

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

Gregory the Great

Moral Reflections on the Book of Job

Volume 2

Books 6–10 and Book 2.LII.84–LV.92

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Gregory the Great

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Introduction by

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Abbreviations

General

chap.	chapter
diss.	dissertation
ed(s).	editor(s); edition(s)
gen.	genitive
n(n).	note(s)
no.	number, issue
p(p).	page(s)
pl.	plural
s.v.	<i>sub verbum</i>
trans.	translator, translated by
vol(s).	volume(s)

Publications: Books and Series

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1954–
CS	Cistercian Studies series. Kalamazoo, MI, and St. John's, MN: Cistercian Publications.
LXX	Septuagint
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latinae. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris.
Praef.	<i>Praefatio</i>
SCh	Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1942–

Introduction

On the Necessary Intermingling of the Good and the Bad

Mark DelCogliano

In part 1 (books 1–5) of his *Moralia in Job*, Gregory the Great managed to comment through Job 5:2. In part 2 (books 6–10) he picks up where he left off and extends his commentary to Job 12:5. Parts 1 and 2 originated in the oral discourses that Gregory delivered to the small group of monks and clerics living with him in Constantinople in the early 580s when he was serving as papal ambassador to the imperial court. He later revised these discourses upon his return to the monastery of St. Andrew around 586, achieving the form in which we now possess them shortly after Gregory was elected pope in April 591.¹

In part 2, there is a complete breakdown of the overly ambitious exegetical method with which Gregory began his exposition in book 1 (CS 249:18; *Letter to Leander* 1, CS 249:48–49). His original plan appears to have been to interpret each selection of verses three times: first the historical or literal interpretation, then the typical interpretation (geared toward what Christians believe or need to believe), and finally the moral interpretation (what Christians need to do). He scrupulously followed this scheme in books 1–3. But book 4 begins with

¹ See Gregory the Great, *Moral Commentary on Job*, trans. Brian Kerns, vol. 1, CS 249 (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2014), 8–10; hereafter cited as CS 249, with page numbers.

the historical interpretation of Job 3:1-10 (I.1–XII.22) and concludes with the moral interpretation of Job 3:1-19 (XII.23–XXXV.72):² he completely skips the typical interpretation, as well as the historical interpretation of Job 3:11-19, and focuses instead on the moral interpretation. Starting in book 5, Gregory generally comments on each selection of verses only once, whether giving the historical, typical, or moral interpretation. In practice, he mostly abandons the historical interpretation, preferring to delve into the allegorical senses, that is, the typical and the moral senses. In a few cases in part 2, particularly in the earlier books, he treats a few verses in two senses, but never in all three, as if he was still unwilling totally to abandon his original plan.³ But as he advances through Job, such exegetical repetitions become more rare. The preponderance of the moral sense in his commentary starting in part 2 no doubt contributed to the name of the entire exposition, the *Moralia*.

Gregory probably jettisoned his original plan for two reasons. First, the task of commenting on the entirety of Job in such a fashion would have been enormous. In books 1–3, he comments on five, sixteen, and thirteen verses, respectively. Given that there are over 1,050 verses in the book of Job, if he had maintained the threefold interpretation, assuming that he would have commented on an average of fifteen verses per book, he would have needed at least seventy books to complete the exposition on Job—and probably many years added to his life. Second, Gregory surely knew that his audience was more interested in the allegorical senses than the historical. He did not believe his *Moralia* was suited for a general audience, as is evidenced by his dismay upon hearing that Marinianus, the archbishop of

²Citations of Gregory contain three numbers; the first Arabic numeral indicates the book, the Roman numeral indicates the paragraph according to the Coccian division, and the second Arabic numeral indicates the paragraph according to the Maurist division. For further explanation see my introduction to volume 1 (CS 249:39–42).

³For example, in 6.II.3–V.6 he discusses the typical sense of Job 5:3–5, whereas in VI.7–X.12 he discusses the moral sense of Job 5:3–5.

Ravenna, was having the book read in public at Vigils.⁴ He intended the historical sense for “the simple” and the allegorical senses for those “learned in the mysteries” of the Word of God (*Letter to Leander* 4, CS 249:53; Introduction, CS 249:19). He could for the most part dispense with the historical sense for his proficient audience of monks and clerics in Constantinople.

Evidence for this new exegetical approach directed to those learned in the mysteries of the Word is also seen in the opening sentence of part 2, where Gregory for the first time in the commentary proposes to set forth a “mystical interpretation” (*mystica interpretatio*) of Job (6.I.1). In part 2 itself he declines to provide a precise explanation of the “mystical interpretation,” as he had for the historical, typical, and moral interpretations in the Preface, but he does have this to say: “His [Job’s] words, therefore, are not empty of mystery, just as we learn from the end of the story that the interior Judge praises his words. Indeed, his words would hardly still be valid until the end of the world and win so much veneration if they had not been pregnant with mystical understanding” (7.X.10). The “mystical interpretation” seems to be the insight that Job’s words give into the mysteries of the Christian faith: the mysteries of Christ’s incarnation and redemption, of the divine economy, of prophecy, of Paradise and heaven, of the spiritual life, of the cross, of interior contemplation, and of the divine wisdom and judgment—the list goes on.

This new “mystical interpretation” was clearly on Gregory’s mind throughout books 6–10, because he concludes part 2 with these words: “It should be enough that we have now produced these two parts with the Lord’s help. Since we cannot master the extended sequence of the

⁴“And I have not been at all pleased about what has been reported to me by some people, that my most reverend brother and fellow bishop, Marinianus, is having my commentary on the blessed Job read out in public at Vigils. For it is not a work for the general public, and it produces an obstacle rather than assistance for ill-educated readers” (*Registrum epistularum* 12.6; English translation by John R. C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols., Medieval Sources in Translation 40 [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004], 811).

holy book with the mystical interpretation by means of a brief exposition, we must reserve it for a future volume, that readers may return more ardently to the study of the book inasmuch as they have rested during the interruption of the reading” (10.XXXI.55). Perhaps also by “mystical interpretation” Gregory means an interpretation that does not systematically include the historical, typical, and moral in a threefold manner, but rather one that delves into whichever of these three senses might provide the greatest insight into the “mysteries.” In any event, part 2 marks the definitive abandonment of the original threefold interpretation in favor of mystical interpretations, usually moral in nature, according to the material supplied by the scriptural verses at hand.

One of the exegetical challenges that Gregory faces in part 2 is that often he is not interpreting the words of Job, but the words of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. In the Preface, Gregory had explained that Job’s friends allegorically represent heretics, “who pretend to advise but intend to seduce. . . . They speak to blessed Job as though holding God’s place, but God does not approve of them, for all heretics obviously pretend to defend God, whom they actually offend” (Pref. 6.15; CS 249:71). Citing Job 15:3-4, Gregory notes that Job considered his friends “liars and followers of perverse doctrines” (Pref. 6.15; CS 249:71), and citing Job 42:7, he says that God said to the friends, “You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has” (6.I.2; see 5.XI.26). Gregory devotes book 8.XXXVI.60–XLII.66, which treats the beginning of Bildad’s speech in Job 8, to demonstrating how “Bildad’s words coincide with the heretics’ pilfering” (8.XXXVI.60).

So how can moral and mystical insight be gained from the words of these liars, who are followers of perverse doctrines and speakers of untruths, who represent pilfering heretics? At the beginning of part 2, Gregory responds that not everything they say is to be rejected:

I have said that blessed Job’s friends play the role of heretics, but I do not at all always condemn their words. . . . It is perfectly obvious that if something is rejected through comparison with a more perfect example, it is still not absolutely contemptible.

They would, in fact, carelessly fall into criticism of him, but they were still this great man's friends, and from this friendship they learned much spirituality. . . . Truth rightly reprehends their words, because however truthful their statement may be, it should not have been made against this holy man. (6.I.2)

Not even heretics are wrong all the time. There is much truth in their words, Gregory admits. For example, Bildad “produced true and solid arguments against hypocrites, and understanding their application to extend to all other evildoers as well, he leaves himself no concern for defense” (9.I.1).⁵ But relative to Job, all the words of Job's friends fall far short of the truth.⁶ Gregory justifies his positive use of the words of Job's friends by appealing to the example of Paul, who in 1 Corinthians 3:19 quoted Eliphaz's words in Job 5:13 (6.I.2, 5.XI.26). Paul uses the words of Job's friends, explains Gregory, because of their own merit, but God (in Job 42:7) reproves them because they spoke them to Job out of spite. The main problem, then, is not so much the lack of truthfulness in the words of Job's friends (though it is a problem), but the inappropriate manner in which those words were spoken to the blameless Job.⁷ And yet they are like heretics, says Gregory, because

some of their thoughts are certainly correct, but they also have thoughts that merge with the perverse. In fact, it is characteristic of heretics that they mix good with evil so that they may the more easily deceive those who listen to them. If they only spoke evil things, they would more easily be recognized as evil, and

⁵ Referring in particular to Job 8:11-14, discussed in 8.XLII.67–XLIII.70.

⁶ See 5.XI.27: “It is clear . . . that some of their words are true, but compared to better speeches [i.e., those of Job] they fail the test” (CS 249:329).

⁷ “Bildad certainly speaks admirable words against the hypocrites, but he turns the sword of the word against himself, since unless he were an imitator of justice in some small way, he would never presume to teach just men so rashly. The words he speaks are admittedly strong words, but he ought to say them to fools, not to a wise man, to deceitful people, not to a righteous man; the one who passes withering gardens to pour water into a stream declares himself to be a fool” (8.XLI.65).

they would then convince no one of their purpose. On the other hand, if they only thought what was right, they would hardly be heretics. The art of deception serves both truth and falsehood, so that evil infects good and good hides evil, and its practitioners are accepted. (5.XI.28; CS 249:330)

Gregory does not attribute outright deception to Job's friends but sees a parallel between them and heretics insofar as good thoughts are mixed with evil thoughts. Thus the issue in drawing moral and mystical insight from the words of Job's friends is distinguishing between their true and false statements. In practice, this means for Gregory determining *in what way*, or rather *in what sense* their words are true, interpreting them typically, morally, or even historically as needed to uncover their truth.

