves none of the wicked things but only the good ones, because he received both the appetitive faculty and the desire in order that he might pursue good things, in order that he might reach toward things that profit. Come then! If someone is greedy for wealth, he did not receive the desire of his own soul but the desire of greed. It is then a great thing to obtain the desire of the soul, when the word *wicked* is not adjoined to it. Take, for instance, what it says in another psalm: “who satisfies your desire with good.”⁵⁰ [9] It is speaking about the soul.

Many times it was said by us in other places that things that are proper to the soul do not create a contradiction. If I say, “The desire of the soul is good,” and then I say on the other hand, “The desire of the righteous person is good,” that which is added does not create a

contradiction. When I say, “The shameful desire, the wicked desire, the desire of the unrighteous,” then a contradiction arises. That is not simply the desire of the soul but of such a soul. Therefore, there are times when the accidents agree together with the substance; but when they war against it, they create a contradiction. So, for example, was it said, “The desire of the righteous is completely good.”⁵¹ To consider the desire of the righteous soul and the desire of the soul, without further qualification, is one and the same thing.

This appears even in the case of perceptible things. If I say now, “Such and such a father desires for his children to live well,” since I have made mention of a “father,” I want to say next that his children live well. But if I say, “The wicked father wishes for his children to do such and such,” I have annulled fatherly compassion.

“With great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you.”⁵² The phrases “with desire” and “I desired” mean the following: “I pursued what was righteous in a righteous way,” what is worthy of being desired. However, there are times when someone desires what is unworthy of being desired, as it says: “passion, evil desire.”⁵³ The evil desire is not desirable, since nothing that is falsely called “good” is said to be choice, even if some choose it.

[20:3] *And you did not deprive him of the prayer of his lips.*

If the discourse is about the one who came from Mary, clearly he advances his request on behalf of those he has come to save. You have, for example, “Consequently he is able for all time to save, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”⁵⁴ He always lives in intercession. And understand the word *always* in this sense: for as long as they have need of

⁵¹Prov 11:23 LES2.

⁵²Lk 22:15.

⁵³Col 3:5 NRSV.

⁵⁴Cf. Heb 7:25 NRSV.

⁵⁰Ps 103:5 (102:5 NETS).

an advocate and arbiter. “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”⁵⁵ And so, since others also eagerly agree with the teacher, they also desire to advocate for those with whom they were entrusted, not arranging for their own consolation as though it were of primary importance but establishing an intercession that follows after the righteousness of the one who summons them to imitate him.

Therefore, in relation to all the definitions of the word *king*, one must understand that he is not deprived of his prayer. When we say, for example, of one who is king in a perceptible way that the prayer of his lips was not taken away but that it has come to fulfillment, we intend his praise. And if we say this about the saints—for they too were called “kings”—their praise is also great when their prayer is received. For “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer.”⁵⁶ And “he listens to the prayers of the righteous.”⁵⁷

[20:3] *Diapsalma*.

[10] The word *diapsalma* appears nowhere else but in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the Psalms. And it appears also in the song of Habakkuk. Those who understand the Hebrew language can say what it means best of all. All the same, we report what has come to us. There are those who say that it signifies a change of person. But this is a fallacious conclusion: we have found a change of persons in the Psalms even without the *diapsalma*.

Again, they say that the *diapsalma* signifies a kind of interval—as though the speaker ceased talking and then resumed on another occasion—and the *diapsalma* signifies this: the temporal interval. We are unable to affirm

this, however, for it is never explicitly stated that, having spoken these verses of the psalm, the psalmist spoke again after another period of time.

Those who are slightly familiar with the Hebrew interpretations say this: that it is the rhythm of a musical composition, just as they talk about rhythms and melody in the study of music. These matters are not ours to know; they belong instead to those who are familiar with the language. In any case, it can be appropriate for music in every language. And music is nothing other than a rhythm of sounds, harmoniously composed.

At some point, I hope to understand the Hebrew letters and dedicate myself to their interpretations. But when we see something on a farm, although it is named by a farmer, since we do not understand what it is, we learn it from him. And, so long as we do not reject it as unworthy of our knowledge, we remain ignorant no longer, because we asked him. So also in this case: when we do not understand the Hebrew language, yet we hear that it signifies a musical rhythm in the Hebrew language.

[20:4] *For you went before him with blessings of kindness.*

God went before *the king*, according to every interpretation, with blessings of kindness. The phrase *You went before with blessings* is the equivalent of the phrase “while you are still speaking, I will say, ‘See! Here I am!’”⁵⁸ Take this as an example: someone sends up a prayer for one who lives well, for one who possesses virtue. God says, “while you are still speaking,” though you have not yet finished the words of the prayer, I tell you that I am present by granting it.

We understand *kindness* here to mean “goodness.” For often we understand the word

⁵⁵1 Jn 2:1 NRSV.

⁵⁶Ps 34:15 (33:16).

⁵⁷Prov 15:29.