Gregory was fond of the idea of the good being mixed with the bad. One of the central themes of the *Moralia*, and indeed of his entire literary corpus, is the mixture of good and bad people in the church. This is, in fact, the first subject he treats in the *Moralia*, in 1.I.1, in his commentary on Job 1:1, indicating that it is a key topic for him.⁸ He discusses the idea that the intermingling of the good and bad in the church is necessary, in ways that are structurally and even verbally similar, five other times in his writings.⁹ An investigation of his treatment of this theme, in the *Moralia* and elsewhere in his corpus, allows us to gain manifold insight into Gregory, as a thinker, as a writer, as an exegete, as a pastor, as a biblical theologian, as an ascetic, as a reuser of his own material, and as a recipient of earlier patristic thought.

In 1.I.1 Gregory notes that Job was a good man among the bad: "For it is not very praiseworthy to be a good man living among good men, but to be a good man living among bad men *is* praiseworthy.

⁸The theme is dealt with more globally in Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988). See also R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Claude Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977).

⁹I.e., *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76; *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38; *Homiliae in Hiezechielum* 1.9; *Registrum epistularum* 10.15; and *Registrum epistularum* 11.27.

In the same way, it is considered a grave fault not to be a good man when you live among good men. So it is high praise for a man to have been good while living among bad men” (CS 249:77). This is the core of Gregory’s teaching on the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad: true Christian virtue is developed and becomes manifest only in the face of vice. Calmly bearing with bad people and their misbehavior both necessitates and cultivates patience and forbearance. The more one does so, the more one develops these key virtues and the closer one comes to the perfection of goodness. In 20.XXXIX.76, Gregory says that the bad put the good to the test and purify them of their imperfections, as gold is refined in a furnace.¹⁰ Employing another metaphor in *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, he says, “the iron sword of our soul does not become razor-sharp unless the file of another’s depravity grinds it.”¹¹ Only by living patiently among the bad and calmly bearing with them can the Christian reach perfect goodness. Such is Gregory’s basic teaching in each of six instances.

While the *Moralia* passages contain Gregory’s basic teaching on the subject, in other discussions he nuances and enriches it. In *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 he explicitly states that the good and the bad are mixed together in the church. He explains that the intermingled status of the church is transitory, as the separation of good from bad properly belongs to the next life:

For as long as we live here below, it is necessary that we walk the path of this present age thus intermingled. But we are distinguished when we reach the next life. Now the good are never alone except in heaven and the bad are never alone except in hell. But just as this life lies between heaven and hell and is thus accessible to all, so too it admits citizens from both regions alike. Nonetheless, now the holy church receives them both indiscriminately, but afterwards, after they depart from this life, she will make distinctions between them.¹²

¹⁰ *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, lines 33–35 (CCSL 143A:1059).

¹¹ *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 [7], lines 184–86 (CCSL 141:367).

¹² *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 [7], lines 141–48 (CCSL 141:365).

In this passage, Gregory implies that the church is not equipped to judge its members. While it is clear to all that in the church there are good and bad, the final judgment of individuals within the church must be reserved for God. The bad serve a mere *transitional* purpose for the good since the tolerance of them in this life leads to a *permanent* separation from them in the next life. Gregory's emphasis in this passage is on the benefit that the good receive from being intermingled with the bad; he does not recognize any sort of relationship of mutual benefit or reciprocity between the good and the bad here in this life. It is a relationship considered from what can be called the unilateral perspective.

In *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* 1.9, Gregory offers further nuance to his teaching. First of all, he directs his comments toward the good who find themselves unwilling to put up with the bad (notice that he includes himself in this category):

We ought to note that when it is said to the prophet, *Unbelievers and destroyers are with you, and you dwell with scorpions* [Ezek 2.6], we are being offered a comforting remedy, we who often grow weary of living when we do not want to dwell with bad people. Indeed, we complain, "Why aren't all who live with us good?" We make this complaint because we are unwilling to bear the misbehavior of our neighbors. We think that everyone should already be a saint, although we ourselves do not want there to be anything that we have to bear from our neighbors. But the situation is clear: as long as we refuse to bear with the bad, we ourselves will still possess far less goodness. For someone is not entirely good unless he can be good even with the bad.¹³

Here Gregory's audience seems to be the clerics and monks who formed a kind of small community around him. He forces his audience to examine their own consciences and makes a subtle criticism of those who are good but are unwilling to bear with the bad. He implicitly accuses them of a kind of spiritual inertia since they are

¹³ *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* 1.9 [22], lines 456–66 (CCSL 142:135).

unwilling to make the arduous effort of being patient with the bad. Gregory seeks to stir them out of their lethargy by reminding them that Christian perfection is impossible without being good among the bad. Untested Christian virtue falls short of perfection.

In the same homily, Gregory also criticizes those who want to absent themselves from the intermingled church by a change of place:

When we frequently grumble about the life of our neighbors and attempt to change our place and to choose the solitude of a more secluded life, we ignore the fact that if the Spirit is lacking, no place will be of help to us. For although the same Lot about whom we are speaking was holy in Sodom, he sinned on the mountain. Moreover, that places do not protect the mind is proved by the fact that the very first parent of the human race fell in paradise. But by no means are all the things we are saying concerned with earthly places. For if a place had been able to save, Satan would not have fallen from heaven. This is why the psalmist, observing people being tempted everywhere in this world, sought a place to which he might flee, but he could not find a safe place without God. For this reason he even begged for God to become a place for him! It was as he sought this place that he said, *Be for me a protecting God and a safe place, that you might save me* [Ps 30:3]. Therefore, our neighbors are to be borne with everywhere.¹⁴

Against those seeking to adopt some form of monastic or religious life out of the impure motive of escaping bad people, Gregory argues that one's irritation with living among the bad can only be mollified through living with them. In other words, true growth in Christian virtue demands confronting one's imperfection head-on, not in seeking to escape it. Here Gregory is in line with a long tradition of ascetical theology.¹⁵ Note, too, that Gregory's argument appeals to a

¹⁴ *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem* 1.9 [22], lines 473–86 (CCSL 142:136).

¹⁵ As was articulated, for example, in John Cassian's *Institutes*. Gregory here is not arguing against monastic withdrawal but is saying that if one withdraws from

number of scriptural exemplars, including Lot, Adam, Satan, and the psalmist—a method of argumentation we will encounter again below.

Gregory, however, allows for an exceptional case in which one may legitimately avoid the company of the bad: the one who is weak may withdraw from the bad in order to forestall being corrupted by them:

But there is one reason for shunning the company of the bad. If the bad are perhaps incorrigible, they are to be shunned for fear they even induce others to imitate themselves. If they cannot be changed from their wickedness, they are to be shunned for fear that they may lead astray those who associate with them. This is why Paul said, *Crooked speech corrupts good habits* [1 Cor 15:33]. And it is said through Solomon, *Do not be a friend to an irritable man nor walk with a man liable to rage for fear you inadvertently learn his ways and take a stumbling block to your soul* [Prov 22:24-25]. Therefore, just as perfect men ought not flee their wayward neighbors because they often induce them to uprightness while they themselves are never induced to waywardness, so too the weak ought also to turn from the company of the bad lest the misbehavior they frequently see and cannot correct entice them to imitate it. So then, when we hear the words of our neighbors every day, we take them into our mind, just as we draw air into the body by inhaling and exhaling. And just as the constant breathing of bad air infects the body, so too the constant hearing of perverse speaking infects the soul of the weak, with the result that the soul wastes away because of delight in depraved works and in perpetual iniquitous talk.¹⁶

What Gregory says here nuances his teaching in a significant way. For this passage reveals that the intermingling of the bad with the good has the additional purpose of allowing the good to induce the bad to convert to a life of goodness. Hence for Gregory there is,

a community, whether from the local church or from the monastery, in order to escape those who irritate him, it is a failure to address the real problem—one's own lack of patience and virtue.

¹⁶ *Homiliae in Hiezechielem* 1.9 [23], lines 488–504 (CCSL 142:136).

in fact, a relationship of mutual benefit between the good and the bad in the mixed body of the church: the good are given the occasion to grow in patience and tolerance and thus to attain the perfection of Christian goodness, while the bad are given exemplars of good behavior and exhortations to goodness, to which they may respond and be converted to goodness: this can be called the bilateral perspective.

In his letters Gregory adapts the teaching for specific individuals in concrete situations requiring pastoral advice, transforming his core teaching in fascinating ways. These letters, therefore, are good examples of how Gregory's teaching could be deployed with flexibility in eminently practical contexts. In *Registrum epistularum* 10.15 from July 600, Gregory writes to Maximus of Salona in the Dalmatian region, an area then being disturbed by Slavs. The stability of the region was compromised,¹⁷ and Gregory admonished Maximus to work on behalf of the poor and the oppressed.¹⁸ In his exhortation, Gregory encourages Maximus to act in order to win the approval of God and not to be discouraged or thwarted by "wicked men" and the "enemies of God" as he strives to care for the poor and oppressed.¹⁹ Gregory says, "Know this with absolute certainty, that no one can please God and wicked men. And so, let your Fraternity consider that you have pleased almighty God just as much as you will learn that you have displeased sinful humans."²⁰ Maximus's attempts to help the poor and oppressed were apparently being hindered by the activities of the invading Slavs.

Here Gregory is not encouraging Maximus to bear with the bad in the church as a necessary requisite for Christian perfection. Rather, Gregory is exhorting Maximus to continue to do good in the world despite the opposition of the non-Christian Slavs. Gregory's emphasis here, unlike elsewhere, is not on the necessity of patiently tolerating

¹⁷ *Registrum epistularum* 10.15, lines 10–13 (CCSL 140A:842).

¹⁸ *Registrum epistularum* 10.15, lines 14–15 (CCSL 140A:843).

¹⁹ *Registrum epistularum* 10.15, lines 15–36 (CCSL 140A:843).

²⁰ *Registrum epistularum* 10.15, lines 23–25 (CCSL 140A:843); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 725.

one's bad fellow Christians in order to reach Christian perfection, but rather on the inevitable opposition that the Christian encounters from bad people in the world when attempting to do good. Gregory is advising Maximus to persevere in doing good in the face of obstacles rather than to look to his own perfection in Christian goodness. In this letter, then, Gregory has adapted his teaching on the necessary mixture of the good and the bad in the church by transposing it to a different context: the struggles of Maximus to care for the poor and oppressed when his region is being overrun by Slavs. But this adaptation is in no way inconsistent with the versions of the teaching elsewhere. Gregory has merely expanded its scope to include the bad who are non-Christians while deemphasizing tolerating them for one's own perfection in goodness.

In *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, Gregory writes to Theoctista, the widowed sister of Emperor Maurice and a prominent member of the imperial household in Constantinople in charge of the emperor's children.²¹ The purpose of the letter is to admonish Theoctista not to be distressed by the derogatory comments and insults aimed at her by certain zealots accusing her of heresy. Gregory begins by expressing amazement (and indulges in a bit of flattery as well) that the words of her slanderers disturb her, since her heart is fixed in heaven.²² For "if we are delighted by praises and are shattered by insults," it shows that we are living not according to our conscience but according to the mouths of others.²³ Our conscience should be our sole judge, not others' praises or insults: "Although all might insult him, yet a person is free who is not accused by his conscience, because even if all might praise him, he cannot be free if he is accused by his conscience."²⁴ Nonetheless, Gregory is certain that Theoctista's sadness from being insulted is an act of divine kindness: "For not even to his elect had he promised

²¹ See also *Registrum epistularum* 1.5 and 7.23.

²² *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 8–18 (CCSL 140A:902).

²³ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 19–20 (CCSL 140A:902); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 763.

²⁴ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 29–31 (CCSL 140A:903); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764 (slightly modified).

delightful joys in this life, but rather the bitterness of tribulation, so that, as if taking medicine, they may return to the sweetness of eternal salvation through a bitter cup.”²⁵ Gregory here cites Jesus himself—*In your patience shall you possess your souls* (Luke 21:19)—and says patience can only be developed if there is something to endure.²⁶

At this point Gregory launches into his teaching on the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad: “I suspect that there is not an Abel who will not have a Cain. For if the good were without the bad, they could not be perfectly good, as they would not be purified at all. And their very association with the evil acts as a purification for the good.”²⁷ Later on in the letter, Gregory concludes, “Since, therefore, we learn through the witness of Scripture that in this life the good cannot exist without the bad, your Excellency should in no way be disturbed by the words of fools, especially because our trust in almighty God is certain when for doing good, some adversity is received in this world, so that a full reward may be reserved in eternal retribution.”²⁸

And so, in this letter Gregory’s focus is both on the purification of goodness in this life and on the eternal reward won by bearing with adversity in this world. Here he deploys his teaching on the mixed church as part of a larger program of action that he advises for Theoctista when dealing with her critics. In so doing he has slightly modified the teaching delivered elsewhere to make it useful and applicable to one engaged in court politics. Such a modification shows that Gregory saw all Christians as bound by the same standards and motivated by the same principles, even if the instantiation of these shared standards and principles varied according to one’s state in life.

²⁵ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 47–49 (CCSL 140A:903–4); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764.

²⁶ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 52–53 (CCSL 140A:904); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764.

²⁷ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 54–57 (CCSL 140A:904); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764.

²⁸ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 80–84 (CCSL 140A:905); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 765.

As was mentioned above, the six passages on the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad are structurally and at times even verbally similar. An examination of this structure provides insight into Gregory as a thinker and writer. Gregory's discussion of the reason it is necessary for there to be mixture of good and bad people in the church in its fullest form has a schema that consists of five elements, which generally appear in the following order: (1) a basic statement of the teaching, (2) a few examples of people or things able to flourish only when harmed in some way, (3) a series of scriptural exemplars of groups in which good and bad are intermingled, (4) a series of scriptural citations supporting the teaching that the perfection of goodness is only attained in the midst of the bad, and (5) concluding remarks. Not all five elements appear in each instance, or in the same order, but in general Gregory is remarkably consistent in using this schema when discussing the necessary mixture of the good and bad.²⁹ Clearly Gregory had no qualms about repeating himself and was prone to reusing material.

Because it is found in all six passages, the fourth element seems to constitute the skeleton on which each instance of the discussion of the necessary mixture is built. Gregory consistently cites six verses as having the same basic interpretation in order to support his teaching, or cites at least a subset of them: Job 30:29,³⁰ Song of Songs 2:2,³¹ Ezekiel 2:6,³² 2 Peter 2:7-8,³³ Philippians 2:15-16,³⁴ and Revelation

²⁹The second and third elements appear in only half of the discussions: *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, and *Registrum epistularum* 11.27. The fourth element, the scriptural citations, appears in every case, though there are variations in both which passages are cited and what their order is.

³⁰*I was the brother of dragons and the companion of ostriches.*

³¹*As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

³²*Son of man, unbelievers and destroyers are with you, and you dwell with scorpions.*

³³*And he rescued the just Lot, who was oppressed by sacrilegious men's lawless way of life. For Lot was just in his sight and hearing, dwelling among those who from day to day tortured that just man's soul with unjust works.*

³⁴*In the midst of a wayward and perverse people, among whom you shine like lamps in the world, having the word of life.* In some cases, only Phil 2:15 is used; i.e., *having the word of life* is omitted.

2:13.³⁵ From his pattern of usage we can infer that the core scriptural texts for Gregory were Job 30:29, Ezekiel 2:6, 2 Peter 2:7-8, and Philippians 2:15-16.³⁶ These verses are more or less simply quoted, except in two cases (*Moralia* 1.I.1 and *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* 1.9) where Gregory considered 2 Peter 2:7-8 in need of further exegesis in order to clarify its applicability to what he was teaching.³⁷

Gregory's consistent association of these six verses, or the four-verse subset, as having the same interpretation shows that his teaching on the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad was fundamentally and consciously rooted in Scripture. Since Job 1:1 had no direct connection to the doctrine of the necessary mixture in Gregory's mind (that is, it was not one of the six associated verses), Gregory's choice to present this teaching at the beginning of book 1 of the *Moralia* as his commentary on Job 1:1 shows his partiality for it and indeed its centrality for him; this fact is further evidenced by the fact that Job 1:1 is never associated with the six verses elsewhere. Thus its appearance in book 1.I.1 is calculated and deliberate.³⁸

³⁵ *I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; you both hold fast to my name and did not deny my faith.*

³⁶ Job 30:39 is included in each of the six discussions. Song 2:2 and Rev 2:13 are not found in three discussions: *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* 1.9 and *Registrum epistularum* 10.15 and 11.27. Ezek 2:6 is omitted only in *Moralia* 1.I.1 and *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* 1.9, in the latter case because it is the text on which Gregory is commenting; 2 Pet 2:7-8 is omitted only in *Registrum epistularum* 10.15, the most abbreviated form of the discussion. Phil 2:15-16 is included in each discussion.

³⁷ "For he certainly could not be tortured in any way except by watching and hearing of the wicked deeds of his neighbors. Yet he was called *just in his sight and hearing*, because the evil lives of his neighbors reached his eyes and ears, at which news he felt not pleasure but aversion" (*Moralia* 1.I.1; CS 249:78).

³⁸ Whenever Gregory encountered a verse from this set of six verses in the course of his exegesis, he repeats the same teaching: *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76 is his commentary on Job 20:39 and *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* 1.9 is that on Ezek 2:6. The teaching comes up in *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 as the bulk of the commentary on Matt 22:10, the passage in which the servants of the king gathered the good and the bad for his marriage-feast, which Gregory interprets as the present-day church. In these three cases, the repetition of the teaching was triggered by the need to interpret a specific verse related either scripturally (as

We see a similar but less prevalent pattern with regard to the second and third elements, which always appear together: the examples of (mostly) scriptural people or things able to flourish only when harmed in some way, and the series of scriptural exemplars of groups in which good and bad were intermingled. These two elements appear only three out of six times, in *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, and *Registrum epistularum* 11.27. The second element is virtually identical in *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76 and *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38: “For the one whom a Cain does not vex with wickedness refuses to be an Abel. Just as on threshing floors grains are pressed under the chaff, so too do flowers arise among thorns and a fragrant rose grows when a thorn pricks it.”³⁹ In *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, the second element is reduced to “I suspect that there is no Abel who will not have a Cain.”⁴⁰ Interestingly, the second element in this abbreviated form appears in the *conclusion* of the discussion in *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem* 1.9: “a person cannot become an Abel if a Cain does not vex him with wickedness.”⁴¹ So it seems that Gregory could deem the example of Abel and Cain sufficient to make his point that good people need bad people in order to reach Christian perfection, allowing him to omit the additional examples of the grain, flower, and rose.

Indeed, the example of Abel and Cain is far stronger than that of grain, flowers, or the rose. In the case of the grain, flower, or rose, they flourish only by being in some way harmed (by pressing or pricking), while in the case of Abel and Cain, Cain kills Abel. Gregory’s preference for the example of Abel and Cain becomes clearer when one

a member of the six-verse set) or thematically to his teaching on the necessary intermingling.

³⁹ *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.75–76, lines 19–22 (CCSL 143A:1059) and *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 [7], lines 151–53 (CCSL 141:365). The only difference between the two is that the former begins *Abel enim* and the latter *Abel quippe*. Note the allusions to Gen 4 and Matt 3:12.

⁴⁰ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 54–55 (CCSL 140A:904); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764.

⁴¹ *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem* 1.9 [22], lines 486–87 (CCSL 142:136).

realizes that, for Gregory, Abel was the primary scriptural type of an innocent person unjustly killed and thus a key prefiguration of Christ.⁴² This point is made most clearly when Gregory comments on Job 2.7:

So Satan left God's presence and struck Job with a painful ulcer from the soles of his feet to the top of his head [Job 2:7]. There is no man born to this life led by the elect who has not felt the hatred of this enemy of ours. There have been members of our Redeemer's Body, however, ever since the world began, who suffered tortures, even though they lived holy lives. Was not Abel one of his members? Did he not, by his acceptable sacrifice, as well as by his silence before death, prefigure that death of which it is written, As a lamb is quiet before the shearers, so he opened not his mouth? [Isa 53:7]. Satan has tried to beat our Redeemer's body ever since the world began. From the soles of his feet to the top of his head he has wounded him, beginning with the first human beings, until in his fierce wrath he even attacked the very Head of the church himself. (3.XVII.32; CS 249:208)⁴³

Abel can therefore be Gregory's choice example of Christian perfection because Abel—the “sole” of the Body of Christ—doubly prefigures Christ, both in offering an acceptable sacrifice to God and in being led to an unjust death without complaint. As is the case for every member of the Body of Christ, the sufferings Abel endured from the bad are overcome through the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ is, then, the prime example of an Abel who had a Cain. Accordingly, the perfection of goodness achieved by being good among the bad is not merely a matter of growing in patience; on a more fundamental level it is a participation in the redemptive

⁴² See *Homiliae in evangelia* 1.19 [1], lines 9–12 (CCSL 141:143); *Moralia* praef.6 [13], line 9 (CCSL 143:19); *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* 2.3 [21], lines 488–90 (CCSL 142:252).