⁵⁸Cf. Is 58:9.

kind as though it were an accusation: “Bad company ruins kind morals,”⁵⁹ meaning good morals that are superficial. And the phrase “good character” is indeed understood as a compliment, when someone has good conduct that is more than superficial. Likewise also with the word *innocent*, for “by smooth talk they deceive the hearts of the innocent,”⁶⁰ and again, “The innocent believes every word.”⁶¹

[20:4] *You placed on his head a crown made of precious stone.*

If this was said about the Lord’s Man, this crown that will be placed on his head is composed of precious stones, which are either the virtues or those who [11] possess the virtues. In the construction of this crown are found those stones that are wrought together with gold and silver on the foundation: Christ.⁶² Clearly neither gold, nor silver, nor stones are to be taken in a literal sense.

But if this was said about each king, such as Abraham was, such as the rest of the saints are, we say the following: just as the king of Tyre, when he lived well and was placed with the cherubim on God’s holy mountain, when he was “signet of likeness” and “a crown of beauty,”⁶³ was not encircled with sensible stones, with such stones by which someone is crowned. Come now! Joseph found delight in chastity. Chastity is a precious stone. These virtues crowned him, Susanna, and the martyrs. And since the virtues are interdependent with each other, and the one who has one of them has them all, the crown that is created is not merely one stone.

You placed on his head a crown made of precious stone. The word *precious* is joined to it. The word *precious* belongs among the relative

words. These stones here, such as pearls, sapphires, and the rest, we call “precious,” since there are also stones that are different from them. Since, therefore, these great stones are also the specific kinds of virtue, see how precious these stones are and how they surpass all the stones that seem to be good in the world!

Now, Paul taught that disciples are the crowns of their teachers, addressing the church that followed his instruction as “my joy and crown.”⁶⁴

“On that day the Lord Sabaoth will be the crown of hope.”⁶⁵ The material of this crown is the Lord of Sabaoth, for “the Lord Sabaoth will be the crown of hope.” And since a person in this circumstance is not yet able to possess a perfect participation in God, yet this will happen at that time when “God becomes all in all,”⁶⁶ when the final object of desire is in the possession of all. This is why it called him a crown of hope: for if we will know him at the time when we see him as he is,⁶⁷ and we see him as he is to appear at the time when we approach the goal, then this crown is a crown of hope. In the meantime, it is a crown of hope; it is being anticipated.

[20:5] *He asked you for life, and you gave it to him.*

We were saying that the Savior as Man—and when I say “as Man,” do not separate him from the Word—that the Savior is “an advocate with the Father.”⁶⁸ The Word is not separated from the Man; neither is the Man separated from the Word, but he, having been composed of both, becomes an advocate and advocates “since he always lives to make intercession for them.”⁶⁹

⁵⁹1 Cor 15:33.

⁶⁰Rom 16:18.

⁶¹Prov 14:15 NETS.

⁶²Cf. 1 Cor 3:11-12.

⁶³Cf. Ezek 28:12-14.

⁶⁴Phil 4:1 NRSV.

⁶⁵Is 28:5 LES2.

⁶⁶1 Cor 15:28.

⁶⁷Cf. 1 Jn 3:2.

⁶⁸1 Jn 2:1 NRSV.

⁶⁹Heb 7:25 NRSV.

He asks for that life, which he wishes to be revived. By him comes vivification, for “he was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”⁷⁰ [12] Now, the soul of Jesus is not life, but he has life from God who assigns and gives it to him. So it is with all other souls as well, so that each says, “My soul lives for him.”⁷¹ The soul has the dignity of living in immortality. “To live for God,” however, is a fruit that is produced out of our free will, just as to live again for sin is produced out of our free will.

[20:5] *Length of days forever and unto all ages.*

Again, we cannot understand *length of days* literally. It says, *forever and unto all ages*. These days that are given to us and exist because of the sun are spoken of in this age only. It was also said, “When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”⁷² and, “to the end of this age.”⁷³ And when the Scriptures say, “in these days,” they are speaking of the days of this age. But this one who prayed is a great man and was not offering up a prayer about something small and indifferent, so that his prayer is also remembered, and it is not about these days that are limited by sun and moon. Therefore, one must contemplate these words differently. Observe that in the Scriptures such things often fail and seem as though they are impossible. “Honor,” they say, “your father and your mother, so that it may be well for you and so that you live for a long time upon the earth.”⁷⁴ He who honors his parents, however, does not always remain for many years on the earth. Many younger people are carried away. For example, of such people it was said in the Wisdom of Solomon: “He was taken away so that wickedness would not

change his understanding or treachery deceive his soul.”⁷⁵ And it says, “Being perfected in a short time, he fulfilled long years,”⁷⁶ and it says that Wisdom is gray-haired and that the unstained life is aged.⁷⁷ However, if the spotless life is old-aged, and this is not composed of days but of virtue, one must understand the days differently.