⁴³ See also *Moralia* 13.XXIII.26, lines 13–17 (CCSL 143A:683), and *Moralia* 29.XXXI.68–69, lines 27–45 (CCSL 143B:1482).

suffering of Christ.⁴⁴ Gregory's inclusion of this second element in his discussion shows the radical Christological orientation of his conception of the Christian life.

The third element is the series of scriptural exemplars of groups in which good and bad are intermingled, an element that always appears with the second element. In each case but one, there is one person of the group (which is sometimes only a pair) who turns out to be the single bad person among the rest, who are good. In the other case, there is only one good person among the rest, who are bad. In each of the three instances of this third element, the list of exemplars is slightly different, and what is said about each exemplar varies.

In *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, Gregory lists the following groups as exemplars—the sons of Adam, the sons of Noah, the sons of Abraham, the sons of Isaac, the sons of Jacob, and the twelve apostles—and explains why one of the group is bad while the rest of the group is good (or why one of the group is good and the rest bad):

Now the first man had two sons: one of these was elect, the other was reprobate. The ark held three sons, but while two remained steadfast in their humility, one was quick to mock his father. Abraham had two sons: one was innocent, but the other was the persecutor of his brother. Isaac had two sons: one served in humility, but the other was reprobate even before he was born. Jacob begat twelve sons: one of them was sold on account of his innocence, but the others were the sellers of their brother on account of their wickedness. Twelve apostles were elected in the holy church, but one of them became involved with those who put them to the test by persecuting them lest they remain untested.⁴⁵

Notice that in each case except the first Gregory offers reasons that one of the group was unique, whether elect (good) or reprobate (bad), except for Abel and Cain.

⁴⁴ Here one can recall the similar theology of the *Regula Benedicti* prologue.

⁴⁵ *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, lines 22–32 (CCSL 143B:1059).

In *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, Gregory lists the same groups as exemplars but adds the first seven deacons. Regarding the sons of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac, Gregory merely says, without explanation, that one was reprobate while the other or others were elect, while in the two remaining cases he gives more expanded explanations:

The first man had two sons: one of these was elect, the other was reprobate. The ark held three sons: two were elect, but one was reprobate. Abraham had two sons: one was elect, but the other was reprobate. Isaac had two sons: one was elect, but the other was reprobate. Jacob had twelve sons: one of them was sold on account of his innocence, but the others were the sellers of their brother on account of their wickedness. Twelve apostles were elected: one of them became involved with those who put to the test, but there were eleven who were put to the test. There were seven deacons ordained by the apostles: six remained steadfast in correct faith, but one arose as the originator of error.⁴⁶

The addition of the seven deacons may be due to Gregory's specific audience for the *Homiliae in evangelia*, since the seven deacons do not appear elsewhere as an exemplary group.⁴⁷ Here Gregory alludes to the ancient tradition of ascribing the heresy of the Nicolaitans mentioned in Revelation (Rev 2:6, 15) to Nicolaus of Antioch, one of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:5).⁴⁸

The enumeration of exemplars in *Registrum epistularum* 11.27 differs considerably from the two other lists in terms of what groups are listed, and the explanations of the election and reprobation of the members of each group are more detailed than in the other cases, or at

⁴⁶ *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38 [7], lines 154–63 (CCSL 141:365–66).

⁴⁷ *Homiliae in evangelia* were preached to the clergy and people of Rome during Mass, whereas *Moralia* and *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam* were delivered to smaller groups outside of a liturgical context.

⁴⁸ See K. A. Fox, "The Nicolaitans, Nicolaus and the Early Church," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 23 (1994): 485–96.

least significantly different. Here Gregory lists the familiar groups of the sons of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the twelve apostles but does not include the sons of Adam and the seven deacons. And there is a new group here, David and his son:

There were three sons in the ark and one of them ridiculed his father. He received an abusive verdict from his son, although he was blessed in himself. Abraham had two sons before he took Cethura as his wife, and yet his carnal son persecuted the son of the covenant. The great teacher explains this, saying: *As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now* [Gal 4:29]. Isaac had two sons, but the one who was spiritual fled before the threats of his carnal brother. Jacob had twelve sons, but ten of them sold the one who was living more righteously into Egypt. In the case of the prophet David, because he had what should have been purified, it was brought about that he endured his son's persecution. . . . Among the twelve apostles there was one who was false, so that there might be one by whose persecution the other eleven might be tried.⁴⁹

Here Gregory offers considerably more detail in his explanation of the election and reprobation of the sons of Noah and Abraham. Gregory even adds a Pauline passage to support his use of Abraham's sons as exemplars of a group in which good and bad were intermingled. The explanation of Jacob and Esau also differs from the other two examples. Note that Gregory improves the accuracy of his explanation for the sons of Jacob by saying that only ten of his twelve sons were bad, rightly excluding Benjamin as well as Joseph. The ellipses in the above quotation indicate where Gregory includes bits of the third and fourth elements of the discussion. Finally, Gregory includes David and his son Absalom as an exemplary group, perhaps motivated by a desire to provide Theocrista, the recipient of *Registrum epistularum* 11.27 and the emperor Maurice's sister, with an example of royalty being vexed by the bad.

⁴⁹ *Registrum epistularum* 11.27, lines 58–68 and 71–73 (CCSL 140A:904); trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 764–65.

In the second, third, and fourth elements of the discussion of the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad, Gregory adduces scriptural figures, images, and verses in support of the content of the teaching, showing his thoroughgoing rootedness in the Scriptures. And remarkably, not only was Gregory liable to reuse his own material—sometimes with slight changes to fit the situation—but he also repeated the very schema that he used to present his teaching.

The idea that the church is as a mixed body of good and bad people is of course not original to Gregory. But in general it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint Gregory's sources. It is recognized among scholars that his writings are so suffused with the thought of his patristic predecessors that it is difficult to demarcate where their doctrine ends and his begins. He made the preceding patristic tradition his own. He absorbed the teachings of his predecessors and reexpressed them in a way that reflected his concerns as well as those of his audience. He was no mere copyist; he digested the thoughts of others and ruminated on them in the light of his own experience as a pastor, an ascetic, and a contemplative. This experience often led him to transform the ideas of his sources in striking ways. Hence Gregory's writings often contain sentiments that are simultaneously very familiar and very novel. Perhaps it is Robert Gillet who has best expressed the situation: "A reader [of Gregory] who is even slightly familiar with patristic literature constantly feels that he is reading things he has already come across. But what if he searches for the source of what he has just read? It is most often the case that there is no possibility of making a precise comparison. He merely finds himself in the presence of an immense communal ambience."⁵⁰ Nonetheless, despite these difficulties in determining Gregory's familiarity with patristic literature, it is certain that he had an intimate knowledge of the Latin fathers, particularly Augustine and John

⁵⁰ Robert Gillet, "Introduction," in *Grégoire le Grand: Morals sur Job I-II*, ed. Robert Gillet and André de Gaudemaris, SCh 32 bis (Paris: Cerf, 1975), 7–133, here 13.

Cassian, and that whatever knowledge of the Greek fathers he had came mostly through Latin translations.⁵¹

The notion of the church as a mixed body, however, immediately brings to mind the anti-Donatist ecclesiology of Augustine.⁵² The Donatists, following an African tradition that extended back to Cyprian, advocated an ecclesiology rooted in priestly purity: a priest had to be without serious sin in order to administer valid sacraments to the members of the church. If a priest was a sinner (for example, if he apostatized), he put himself outside of the unity of the church and rendered himself incapable of administering valid sacraments. Instead of the sacraments' effecting grace, they transmitted the priest's corruption. The Donatists believed that during the aftermath of the Great Persecution, members of the episcopal hierarchy of the catholic church in North Africa were guilty of *traditio* (handing over the Scriptures), a serious enough sin to render them unable to administer valid sacraments. But since they had continued to administer the sacraments, they had passed on their corruption, and the entire church had become complicit in their sin, as was any church throughout the world that was in communion with them. Contagion had infected the catholic church in the early fourth century and thereafter corrupted the entire church, so that it was impure. The Donatists, however, thought of their church as pure and a congregation of the saints, since their hierarchy alone, they claimed, was free from the contagion of *traditio*.

Besides denying that the members of the Catholic episcopal hierarchy were guilty of *traditio*, Augustine developed a new sacramental theology in which the validity of the sacrament was independent of

⁵¹ See Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 35, citing the relevant studies. See also John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 31–32.

⁵² Representative passages include Augustine, *De baptismo* 1.24–27, 3.22–23, 4.14–22, 6.5–8; *De fide et symbolo* 21; *Epistulae* 87.2–3, 93.9.28–34, and 108.3.10–12. Such passages could easily be multiplied. Of the many studies of Donatist and Augustinian ecclesiology, I refer the reader to the brief summary of the late Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd ed. (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002), 278–89.

the state of its minister, thereby countering the Donatist claim of impurity's being transmitted by sinful priests.⁵³ Augustine also argued that the unity of the church superseded any need for its membership to consist solely of the pure. Augustine rejected the Donatist notion that the pure within the church could be infected with the contagion of the impure simply through ecclesial communion; rather, he said, the pure are affected by the sins of the impure only when they consent to their sins. The holiness of the church is not the holiness of its members but rather that of Christ. Accordingly, both the pure and the impure, the good and the bad, can coexist within the unity of the church without detriment to the good.

In addition, Augustine taught that the mixed church was not competent to judge its members here in this life: the separation of the good from the bad was reserved to Christ at the Final Judgment at the end of the age. Still, even if one could not recognize the good and the bad within the church with any certainty, Augustine's ecclesiology of inclusion of the bad within the unity of the church was aimed at securing their amendment and restoration to purity. The good should accept what can be called external communion with the bad and bear with them within the unity of the church lest that unity be broken. Augustine argued that church unity was far more important than church purity, as schism destroys Christian love. The good, however, should not have what can be called internal communion with the bad, that is, to acquiesce to and accept or join in their sins.⁵⁴ Rather, the good should pray for the forgiveness of the sins of the bad, admonish the bad to be converted, and provide models of goodness for them to imitate. In this way, the good and the bad could be intermingled within the church without having any negative effect on the good but having a beneficial effect on the bad.