He asked you for life, then, not that he himself might live but those for whom he offers up his prayer. We spoke not of the common life but of the life that accords with virtue. He who knew no sin nor performed it,⁷⁸ and had no deceit in his heart,⁷⁹ did not experience the state of death that separates us from the blessed life. For this reason, when he asked for life, he did not ask for himself, but he desires that life be given to those for whom he offers up his petition: for he “always lives to make intercession for”⁸⁰ those who are going to receive life from him.

He asked you for life, then, *and you gave it to him*. Either the psalmist, or the Holy Spirit in him, says this to God. And great is the testimony when the one who offered up the prayer receives his requests. *You gave it to him*, therefore: *length of days forever and unto all ages*.

In general, the saints do not wish to have their common life prolonged for a long time in this life. Take as an example when he says, “It is better to depart and be with Christ,”⁸¹ and again, “Woe is me, that my sojourning was prolonged.”⁸² [13] “I am a sojourner on the earth.”⁸³ He who is “a sojourner and a

⁷⁰1 Pet 3:18 NRSV.

⁷¹Ps 22:29 (21:30 NETS).

⁷²Cf. Mt 24:3 NRSV.

⁷³Mt 28:20.

⁷⁴Ex 20:12.

⁷⁵Wis 4:11 LES2.

⁷⁶Wis 4:13 NETS.

⁷⁷Cf. Wis 4:9.

⁷⁸Cf. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22.

⁷⁹Cf. Is 53:9; Ps 32:2 (31:2).

⁸⁰Heb 7:25.

⁸¹Phil 1:23.

⁸²Ps 120:5 (119:5 LES2). The English translations take *mešek* as a place name, where the Greek translates the verbal form *māšak* (to draw out, prolong).

⁸³Ps 39:12 (38:13); 119:19 (118:19).

foreigner”⁸⁴ has the desire and goal of removing himself from his exile, in order that he might dwell in his homeland. Therefore, just as it is not a common life that is meant here—the life that both impious men and unreasoning animals live—so neither is he saying that *length of days* is a long-lasting life; rather, *length of days* is meant in the same sense as the one who honored his parents will be long-lived and of many days. In Deuteronomy, it is also said, “This is your life and this is length of days,”⁸⁵ that “you love me, the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.”⁸⁶ See how *length of days* is to love him with all of one’s soul, with all of one’s might, and with all of one’s desire.

Length of days, then, *forever*. It is possible to take these words about the blessed life in this manner, for this is a life that is identical with the knowledge of God. When the following was said: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent,”⁸⁷ this life is the knowledge of the Father and the Son. And again, “whoever believes in me has eternal life.”⁸⁸ The one who believes in the Savior does not have a common life. The ungodly one often is found to be more long-lived than the virtuous. These people ardently desire this life to be of many days, since they in fact hold that there is no other good but such a condition.

Therefore, just as the present life and the life to come are praiseworthy, so also is *length of days* in the present age, so that someone has great illumination, each doctrine of the truth being understood and giving him light.

Each practical virtue that is successfully performed is also a praiseworthy *day*. Since then, just as perfect and total knowledge will succeed the knowledge that at present is only

partial, so also in the case of practical virtue, those who are shown to be righteous in practical virtue from now on will be virtuous in another way—for again, they have righteousness now and in the future—*length of days* referring to the present age, not to this common day, but to the day that can exist, of which they say, “This is the day that the Lord made.”⁸⁹ For they have spoken in demonstration of it. No one, however, demonstrates something that is to come but that which is already at hand and present. The future, whenever that time arrives in which it comes, is no longer future. Then in its turn it will fall under demonstration.

In whatever way, then, you understand the king—whether the holy man or him who has come forth from Mary—they do not pray about that life or length of perceptible [14] days, but about the days already mentioned. They have in mind a long life and they are sending up a petition about this. Long life is not the life of a single age. Understand the life in correspondence to each age: at first primary and introductory, then intermediate, and then perfect.

Question: What comes after all these days that are mentioned?

Each doctrine that illuminates the soul, being emitted by the Sun of Righteousness,⁹⁰ we have called a “day.” After these progressive illuminations, there is a kind of perfect state of light. That day is not interrupted by night; a multitude of days does not elapse.

One can also understand it thus: since the virtues have a connection to each other—for each virtue is full of light—a single length of days comes from their interdependence; it is not interrupted.

I say: each theory of knowledge is detached from the others, for the wise man knows many things. For example, just as in the case of

⁸⁴Gen 23:4.

⁸⁵Deut 30:20.

⁸⁶Cf. Deut 6:5; 10:12.

⁸⁷Jn 17:3.

⁸⁸Jn 6:47.

⁸⁹Ps 117:24 NETS.