⁵³ On the divergent sacramental theology of the Donatists and Augustine, see Bonner, *Augustine*, 289–94.

⁵⁴ Hence for Augustine the purity of the church was invisible, whereas for the Donatists ecclesial purity had to be visible.

Augustine's ecclesiology was here shaped by another factor besides the Donatist ecclesiology of purity: the inevitable mixture of good and bad in the post-Constantinian church. Whatever its other objections, Donatist ecclesiology was seen by Augustine as impractical and as failing to take into account contemporary ecclesial realities. Despite this context, Augustine had to argue against the Donatists that an ecclesiology of church unity was preferable to that of church purity. Given the vitality of the Donatist movement in Augustine's time, an ecclesiology that conceived of the church as a mixed body of the good and the bad could not be taken for granted. The viability of such a model had to be argued for, and Augustine needed to demonstrate that, despite the Donatist claim to the contrary, the good were not necessarily harmed through mere contact by being in communion with the bad.

Gregory thoroughly absorbed Augustine's ecclesiology of church unity and in his reexpression of it transformed it into a principle of perfection in the Christian life. Yet Gregory's treatment of the theme lacks the complexity and profundity of thought that characterizes Augustine's ecclesiology in his polemical anti-Donatist treatises and letters. Rather, Gregory's teaching on the good and the bad in the church bears much more resemblance to the way Augustine presented his ecclesiology in his sermons.⁵⁵ In these, Augustine stresses the mixed nature of the church in this life and the fact that the separation of the good and the bad occurs only at the Judgment at the end of the age. He exhorts the good in the church not to seek to be separate from the bad here in this life but rather to tolerate the bad within the church if they themselves want to be judged favorably. The good, however, should not consent to the sins of the bad. The bad are to be accepted into church, because this acceptance gives them the best possible context for repentance. The good play a role in their repentance: they are to pray for the bad, to rebuke and correct the bad, and to be models for the bad to imitate.

⁵⁵ Representative texts are *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10.1, 25(2).5, 34(2).10, 47.8, 61.8, 64.2, 64.9, 95.2, 99.8–13, 119.9, 128.7–8, 138.26–31; *In Johannis evangelium tractus* 50.10; *Sermones* 4.31–35, 5.3, 5.8, 15.3–9, 37.27, 47.18, 63A.1, 73.3–4, 88.19–22, 223.2, 249.2, 250.2, 252.5–6, 259.2, 260D.2, and 270.7.

Augustine teaches that the temporary tolerance of the bad on the part of the good in this life leads to a permanent separation from them in the next life: “be good among the bad now, and you will be good without the bad.”⁵⁶ This is the very teaching of Gregory in *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38. But there is a slight difference. In *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, Gregory has the unilateral perspective, considering the church only from the perspective of the good and making no mention of how the good can benefit the bad in the church. In his sermons, Augustine’s bilateral perspective is explicit: the toleration of the bad within the church is aimed at their moral amendment, in which the good play a major role. At the end of the age, the good are permanently separated only from those bad people who failed to repent.

Gregory places much more emphasis than Augustine on how the good must be mixed with the bad if they are to attain the fullness of goodness. One does find hints of this theme in Augustine, but only rarely. Augustine says that the bad purify the good.⁵⁷ Bearing with the bad is also a sign of progress: “If he thinks that because he has made some progress he cannot be expected to tolerate anyone else, his very intolerance proves that he had made no progress at all.”⁵⁸ But Augustine never makes the tolerance of the bad on the part of the good the *sine qua non* of Christian perfection that Gregory does. For Augustine, remaining in the unity of church as one tolerates the bad is necessary for attaining salvation; Gregory’s emphasis is on achieving Christian perfection here and now by tolerating the bad. Gregory is interested in Christian perfection here in this life, while Augustine’s focus is on salvation in the next life.

⁵⁶ Lat: *Inter malos estote boni, et eritis sine malis boni* (*Sermones* 249.2 [PL 38:1162]).

⁵⁷ *Sermones* 15.7–8.

⁵⁸ Lat: *Si ergo, quia proficit, nullum hominem vult pati, eo ipso quo non vult aliquem hominem pati, convincitur quod non profecerit* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 99.9 [PL 37:1276; trans. Maria Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms 99–120*, The Works of Saint Augustine, Part 3/19 (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2003), 20]).

For Gregory, as for Augustine, it was inevitable that the church was a mixed body, given the context of the church in late sixth-century Italy. Yet Gregory did not need to argue for the validity of such an ecclesiology. It was taken for granted and did not need to be asserted against opponents. More specifically, Gregory, unlike Augustine, did not need to make the anti-Donatist argument that the good were not adversely affected through mere communion with the bad in the unity of the church. This argument of Augustine is essentially negative in that it denies the claim of the Donatists. Rather, Gregory can make a positive argument for the church's being a mixed body by demonstrating that the good are in fact beneficially affected here in this life through communion with the bad in the unity of the church. For Augustine, the benefit that the good procure from intermingling with the bad is reserved for the next life. Therefore, Gregory develops Augustine's notion that the church is an intermingling of the good and the bad: the good do not simply tolerate the bad within the church without detriment to themselves while waiting for the Day of Judgment (as was the case for Augustine), but the presence of the bad within the church is actually beneficial for the spiritual progress of the good. In saying here that Gregory developed Augustine's ecclesiology, I am not claiming that Gregory improved upon Augustine. Rather, because of his ecclesial context, Gregory could push Augustine's ecclesiology in a direction that Augustine's own ecclesial context would not perhaps have allowed. In fact, Gregory goes even further: the presence of the bad is not merely beneficial for the good, but it is necessary if they are to attain the fullness of good. Gregory has taken an ecclesiology that Augustine had argued was preferable to the Donatists' and made it necessary for Christian perfection. All traces of the anti-Donatist context of this ecclesiology have disappeared, and Gregory's emphasis is solely on living the Christian life in all its perfection.

Gregory assimilated Augustine's ecclesiology of church unity so thoroughly that when presenting his own doctrine of the mixed church he incorporated few of the analogies and scriptural passages employed by Augustine. Augustine's favorite analogy for the inter-

mingled church was the threshing floor from Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17: the grain (the good) and the chaff (the bad) are now mixed as they lie on the floor of the church before being threshed, but at the end of the age they will be separated, the good gathered into granaries and the chaff burnt.⁵⁹ Augustine also uses the analogies of the wheat and the weeds, which cannot be separated from each other before the harvesttime (Matt 13:24-30),⁶⁰ the mixed catch of fish (Matt 13:47-48),⁶¹ and gold's being refined in the furnace.⁶² In his second element, Gregory employed the image of the threshing floor but preferred that of Abel and Cain to it. Still, Gregory's use of the threshing floor as a metaphor for the church has nothing of the prominence that it has in Augustine, for whom it was the central analogy. Gregory also once used the metaphor of gold's being refined in the furnace.⁶³ The only scriptural text that Augustine and Gregory have in common is Song of Songs 2:2.⁶⁴ But this was not one of the four core scriptural verses for Gregory. Augustine also saw Matthew 22:10, the passage in which the servants of the king gather the good and the bad for his marriage feast, as a metaphor for the present-day church, as Gregory himself did in *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.38, a commentary on this verse.

There is, then, some but very little substantial overlap in the metaphors and scriptural texts used by Augustine and Gregory. In his second and fourth elements, Gregory employs such items as the threshing floor and Song of Songs 2:2 as Augustine did, but not to the extent that Augustine did. The same holds true for the third element, the scriptural exemplars. Augustine on occasion deploys Jacob and Esau,⁶⁵ and Judas and the eleven apostles,⁶⁶ as types of mixed

⁵⁹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 25(2).5, 34(2).10, 47.8, 99.8, 99.13, 138.26-27; *Sermones* 4.32, 15.9, 63A.1, 88.19-22, 223.2, 252.5-6, and 260D.2.

⁶⁰ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 128.8, 138.27; *Sermones* 5.3, 5.8, 73.3, and 88.22.

⁶¹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 138.27 and 138.31.

⁶² *Sermones* 15.4 and 15.9.

⁶³ *Moralia* 20.XXXIX.76, lines 33-35 (CCSL 143A:1059).

⁶⁴ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 47.8, 99.8, 99.12, and *Sermones* 37.27.

⁶⁵ *Sermones* 4.31.

⁶⁶ *In Johannis evangelium tractus* 50.10.

churches, but not frequently. Augustine prefers the New Testament metaphors such as the threshing floor to illustrate his teaching on the mixed church, while Gregory prefers to use exemplary groups of people drawn from Scripture to illustrate the same teaching.

All in all, then, Gregory's scripturally rich five-part schema owes little to Augustine, though one can detect certain points of contact. Certainly Augustine never presented his teaching on the mixed church with the same consistent, scriptural structure that Gregory did. While Gregory's teaching on the intermingling of the good and the bad in the church is Augustine's (with slight shifts in emphasis), Gregory's schematization of the teaching and the particular metaphors, scriptural texts, and scriptural exemplars he uses are fundamentally his own.⁶⁷ In taking up the theme of the necessary intermingling of the good and the bad in the church, then, Gregory has transformed an element of Augustine's ecclesiology that was forged in the heat of the Donatist controversy into a principle of perfection in the Christian life, removing all traces of the earlier polemic. He abandoned Augustine's negative argument for the preferability of the mixed church and formulated a positive argument for the necessity of such a church for Christian perfection.

This investigation of Gregory's teaching on the necessary intermingling of the good and bad in the church in the *Moralia* and elsewhere in his corpus has provided several insights into Gregory. It reveals him to be a thinker who was so organized (and perhaps even rigid) that he used a five-part schema to present his teaching on the subject, a writer who was prone to reuse his own material but in a flexible way as he adapted and nuanced the core teaching in a variety of settings, an exegete and biblical theologian who built the edifice of his teaching on the foundation of a diverse set of scriptural texts, images, and examples that he nonetheless interpreted as inculcating the same basic teaching, a pastoral theologian who developed an ecclesiology

⁶⁷ The schema is thus a clear example of the radical biblicism that marked Gregory's age in contrast to Augustine's: see R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225–28.

that responded positively to the lived situation of the church in his era, an ascetic theologian who denied that perfection of true goodness and holiness could only be achieved in ascetic withdrawal, and a disciple of Augustine who used the thought of the bishop of Hippo as the starting point for his own developments.⁶⁸ Thus the interpretation of Job 1:1 at the beginning of book 1 of the *Moralia* affords insight into multiple aspects of the work and thought of Gregory. Indeed, this passage of the *Moralia* is a window into his universe.