⁹⁰Mal 4:2 (3:20).

medical science, there is surgical theory and dietary theory, in the case of grammatical science, it is the same. Whenever someone becomes perfect, he no longer holds them as though they were different. Indeed, at present it is possible for someone to master surgical theory to a greater degree while mastering dietary theory to a lesser degree. But when you presuppose a perfect physician, someone who possesses all the theories perfectly and without a superior, the theories are no longer disparate, nor do they have any difference in their subject matter. Presuppose a man who has perfect health in his body. He no longer requires a strict diet; he does not require a surgical incision. He has left behind those conditions because of which he had need of these things. At length he has a health that no longer brings something else into being. For his sake all these things are attempted. And the possession of health is pursued with a certain eagerness. In fact, just as there are some things that produce health, so also there are some that preserve it: for example, physical exercise or a particular kind of food.

That long day, then, is uninterrupted; for at some time in the evening there arrives that time when the saying is fulfilled: “The Lord will be to you an everlasting light,” when the sun no longer fails, “nor shall the rising of the moon illuminate the night.”⁹¹ These words are not spoken about sensible bodies of light, for “immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.”⁹² These will no longer grant the light that is so dear to the people of this age, for the sun will be seven times brighter and the moon will be like the sun. It was said of the heavens in general that “they will be changed.”⁹³ And when he says that the heavens are changed [15], he means the stars and the luminous bodies in them, just as we say of the

earth, “The whole earth worships,”⁹⁴ and we mean those who dwell on the earth. “Sing to the Lord, all the earth.”⁹⁵

[20:6] *Great is his glory in your salvation.*

If we understand *glory* in a strict sense, we do not mean the glory that is the happiest state. For example, we do not mean the glory that is human authority, nor do we mean reputation; for all these things are the little glories of narrow-minded and foolish men. Physicians, then, who bestow healing on those who recover from sickness seem to earn glory for their patients—for the one who is cured has been glorified rather than the sickness—but this glory is not great. So it is with the pilot of a ship as well.⁹⁶

In the *salvation* of God, therefore, there is *great glory*. For this salvation reaches intellect and soul. The intellect, however, is superior to all that is in us, and the soul is superior to the body, even if others do not think so.

And it is also possible to call the Savior himself “salvation,” as appears in many passages: “All the ends of the earth saw the salvation of our God,”⁹⁷ and: “All flesh shall see the salvation of God,”⁹⁸ instead of “every man” or “every soul endowed with perception.” In this *salvation*, then, the *glory* is *great*. If the death that he endured seems to be dishonorable—for according to the law, “cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”⁹⁹—yet the apparent dishonor succeeded in obtaining such great glory because of the object of salvation. For salvation was accomplished not for animals, nor simply for men, but for soul, intellect, and spirit, as Paul writes, “your whole

⁹¹Is 60:19.

⁹²Mt 24:29 NRSV.

⁹³Ps 102:26 (101:27).

⁹⁴Cf. Ps 66:4 (65:4).

⁹⁵Ps 96:1 (95:1 NETS).

⁹⁶That is, the pilot of a ship glorifies his fellow passengers over the trials of the sea when he delivers them safely to the destination of their voyage.

⁹⁷Ps 98:3 (97:3 LES2).

⁹⁸Lk 3:6.

⁹⁹Gal 3:13.

spirit, soul, and body.”¹⁰⁰ The apparent dishonor, then, is a surpassing glory.

I want to suggest an idea. When I was speaking about the Gospel, in that passage that says, “The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and will do greater works than these,”¹⁰¹ in addition to other interpretations this one has also been given: when you consider the analogy of the one who does the works, even the great things he does are small, since they are small in comparison with God. The apostles have not performed perceptible works that are greater than those of the Savior. The Savior raised Lazarus even though he was already dead for four days, was near to decaying, and had already begun to stink. The apostles have done nothing like this. Jesus led into sight a man blind from birth. But if you consider these works of the Savior, they are small when compared with the creation of the rational essence, the heavens, and souls. And the works of the apostles, even if they were inferior to those [16] of the Savior, since they are beyond their power they are called greater than those things the Savior has done, for they were not capable of doing things greater than these. Jesus, however, has both done such things and is always doing them.

And the apostle also says: indeed, “we see Jesus, who is made lower because of the suffering of death.”¹⁰² He was made lower because of the suffering of death but was crowned “with glory and honor.”¹⁰³ The diminution brought him glory, and even glory of the greatest kind. “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed.”¹⁰⁴ Now, those are the sufferings of Christ, which those who imitate him have suffered, though he suffered first. *Great*, then

is *his glory*. Even though there was a cross, even though there was death, how great is his glory when you contemplate the object of salvation and the Savior! And the glory of all the rest is not great. Most certainly there was a time when they had glory, but the glory of some of them departed even while they were still alive.