In this second of a projected six volumes of the *Moralia* to be published by Cistercian Publications, Br. Brian Kerns, OCSO, has once again provided a fine translation that preserves the complexity of Gregory's style without sacrificing clarity and readability. We are grateful to Br. Brian for his dedication to the enormous task of translating the *Moralia* and for the willingness on the part of Cistercian Publications to publish it. A final word of thanks is also owed to Dr. Marsha Dutton, whose attention to detail and meticulous editing has made no small contribution to the high quality of the final product.

Mark DelCogliano
 Minneapolis, Minnesota
 March 12, 2015
 The 1411th Anniversary of the Death of
 Saint Gregory the Great

⁶⁸ Gregory held Augustine in very high esteem. In a letter to Innocent, the praetorian prefect of Africa, Gregory writes, "if you desire to be nourished with delicious food, read the little works of Saint Augustine, your countryman, and do not look for our bran, in comparison with his fine flour" (*Registrum epistularum* 10.16; trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 727). And in a letter to Marinianus, bishop of Ravenna, Gregory writes, "I believed it most inappropriate that you should drink despicable water [i.e., Gregory's own homilies on Ezekiel], when it is certain that you regularly imbibe the deep and clear streams from the springs of the blessed Fathers, Ambrose and Augustine" (*Registrum epistularum* 12.16a; trans. Martyn, *Letters*, 821).

BOOK 6

I. 1. I have proposed to set forth a mystical interpretation of the words of blessed Job and of his friends, without departing from the truth of the story. It is obvious, you see, to all educated people, that Holy Scripture carefully foretold the Redeemer of the world by all her proclamations, as she also zealously indicated him by means of all his chosen ones, who are indeed his members. Accordingly, blessed Job also is rendered in Latin as one who suffers that by his name and by his wounds the passion of our Redeemer might be envisioned. About the latter the prophet spoke as follows: *He really bore our weariness, and he took on himself our sufferings.** Having robbed Job of everything, the tempter killed both slaves and sons, because it was not only the Jewish people, slaves of fear, whom he shot with the arrow of faithlessness during his passion but also the apostles themselves, to whom Christ had given new birth by his love.

*Isa 51:4

The body of blessed Job was wounded raw, because our Redeemer did not refuse to be nailed to the painful cross. From the soles of his feet to his head he was wounded,* because the tempter strikes Holy Church, Christ's body, with grievous persecution, not only the last and most remote but even the highest members. Paul too says, *I supply in my flesh what is missing from the passion of Christ.** When Job's wife tries to get him to curse God, she indicates carnal people inside the church, who are the shrewd tempter's allies. She who prompts him to curse symbolizes the life of the flesh. I have already spoken of those who are members of the church but who behave improperly; because by faith they are

* see Job 2:7

*Col 1:24

neighbors of those who do what is right, their behavior causes them anguish. Since they are like the faithful, they cannot be avoided, and the closer they are to the faithful, the more difficult it is to put up with them. As for Job's friends, they came to comfort him, but they spoke excessively to the point of grievous insults; for this reason they play the role of heretics, who try to defend God against good people but offend him instead.

2. I have striven, therefore, to support what I have already written at some length with a briefer spiritual comment, that such repetition may remind my readers that I am devoted in the present work to perception of the Spirit. Nevertheless, when pastoral needs require it, I also zealously discuss the actual story with attention. On the other hand, when it is necessary, I unite the strands so that allegory may develop spiritual offspring, and please notice that the real story has produced that spiritual offspring. I have said that blessed Job's friends play the role of heretics, but I do not at all always condemn their words, even though God pronounces the sentence against them, *You have not spoken the truth about me*, immediately adding, *as my servant Job has*.*

* Job 42:7

It is perfectly obvious that if something is rejected through comparison with a more perfect example, it is still not absolutely contemptible. They would, in fact, carelessly fall into criticism of him, but they were still this great man's friends, and from this friendship they learned much spirituality. As I have already said, Paul himself quoted their words, using them as support of his own argument, and so he is a witness that they are a source of truth. Nevertheless, Truth rightly reprehends their words, because however truthful their statement may be, it should not have been made against this holy man. We may now spiritually evaluate Eliphaz's words spoken to blessed Job. He says,

II. 3. *I saw the fool take root, and I immediately cursed his excellence.** The Jewish people were fools because they spurned eternal Wisdom when he was actually present in the flesh. They took root and prevailed, since by taking the lives of the chosen ones in the realm of time, they were victors. Yet Eliphaz spitefully curses them. As I have said, the friends of blessed Job play the role of all heretics, and all the heretics boast of the name of Christ; by so doing they authoritatively reprehend the faithlessness of the Jews. We are told further of the fool,

*Job 5:3

III. 4. *His sons will be remote from safety.** The sons of this fool are all those who are born of the preaching of his faithlessness. They are indeed remote from safety, because even if they live a worldly life free from trouble, the blows of eternal punishment will be harsh. The Lord spoke about the sons of this fool when he said, *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, you frauds, because you travel all over the ocean and the lands just to make one convert, and once that one is converted, you make that one twice the child of hell that you are yourselves.**

*Job 5:4

*Matt 23:15

*They will be cut down at the city gate, and there will be none to help them.** Who else should be understood by the words *city gate* but the Mediator of God and humankind, who said, *I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be safe.** The children of the fool, then, who prosper outside the gate, are cut down at the gate, because the depraved offspring of the Jews flourished before the Mediator's coming by observing the law, but in the very presence of our Redeemer they were cast out by merit of their unbelief and fell away from the service of God. So of course there is none to save them, since they tried to kill the Redeemer himself by persecution and therefore cut themselves off from the remedy of salvation that was offered them.

*Job 5:4

*John 10:9

IV. 5. The text continues, *Hungry people eat his harvest, and the armed bandit will seize him.** The harvest of this fool would have been the crop of Holy Scripture. The words spoken by the prophets, you see, are like ears of grain, which the fool kept without eating them, because the Jewish people indeed kept the law as far as the words are concerned but fasted from its meaning through foolish dislike. Accordingly, hungry people eat the harvest belonging to this fool, since the Gentile people indeed feed on the words of the law by understanding them, whereas the Jewish people had worked the crop without understanding it. The Lord foresaw these people hungry for faith when he said in the gospel, *Blessed are they who are hungry and thirsty for justice, because they will be satisfied.** Hannah, too, is said to have prophesied about these hungry ones, *Those who were full before have hired themselves out for bread, while those who were hungry are full.**

On the other hand, the fool lost out on the harvest, so we are rightly informed about how the fool perishes in these added words: *The armed bandit will seize him.** The ancient enemy was armed, and he seized the Jewish people, because he snuffed out the life of faith in them by the darts of his deceitful suggestions, so that whenever they thought themselves united with God, they might resist his orders. Truth himself warns his disciples about this: *The hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is worshipping God.**

V. 6. *Thirsty people will drink up his wealth.** Thirsty people drink up the wealth of this fool, because the minds of Gentile converts are refreshed with the running water of Holy Scripture, which the Jewish people had possessed with pride and ostentation. It is to these Gentiles that the prophet speaks when he says, *All you thirsty people, come to the water; hurry, you who have*

*no money.** The word *money* means the word of God, as the psalmist testifies: *The word of God is pure: it is silver, tested by fire.** Accordingly, those who have no silver coins are called to the waters, because the Gentiles who had never received the precepts of Holy Scripture are refreshed by the outpouring of God's word, and to the extent that they had long thirsted for it in a state of dryness, they drink of it now all the more avidly. So also that divine word is called both harvest and wealth: harvest because it satisfies the hungry mind, wealth because it clothes us with great moral beauty. The same divine words are said to be eaten and drunk, clearly because when there is anything obscure in them, we only understand them after they are explained, so it is as if we chewed and swallowed them. On the other hand, when we consume anything just as we find it readily comprehensible, it is as though we drank it without chewing; we absorb it without breaking it up.

*Isa 55:1

*Ps 11:7

We have discoursed briefly on these words to clarify the spiritual sense, lest perhaps we should seem to have omitted something. Still, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar could not be blessed Job's friends unless, from a certain point of view, they were also shining examples of moral excellence. It remains for us therefore to study the moral sense behind the meaning of the words they use; in doing this, as we discuss the import of what they say, we will point out the doctrinal content of their words.

VI. 7. *I saw the fool take root, and I immediately cursed his excellence.** The fool is, as it were, planted in the ground, with roots that grow strong, because all the fool's desires are solidly fixed on the love of earthly things. We are told that Cain was the first to build a city on the earth, a fact that clearly demonstrates that he dug his foundation on the earth, he who was an exile from the security of the heavenly fatherland.* When material

*Job 5:3

*see Gen 4:17

prosperity sustains the fool in this world, that fool is, as it were, firmly rooted and elevated. So fools can obtain all their desires, experience no reverses, and prevail against the weaker without resistance; they can gain-say do-gooders influentially, they can gain still greater advantage by means of still worse actions, and by the very means with which they forsake the way of life they can live happily in the present. When weak minds see the evil flourish they shake with fear, and they are troubled within themselves at the prosperity of sinners; their mind within them wavers and falters. The psalmist surely speaks for them when he says, *As for me, my feet almost slipped, my steps almost went astray, because I was envious of sinners when I saw them prosper in their sin.**

* Ps 72:2-3

8. When the virtuous people see the sinners boasting, they instinctively wait for the punishment that follows the boasting; their deep interior thoughts scorn the pride shown by these arrogant people in their self-importance and outward show. These words, then, are true: *I saw the fool take root, and I immediately cursed his excellence.** When we curse fools' excellence, we indeed judge their boasting with deliberate condemnation: the prouder their boast regarding their sins, the more frightfully will they be engulfed in torment, since pride passes but punishment lasts. They who receive honor on the road will be damned when they arrive. It is almost as if they traveled through pleasant meadows to reach the prison; they enjoyed prosperity in the present life only to end up in destruction.

* Job 5:3

But be sure to notice that in Eliphaz's saying that he had cursed the excellence of the fool, he specified "immediately." It is usual, you see, for the weak human mind to change with the nature of the objects it looks upon. The mind's judgment is often led on by the actual

form of the object of sense, and bias and sensation are formed according to the appearance of what the mind sees. It often happens, you see, that when people see others honored, they are delighted with certain aspects of that honor and esteem it as something great; then they desire to earn some of it for themselves. On the other hand, when they see famous people suddenly cast down or even killed, they groan and avow that human fame is utterly nothing. Then they say outright, “Look, a person is really nothing.” They would speak more correctly if they said it when they saw someone honored; if they then thought of that one’s destruction, they would really understand that temporary power amounts to nothing.

Surely, then, human pride is to be evaluated as nothing when people are exalted above their fellows by their success. Then we must consider how the course of happiness flies away when in the eyes of human beings it seems almost permanent. Any weak person who is about to die can think in the very act of dying that worldly honor is nothing. In that hour, of course, even those who love and pursue honor all the way to death count it nothing. So it is well said, *I saw the fool take root, and I immediately cursed his excellence.** Eliphaz might as well say outright, “Confronted with the fool’s excellence I did not delay my cursing of him, because once I saw that, I saw also the punishment that follows. I would not curse him immediately, you see, if any pleasure in that glory held me. Nevertheless, I cursed him without hesitation, because I saw the punishment that would abide, so I had no doubt about disapproving his power.”

* Job 5:3

On the other hand, the longer their worldly prosperity lasts, the more people the wicked take with them to destruction, so the next words are appropriate: *Let his sons be remote from safety.** The sons of fools are those who are born from imitating them in their ambition for

* Job 5:4

worldly honor; they are surely remote from safety to the same extent that in their acts of injustice they are struck by no faintheartedness. So the sequel is logical:

VII. 9. *They will be crushed at the city gate, and there will be none to rescue them.** Just as the entrance to a city is called a gate, so is Judgment Day the gate of the kingdom, because by it all the elect enter into the glory of the heavenly fatherland. Accordingly, when Solomon saw the day approach for rewarding Holy Church, he said, *Her husband is honored at the gate, where he sits with the princes of the land.** The church's husband is surely the Redeemer of the human race, who shows his honor at the gate; first he was despised and insulted, but on entering the kingdom he will appear in his majesty. He will sit down with the princes of the land, for he will decree judgment together with the saints and preachers of the church, just as he said in the gospel: *You who have followed me, in the new world, when the Son of Man sits on his majestic throne, you also will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.** Isaiah foretold this event long before it happened: *The Lord will come for judgment with the elders of his people.**

Solomon again says about this gate, *Give her the fruit of her labor; they will praise her at the city gate.** Then indeed will Holy Church receive the fruit of her labor, when the reward of her labor raises her up to heaven's welcome; then will her labors praise her at the gate when her members are told at the very entrance of the Kingdom, *I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you dressed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to see me.** As for the children of this fool, they strut in front of the gate, but at the gate they will be crushed, since the lovers of this world are

* Job 5:4

* Prov 31:23

* Matt 19:28

* Isa 3:14

* Prov 31:31

* Matt
25:35-36

proud in the present life, but in the very entrance of the Kingdom they will be struck down by eternal censure. So the following comment is appropriate: *There will be none to rescue them.* The Truth indeed in the eternal trial helps those whom he disciplines in temporal prosperity. Those on the other hand who refuse discipline in this life cannot be rescued in the other; since wicked people disdain him as Father and disciplinarian, they do not find him as rescuer and helper in their time of trial.

VIII. 10. *Hungry people will eat their harvest.** The fool's harvest comes when any evil person receives the gift of right understanding. Such people are taught by the statements of Holy Scripture and then speak correctly, but their actions in no way correspond with their words. They speak the word of God but do not love it, praise it with hyperbole and trample upon it in their life. Since therefore fools both understand and speak what is right and yet show by their actions that they hate it, they renounce the harvest. The hungry one, however, eats it, because the one who pants for God with holy desires learns by listening, puts into practice what is learned, and is therefore fed by the correct preaching of an unruly teacher. What else does it amount to but being refreshed by a fool's harvest? Did not Truth himself advise his hungry disciples to eat the harvest of the fool when he told those who were on fire with holy desires, as he gave orders about the Pharisees, *Do what they tell you, but do not imitate their actions?** It was as if to say, "They tend the harvest of the word by speaking, but by their sinful lives they by no means touch it; let this harvest therefore assuage your hunger, since their foolish squeamishness serves your need.

* Job 5:5

* Matt 23:3

IX. 11. The text continues, *And the armed bandit will seize him.** The ancient enemy, you see, is conquered as if he were unarmed when he openly suggests

* Job 5:5

evil actions to the human mind and tries to bring about the ruin of all that is good with one blow. On the other hand, he comes well armed when, leaving some good actions untouched, he secretly ruins others. He often does not attack their intelligence; he does not deny people meditation on the word of God. Rather, he undermines their life in their actions. They are praised for the extent of their knowledge, yet they are totally unaware of the loss of their good actions. Their mind takes pleasure in the favor of humankind while their wounded life is not attended to. Accordingly, the armed enemy seized them while hidden by a ruse and left them alone in one respect but prevailed in another.

* Job 5:5

X. 12. *Thirsty people will drink up his wealth.* * Fools often have an interior source of water but do not drink from it; they have received the ability to understand but scorn the knowledge of truthful statements that they might obtain by reading. They know that they could succeed in understanding by studying, yet they loathe study, and they cease from all doctrinal study. The words of Holy Scripture are also the mind's wealth; fools see this wealth with their eyes, but they by no means appropriate it for their own use to distinguish themselves. They indeed consider the words of the law, which they listen to as being something great, yet they expend no labor of love for the understanding of those words. On the other hand, others thirst but have no skill; they set their heart on meditation, but their slowness of perception is against them. It often happens in their study of God's law that they at times understand by application what the smart but negligent do not know.

So then the thirsty people drink up the wealth of the fool when the intelligent people feel distaste for God's precepts and do not know them, but the slow of mind learn them through love. In them the eye of love

lights up the darkness of the slow mind; for the slow of mind, thirst opens up what disdain closes for those who are swifter. Therefore the slow of mind have attained the highest level of understanding, because they never disdained the doing of even the smallest thing that they had understood. Their hands help their minds, so they rise above the level of the more intelligent. Accordingly, Solomon was right to say, *A lizard climbs with its hands, but it lives in kings' palaces.**

*Prov 30:28

Birds too, held aloft by their wings, sometimes live in thornbushes. Even lizards, though they have no wings for flying, occupy royal buildings by climbing with hands; so of course when intelligent people grow lazy and negligent, they often remain stuck in crooked actions, whereas simple people, unaided by the wings of intelligence, rise up and reach the walls of the eternal Kingdom by virtue of their activity. The lizard, then, climbs with its hands when it lives in kings' palaces, because the simple person by the intention of good works reaches the place to which the intelligent person never ascends. Yet once we have heard these words, a question arises in our hearts: Why, then, is the gift of intelligence given to the negligent person while the one who makes an effort is impeded by slowness of mind? The answer to that question is speedily given, as the text immediately continues:

XI. 13. *Nothing happens on earth without a reason.**

*Job 5:6

That is why lazy people are often endowed with an intelligent mind so that they may be more justly punished for negligence, since they scorn the knowledge they could have obtained without effort. Studious people, however, are sometimes impeded by slowness of mind so that they might obtain greater rewards, for the very reason that they expended greater effort in learning. Accordingly, nothing happens on earth without a reason, since

slowness of mind is profitable for the studious person who thereby obtains a reward, and the quickness of lazy people increases their punishment. Sometimes we are taught by laborious effort, sometimes by the pain of punishment, to understand what is right. Therefore, once the writer has said, *Nothing happens on earth without a reason*, he immediately adds,

* Job 5:6

XII. 14. *Pain does not come out of the ground.** It is as if pain did come out of the ground when a person who is made in the image of God is scourged by unfeeling reality. But since severe pains proceed openly through the hidden sins in our minds, it is also true that pain does not come out of the ground, because our malicious senses require that unfeeling reality should strike us down. Open your eyes and see that it is for our correction that the hoped-for rain does not come when the earth is parched, the sky is dark, the air is dry, and the heat of the sun increases. The sea meanwhile gets stormier and stormier, blocking the progress of sailing ships and by its threatening waves denying embarkation to those desiring passage. The earth itself not only threatens growth and fruitfulness but it even destroys the sown seed. In all these adversities one fact clearly emerges, namely, the testimony of the wise concerning the Lord: *With him the whole world will fight against the fools.**

* Wis 5:20

The whole world indeed fights with God against the fools when even the elements turn against criminals to punish them. Still in all, pain does not come out of the ground, because only the goad of our own acts incites any unfelt reality to afflict us. Pain does not come out of the ground, because it is not at all the creature that strikes us that metes out punishment to us, but rather beyond any doubt the creature that releases the force of the blow by sinning. But we must by all means be care-

ful to hope urgently for eternity when external events overwhelm us with a burden of sorrow. The more external pains trouble us, the more our minds must reach for the heights. Therefore the sequel is apt:

XIII. 15. *Man was born for trouble and the bird for flying.** It is true that humans were born for trouble, because, of course, we are endowed with reason, and we know very well that it is impossible for us to escape grief in this time allotted to us. That is why Paul, when he listed his struggles for his disciples, added, *You already know that they are our lot.** Yet at the same time as the flesh is scourged and afflicted, the mind is uplifted and desires heaven, as Paul again bears witness: *Although our outer man gets worn out, still our inner man is renewed every day.** Accordingly, humans are born for trouble and the bird for flight, because the mind flies upward even as the flesh struggles intensely here below.

* Job 5:7

* 1 Thess 3:3

* 2 Cor 4:16

16. The word *man* can also be used to signify the life in the flesh. Paul again says, *When there is envy and strife among you, are you not in the flesh?** Having said this, he later adds, *Are you not men?** In this life, therefore, humankind is born for trouble, because when carnal persons desire passing things, they burden themselves with the weight of their own wishes. It is indeed serious trouble for anyone to seek honors in this present life, sometimes to grasp what is sought and then to keep and guard what is grasped. It is serious trouble to take hold of that with a mighty effort when the one who has taken hold of it knows very well that it cannot long be held.