So also have I understood what is said in Isaiah: “And there is no boundary to his peace.”¹⁰⁵ “In his days righteousness will sprout, and an abundance of peace, until the moon vanishes.”¹⁰⁶ Observe the peace that arises, for it prevails until the consummation. For the annihilation of the moon signifies nothing other than the consummation of all things, when “the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”¹⁰⁷ The peace does not prevail in one nation, nor does it prevail over the earth alone, for “he reconciled by the blood of his cross” not only “the things on earth” but also “the things in heaven.”¹⁰⁸

[20:6] *Glory and magnificence you will confer on him.*

The glory and magnificence are conferred on him together with this great glory that began at his salvation. Now, the *magnificence* is the actions and zealous deeds done by those in whom that which is fitting is found. The deeds that stem from virtue are performed fittingly. While many deeds seem to be done fittingly by men, they are not truly fitting. As I have said about glory, the signs of honor and little glories are not so great a thing as men suppose them to be; nonetheless, such honors were welcomed by them.

With the word *magnificence* people also mean the following—first of all understand the meaning from the literal sense—there are organizers of athletic contests, and if they are stingy, they diminish the contests and the

¹⁰⁰1 Thess 5:23.

¹⁰¹Cf. Jn 14:12 NRSV.

¹⁰²Cf. Heb 2:9.

¹⁰³Heb 2:9.

¹⁰⁴Rom 8:18 NRSV.

¹⁰⁵Is 9:7 (9:6 LES2).

¹⁰⁶Ps 72:7 (71:7 NETS).

¹⁰⁷Is 13:10; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Col 1:20.

related expenses as a result of their petty deliberation, and they appear also to be doing that which befits an organizer of the games. However, they do it in a trifling way, and these men are called “stingy,” for they do not distinguish themselves, while they are found to be in no way inferior to those who were organizers of the games before them in “what is fitting.”

This, then, is called *magnificence*: when there is greatness in that which is fittingly done. Magnificence exists especially at the time when one does what is fitting not because of some other person but because of oneself.

Take another example: if someone, being wealthy, [17] during small occasions and at small gatherings spends lots of money, this person is not magnificent. This is an excess of magnificence, as when we say that audacity is an excess of courage and superstition an excess of piety. For example, suppose someone serves his fellow dice players the very finest banquet and squanders more on it than another spends at a wedding feast. This happens for the sake of vainglory. And magnificence does not happen for the sake of vainglory.

Being led by the hand by perceptible examples, let us come to the things of which the word is speaking: the Savior accomplished what is fitting in great things. The righteous man also demonstrates what is fitting in great things. What is greater than saving the world, than making peace not with things that are on the earth alone, but also with things that are in heaven?¹⁰⁹ What is greater than to accomplish that for which the things in heaven, the things on earth, and the things under the earth bow the knee to the Savior to the glory of God the Father?¹¹⁰ This glory is *magnificence*, and it has a kinship with majesty. It is said of God himself, therefore: “The Lord is king! He is clothed in majesty!”¹¹¹ This majesty and

magnificence are the same thing. For whom was it fitting to save men other than one who had no sin?¹¹² He had no sin, knowing that it is good to avoid sin and to possess righteousness, that it is good not to repay insult to one who insults another,¹¹³ not to avenge oneself on those who are disposed to evil. “When he suffered,” it says, “he did not threaten.”¹¹⁴ Not only was he not doing things that are unworthy, but neither did he threaten to do them. A threat is an anticipation of fearful things. Indeed, when there is no longer an anticipation but something comes as a result, then there is no longer a threat.

Glory, then, and *magnificence* you will confer on him. And the statement *you will confer* is well said. This is conferred in addition to something else that is already established: for he did not begin to display this glory and magnificence among rational creatures for the first time when he appeared, but he did this at every moment and everywhere it was possible. The glory and *magnificence* that came by means of his appearance—through the cross, for example—have come as an addition.

[20:7] *Because you will give him blessing until the farthest age.*

Just as we have spoken about life—not that he himself should have it, for he has it already, but that those who draw near to him, who gather around his teachings, should have this.

And this blessing *until the farthest age* is distinct from the blessing that seems to exist among mortals, for this blessing is also spoken of on one occasion: “Because in his life his soul will be blessed; he will never again see light.”¹¹⁵ He will not see the light, even if he now seems to see clearly. He does not possess this glory on his own.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Col 1:20.

¹¹⁰Cf. Phil 2:10-11.

¹¹¹Ps 93:1 (92:1).

¹¹²Cf. 1 Pet 2:22.

¹¹³Cf. 1 Pet 2:23.

¹¹⁴1 Pet 2:23 NRSV.

¹¹⁵Ps 49:18-19 (cf. 48:19-20 NETS).

Therefore, the spiritual [18] blessings that are given in the heavenly places¹¹⁶ are identical with this blessing that remains *until the farthest age*. For when someone supposes that he has received wealth as a blessing, he does not possess it *until the farthest age*, for it passes away together with the material life.

It is also possible to interpret this with grace and elegance in a moral sense: when one who has wealth so spends it that he finds a glory after these things are gone, of which glory it says, “As for the those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty.”¹¹⁷ Then it says, “Storing up for themselves a foundation of good works.”¹¹⁸ The blessing of this person remains *until the farthest age*. And the things accomplished by this wealth remain indestructible. Likewise also in the case of other things: if in keeping with prudence—with what is truly prudence—a person should be glorified and blessed, he has the blessing remaining *until the farthest age*. If, however, someone presumes to be blessed by virtue in pretense, he has a blessing that is ended; for when the truth shines forth and deeds appear just as they are by nature, the blessing that accords with mere thinking is dissolved. At times it even presents a danger.

[20:7] *You will gladden him in joy with your face.*

The saying seems to be ambiguous, for by the phrase *you will gladden him in joy with your face*, on the one hand the following is meant: when you gladden your face, you will gladden him also.

Or perhaps both things gladden him: *you* will gladden him in joy, and *your face* will gladden him along with you.

This kind of saying appears also in Isaiah: “And the Lord, the Lord has sent me and his

Spirit.”¹¹⁹ Some take it thus: “The Lord sent me; meanwhile his Spirit also sent me.” And they say that the sending of the Savior in his appearance has taken place from the Father and the Holy Spirit. For it was said to her who conceived him or carried him in the womb, “The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and the power of the Most High.”¹²⁰ See! It seems here that he was sent from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Others, however, read it thus, and this reading is better: “And the Lord, the Lord has sent me; and he has sent his Spirit also,” the Father sending the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The former interpretation says this, that the Father and the Holy Spirit sent the Son. And each receives an interpretation of the reading that suits himself, as was already said.

Here too, then, is the *face* of the Lord who is spoken of here. And the Son is his image, “the exact imprint of his very being.”¹²¹ Therefore, about the *face* assumed by the Savior and every righteous *face* is it said, *You will gladden him in joy with your face*, for when the Son comes, then someone, having seen the exact impression, immediately sees the one whose impression he is also, for “whoever has seen me [19] has seen the Father.”¹²² The joy comes from God and his *face*.

One can also understand the words *You will gladden him in joy with your face* in the following way. He is now saying this about every righteous person, for your *face*—by which the righteous person has been created “in the image and likeness”¹²³—will be shown to be his.

And I say: accidents, even though they are separable from essences, often occur as coexistent with them. Take color, for example, for the body is not first created and then colored; it is created colored. Nevertheless, we

¹¹⁹Is 48:16.

¹²⁰Lk 1:35.

¹²¹Cf. Heb 1:3 NRSV.

¹²²Jn 14:9 NRSV.

¹²³Gen 1:26.

¹¹⁶Cf. Eph 1:3.

¹¹⁷1 Tim 6:17 NRSV.

¹¹⁸1 Tim 6:19.

say that color in some cases belongs among the accidents and can be absent. I added the words “in some cases,” since in the realm of sensible things, color is neither added to nor lost from snow. Neither is humidity added to water, for it is essential to it.

Therefore, given that the rational being has been created good from the beginning, it is not good in the same way that God is, for man is not good in essence but in habit and disposition. Even if man, then, has been created “in the image and likeness of God,”¹²⁴ this is separable from man in the sense that it has an appearance that is able to be cast away and taken up again. But when God saves, every appearance will change. And this will be shown in the one that is saved.

[20:8] *For the king hopes in the Lord.*

This king hopes in the Lord. He hopes that there will be salvation for those on whose behalf he has come to suffer. He is not uncertain about the goal of what is pursued with zeal, but he hopes steadfastly, for “in the mercy of the Most High he is not shaken.”¹²⁵ Therefore his hope does not fail.

And I give an example, though perhaps it is forced. No one hopes for things that are present. The one who is well does not hope to be made well; the wealthy does not hope to be rich. Hope, then, is concerned with future things. Hope and expectation are identical. Expectation is the genus to which hope belongs; specifically, hope is an expectation of good things from God.

Of things future, then, some have potential reality, so that they might happen and might not, since both outcomes transpire by chance, while other things will certainly transpire: as, for example, when I say knowledgeably that after so long a period of time there will be an

eclipse of the sun. Only the wise person hopes for this, for the other is wholly ignorant of it, whether it happens or not.

It is good to remember this: that there are four questions to be resolved, two of them being simple and two being complex. The simple questions are that something is and what it is. Then the complex questions are how it is and why it is. Therefore, it is characteristic of the wise person to expect, according to knowledge, these things that will always come to pass.

For he understands both that there is such a thing as an eclipse and what an eclipse is: namely, a covering of the sun by the moon. And he understands how it happens: when the moon passes in a vertical line beneath the sun, an eclipse occurs. See! This is the “how” question. And the “why” question is as follows: when the sun travels around, it appears in different positions. Sometimes the circle of the moon is below the circle of the sun. It does not always pass directly below it. That is, there are two circles. When a body comes here and passes again into the position directly below the other, that which comes below conceals the one above it. In any case, they say that an eclipse is an interposition of the moon [20] before the sun.

It belongs to the wise person, therefore, to know this unerring expectation. And one can anticipate the things that happen by chance, for example, rain or a good harvest. But these predictions are often wrong.

Therefore he says, *You will gladden him in joy, for the king hopes in the Lord.* The one who hopes is a king. The hope and expectation of such a person is unerring. And he says,

[20:8] *In the mercy of the Most High he will never be shaken.*

Being pitied by the Most High, he is unshaken. For he is shaken at the time when his subjects are found to be unworthy of his rule. And he leaves them and abandons them.

¹²⁴Gen 1:26.

¹²⁵Ps 21:7 (20:8).

And, in their intent, we understand hoping in God to be the same as repenting.

It is characteristic of the Most High to bless rational creatures, just as the following also shows: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.”¹²⁶

[20:9] *May your hand be found against all your enemies, your right hand find out all who hate you.*

In the case of the body, one may contrast the right hand with the hand, for the right hand is a hand, but not every hand is a right hand. We have here a *hand* and a *right hand* that are named in relation to God. Of the true David who comes from David’s seed this is also said in another psalm: “And he will set his hand upon the sea and his right hand on the rivers.”¹²⁷ And note that it is simply the *hand* that is set on the sea, for the *right hand* is not on the sea but on his rivers. And again, “Your hand destroyed nations.”¹²⁸ Observe: the military power of a king is often called *hand*, and executioners are called the *hands* of judges. The devil also knew that there is a *hand* that causes harm, for he did not say, “Stretch out your right hand,” but rather, “your hand, and touch all that he has.”¹²⁹

May your hand be found against all your enemies.

Your hand that punishes your enemies will appear. So also do I understand the saying, “But the Lord’s face is against evildoers, to destroy the remembrance of them from earth.”¹³⁰ When they do evil things, they suppose that there is no providence, that there is no punishment for the sins that they commit. But when they receive an experience of a certain suffering, sometimes when they become aware of it they see the face of God. Now, “the face” I

understand in this way: they know that there is a God. And just as “we contemplate the Creator by analogy from the greatness and beauty of creatures,”¹³¹ so also from the greatness and harmony of the things that relate to his government the Judge is observed.

We have found, then, Pharaoh first behaving with contempt, and then, when he was stricken, laying hold of a conception of God. Once at least he says, “The Lord is just.”¹³² He who says earlier, “I do not know the Lord,”¹³³ now confesses that he both knows him and knows that he is just. “But I and my people are impious.”¹³⁴ And when the face of God comes on Pharaoh, the worker of evil, the hand is found as well: for at some time evildoers need to know that there is a Judge, even if it does not happen in this life, but it must happen at some point. For this reason it is said, *May your hand be found.*

May your right hand find.

The hand is found by the enemies; the right hand, however, finds those who hate. Those who hate can be less wicked than enemies. Not everyone who hates is an enemy, but every enemy hates.

And as it was said that the hand of God is set on the sea, in order that by its sufferings he should bring an end to its agitation and saltiness, the right hand of the Savior [21] is on the rivers—and these are people who have life in the Spirit, “out of whose heart flow rivers of living water”;¹³⁵ “the rivers lifted, O Lord; the rivers lifted up their voices”¹³⁶—so the right hand of the Savior is found to be the one that saves, the one that exalts, according to the saying: “The right hand of the Lord exalted me, the right hand of the Lord did mightily. I shall not die, but I shall live.”¹³⁷

¹²⁶Lk 2:14.

¹²⁷Ps 89:25 (88:26).

¹²⁸Ps 44:3 (43:3 NETS).

¹²⁹Job 1:11 NETS.

¹³⁰Ps 34:16 (33:17 NETS).

¹³¹Wis 13:5.

¹³²Ex 9:27 NETS.

¹³³Ex 5:2 NETS.

¹³⁴Ex 9:27 NETS.

¹³⁵Jn 7:38.

¹³⁶Ps 93:3 (92:3 LES2).

¹³⁷Ps 118:16-17 (117:16-17).

[20:10] *You have placed them as an oven of fire for the time of your face.*

This could be said about the enemies who are handed over to punishment.

If, however, it applies to both the enemies and those who hate, understand what is written in this way: see, those who are built on the foundation, Christ, if they are gold and silver, are only tested with fire, but they do not disappear. They are not consumed even when they are found by the fire. But if they are “wood, hay, or straw,”¹³⁸ they do disappear and they are set like an oven of fire—they are at last like smoke. Now, smoke is a byproduct of the useful activity of the fire. Therefore, when wood, hay, and straw are *for the time of God’s face*, as it is set down—for there will be an appointed time when the Judge will be shown—those who are called “wood, hay, and straw” do not disappear so that they exist no longer—for it is impossible for them to disappear in this way—but they disappear insofar as they are hay. For this fire of punishment does not act on their essence but on their habits and qualities. This fire does not consume creatures but certain kinds of conditions, certain habits.

And teaching accomplishes the same end: it takes the unlearned and it makes him disappear, not insofar as he is a human but insofar as he is unlearned, for instruction brings his ignorance to an end. So also righteousness abolishes the unrighteous person, not so that he exists no longer but so that he is no longer unrighteous.

[20:10] *O Lord, confound them in your wrath, and a fire will consume them.*

Someone is confounded at the time when he begins to hesitate and repent. And *a fire will consume them* so that they are no longer such people.

[20:11] *You will destroy their fruit from the earth and their seed from the sons of men.*

The word *seed* is ambiguous. When it is defined in relation to fruit, it signifies the seed of a tree; when it is defined in relation to children, the seed of a man; for we often have the word *seed* in Scripture mentioned together with children.

It now falls to us to speak about the difference between the words. He is saying the following: While they were on the earth and had dealings with it, they were united to the earth. Instead of the works of the immaterial soul, they produced as their fruit the works of the flesh. This *fruit you will destroy from the earth*. The good and beautiful land, which receives the seed of Jesus, the seed he sows, brings forth fruit.¹³⁹ This is the same land, in its underlying substance, with that which produces thistles. And being a rational essence, the land is receptive of seeds. This land acquires its differentiation from our free will.

And their seed from the sons of men.

They sowed among the sons of men and not among the sons of God, for they are unreceptive to these seeds. Therefore, *you will destroy their seed from the sons of men*, where the [22] tendency toward bad fruit is present. If someone has virtue in his activity, the seed of vice is opposed so that it seems to be destroyed.

[20:12] *Because they inclined toward evil things against you.*

Against you who have made them straight. Their free will inclined toward evil. You know that in the case of perceptible works of art and representations bad work brings censure to the one who produced it, while what has been well done brings praise. For example, it was said in Sirach, “A work will be praised for the hand of

¹³⁸1 Cor 3:12.

¹³⁹The “land” is frequently taken as an allegorical reference to the soul.

the craftsman.”¹⁴⁰ . . . if someone bends from being “in the image.”¹⁴¹ Therefore, as far as it was up to them, they chose evil things against you.

[20:12] *They devised plots together, which they could not establish.*

And in order to be led by the hand from history to so-called history—I am not sure, however, whether it is a history—those who wished to build the tower that has its head in the uttermost height desired to do this but were unable to establish it.¹⁴² And indeed they were scattered. God accomplishes his counsel at the time when a person desires rightly and according to his counsel. The one who pursues this “does all things with counsel.”¹⁴³ To this counsel God adds the fulfillment.

[20:13] *For you will show them your back.*¹⁴⁴

Often things that relate to God are said to belong to his body: “You are the body of Christ,”¹⁴⁵ and in this body are found eyes, ears, and hands.¹⁴⁶ Hence, “You will show your back to them.” You will put them in their place behind this body of yours.

It is possible to understand this in the following way: the primary matters about God are called his “face,” whereas these perceptible creatures are behind him, for they are after him. For example, to Moses, who is unable to see God’s face, God passes by in his glory and shows him his back. Indeed, he recorded the book of Genesis immediately afterward.

¹⁴⁰Sir 9:17 LES2.

¹⁴¹Gen 1:26.

¹⁴²Cf. Gen 11:4.

¹⁴³Prov 31:4 LXX. There is no corresponding statement in the Hebrew.

¹⁴⁴The NRSV has “you will put them to flight,” where the Hebrew has “you will set them backward.”

¹⁴⁵1 Cor 12:27 NRSV.

¹⁴⁶Cf. 1 Cor 12:15-17.

To them, therefore, he will show his back, for toward the saints his face is set according to the prayer that they offer up: “Show us your face and we shall be saved!”¹⁴⁷

[20:13] *Among your remnant you will prepare your face.*¹⁴⁸

The others “who remain,” besides those who “hate,” are saints; they are the ones who remained in this condition.

And well did it say *you will prepare*, and not “you will give.” He has his face ready, in order that everyone who desires to see it should be able to behold it.

[20:14] *Be lifted high, O Lord, in your power; we will sing and play psalms about your sovereign acts.*

For you do all things with power. At the beginning of the psalm the power of God is also praised in song: *O Lord, by your power the king will be made glad.*¹⁴⁹

The power that gladdens the king, that accomplishes all that has been mentioned, is lifted high, not by being raised from a low place into a height; rather, it is lifted high when men no longer think mean things about it but think lofty things, as it truly is. And when we say, “I will exalt you, O Lord,”¹⁵⁰ we do not mean this: that we elevate you from lowliness into the heights. To exalt God is to confess his loftiness.

Finally, he sings in triumph—for in the case of a king alone is dominion mentioned, and there are dominions that belong to this king—he sings of what he is able to do as king. [23]

¹⁴⁷Ps 80:3 (79:4).

¹⁴⁸The LXX has “among your remnant” where the Hebrew has “with your bows.”

¹⁴⁹Ps 21:1 (20:2).

¹⁵⁰Ps 30:1 (29:2 NETS).

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