* 1 Cor 3:3

* 1 Cor 3:4

As for the saints, however, because they do not love passing things, not only do they not have the burden of transitory desires, but also, if any adversity should cross their path, they are not troubled by the stress and weariness

that accompany it. What is more painful than scourging? Yet when the apostles were whipped, we are told, *They left the Sanhedrin rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.** What trouble was in the minds of those for whom the pain of stripes was no trouble? Accordingly, humankind is born for trouble, because we who avidly desire the pleasures of this world really feel the hardships of this world. Those whose minds are raised up toward heaven keep below themselves whatever external reality militates against them.

* Acts 5:41

Therefore it is then well said, *and the bird for flying.* Why? It is because the soul is out of the way of the pain caused by trouble to the same extent that its hope lifts it up to the heights. Was not Paul like a bird born to fly, Paul, who suffered so many adversities and said, *Our commonwealth is in heaven,** and *We know that, if our earthly house where we live now is destroyed, we have a house from God, a building not made by hands, eternal, in heaven?** Like a bird he had left earth behind: on the wings of hope he had already lifted himself up above the clouds while his body still remained on earth. But since no one can by one's own efforts lift oneself up on high, while bearing visible affliction to ascend to the invisible places, we are immediately informed,

* Phil 3:20

* 2 Cor 5:1

XIV. 17. *For this reason I will beseech the Lord, and I will make a speech to God.** He could have said plainly, "I will ask the one who I know can grant my request." If he had thought he could obtain it on his own, he would not have had to ask God.

* Job 5:8

XV. 18. *He does great and inscrutable wonders, which cannot be counted.** No one could adequately examine the marvels done by almighty God, who created everything out of nothing, who arranged the very structure of the world by wonderful divine power, who

* Job 5:9

hung heaven above the air and poised earth above the cavernous deep. Look how the universe is made up of things visible and invisible, how God created humankind, so to speak, as a second creation, a miniature of the first, a rational creation. He formed humankind out of flesh and spirit; yes, breath and clay were mingled by an inscrutable display of power. Of these two elements we know one, and we are the other. Yet we neglect admiration, because marvels are unreachable by investigation and have become habitually cheap in the eyes of humans. Accordingly, if a dead person should rise, everyone would be rapt in wonder; yet people are born every day who did not exist before, and no one wonders at this.

Nevertheless, it is certainly obvious to us all that the creation of something that did not exist before is greater than the remaking of what did. When Aaron's dry rod bloomed, everyone wondered at it, but every day the dry earth brings forth trees and the power of dust turns into wood, and nobody wonders why. Because five thousand were fed with five loaves, everybody wondered how the food multiplied in their teeth; however, every day the seed grain is scattered, full ears of wheat are multiplied, and no one wonders at it. All those who saw the water once changed into wine were rapt in wonder, but every day the water in the ground is drawn into the root of the grapevine and changed into wine by means of the grapes. Nobody wonders about this.

These are all wonderful things that people disdain to wonder about because, as I have said, they grow dull by constant usage. It is correct, then, to add immediately to the words *He does great wonders, and inscrutable*.^{*} It would indeed have been a smaller deed to work wonders if the wonders that were worked had been scrutable. It was also correct to add *which cannot be counted*,

^{*} Job 5:9

because their effect would have been less wonderful if the inscrutable things he had done had been few.

19. On the other hand, it is incumbent upon us to realize that God's miracles should be both studied and pondered but never the subject of intellectual debate. The human mind, you see, often gets sucked into a whirlpool of doubt when it searches for reasons for certain things but cannot find them. For example, when some people consider how the bodies of dead people turn to dust, since they cannot through reason infer the power of the resurrection, they lose hope that those bodies could return to their former state. Accordingly, miracles must be believed by faith, not investigated by reason, because if reason did disclose them to our eyes, they would not be miracles.

When the mind hesitates, however, it is necessary to recall those things that we habitually know but do not infer by reason. Let the mind strengthen our faith by the use of a similar case to the same extent that we find faith weakening in us as a result of our clever arguments. The consideration that human flesh is dust does indeed cause many to be alarmed and to despair: When would the dust change back to flesh and arrange the configuration of the members into a revived body? When would that dry earth live again in its vigorous members and distinguish itself specifically and formally? It certainly cannot be understood by reason, but it can still easily be believed by analogy. Who would believe that a giant tree could arise from a single grain of seed unless it were held as proven by experience? In such a small seed with hardly any dissimilarity within itself, where is the hardness of wood hidden, where the inmost pith, whether softer or harder than wood, where the roughness of bark, the freshness of the root, the savor of the fruit, the sweet odor, the rich colors, the soft leaves?

Yet because we know all this by experience, we have no doubt that the source of it all is one seed. What is the difficulty, therefore, for dust to be changed back into members of a body, when we see the power of creation every day, which creates wood from seed in a wonderful way and fruit from wood in a still more wonderful way? Then let us say, *He does great and inscrutable wonders that cannot be counted.** The greatness of God's works cannot be questioned as to quality; nor can they be counted as to quantity. So let us go on.

* Job 5:9

XVI. 20. *He sends rain to wet the land and covers everything with water; he raises up the lowly and lifts to safety those who mourn.** Since we believe that blessed Job's friends learned from familiarity with him, it is necessary that we discuss these words of Eliphaz in a mystical sense. Almighty God accordingly sends rain on the earth when he waters the dry hearts of the Gentiles with the grace of heavenly preaching. He covers everything with water, because he disposes the barren minds of the lost to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to bear fruit. Truth himself spoke of this promise: *He who drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty again.** The word *everything* signifies humankind, in whom is seen the true image and complete participation in all creation.

* Job 5:10-11

* John 4:13

Everything that exists, you see, is either without life, or is living without sensation, or is living with sensation but without intelligence or discernment, or is living with sensation, intelligence, and discernment. Rocks, for example, are not alive. Trees, on the other hand, are alive without sensation. The life of plants and trees is called their ability to spring up, since Paul said about seeds, *You fool! What you sow in the ground does not live again unless it dies first.** Savage beasts, on the other hand, live and have sensation but no understanding. Angels

* 1 Cor 15:36

have life, sensation, understanding, and discernment. Accordingly, humankind has being in common with stones, life in common with trees, sensation in common with animals, and discernment in common with angels. Therefore, humankind is rightly named “everything,” because in a sense we are universal. That is why Truth said to his disciples, *Go out to all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.** By all creation he obviously wanted only humans to be understood, whom he created with something in common with all creatures.

*Mark 16:15

*i.e., Job 5:10

21. The word *everything* in this passage* can, however, be understood differently. The grace of the Holy Spirit, you see, while it subjects the rich to its authority, does not cast aside the poor; when it casts down the strong, it does not forbid the weak to come to the Spirit; when it gathers the noble, it at the same time also includes the lowly; while it welcomes the wise, it does not spurn the foolish and ignorant. So God covers everything with water, because the gift of the Holy Spirit calls people of all kinds to the knowledge of God.

22. On the other hand, the different kinds of behavior can be represented by the term *everything*. For example, one person is lifted up by pride, somebody else is stooped over with the burden of fear, another is on fire with lust, this one pants with avarice, that one faints from listlessness, the other burns up with anger. Nevertheless, the teaching of Holy Scripture grants humility to the proud, gives confidence to the fearful, washes clean from impurity the dissolute by zeal for chastity, coaxes the avaricious away from their eagerness and obsession by means of self-control, rouses the lax by zeal for rectitude, and restrains the angry from being hastily provoked; in all these ways God covers everything with water. By the influence of his word he moves each person according to the different kinds of

behavior; each one finds in the word of God that which may germinate the necessary virtue.

A certain wise man spoke of this on the subject of the sweet manna: *You offered them bread from heaven, prepared without labor, which contained all sweetness in itself, as well as every pleasant taste.** Manna indeed contained all sweetness and every pleasant taste in itself; in the mouth of spiritual persons, take note, the manna bestowed the taste of pleasure according to the will of the eaters, since the word of God is both agreeable to everyone and true to itself and therefore adapts itself to the condition of the hearer. Yes, each one of the elect in an individual way profitably understands the word of God, as though having eaten manna and transformed it into the taste desired. Since the glory of the reward follows the labor of good works, after the irrigation of humankind by water, Eliphaz rightly adds, *He raises up the lowly and lifts to safety those who mourn.**

*Wis 16:20

*Job 5:11

23. The lowly are raised up, because those who are now disdained for the love of God will then come with God as judges, since that is what Truth promised these same lowly ones, as we have already said. *You who have followed me*, he said, *in the new world, when the Son of Man sits on his majestic throne, will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.** Then he will lift to safety those who mourn, because those who are on fire with desire for him run away from prosperity and suffer trials; they bear persecution and torture, and they even discipline themselves, lamenting over themselves. Therefore, they will be lifted all the higher to safety, in proportion to the degree to which they now loyally die to all the joys of this world. That is why Solomon also says, *The heart knows the bitterness of its soul, and no stranger shares its joy.**

*Matt 19:28

*Prov 14:10

The human mind, you see, knows its own bitterness when it is on fire with desires for the eternal fatherland and knows the pain of its exile in tears. On the other hand, no stranger shares its joy, because the one who is now a stranger to the sting of sadness will then be no sharer in the comforting joy. Truth also says in the gospel, *Amen, amen, I tell you that you will mourn and weep, but the world will rejoice; you will be sad, but your sadness will turn into joy.** Again, *Therefore, now indeed you are sad, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and nobody will take that joy from you.** The Lord then, we are told, lifts to safety those who mourn, because he comforts those temporarily afflicted for his sake with true salvation. And there is nothing against applying that salvation to his elect even in this life.

* John 16:20

* John 16:22

24. The Lord indeed raises up the lowly, because when they lie prostrate out of humility, they transcend all the things of time by the judgment of their highest thoughts; when they evaluate themselves as unworthy of everything by consideration and reflection on what is right, they trample upon the glory of this world and leave it behind. Let us consider the humility of Paul. Listen to him tell his disciples, *We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord; we, however, are your slaves through Christ.** See this humble man already lifted up high, who says, *Do you not know we shall judge angels?** Somewhere else he says, *He raised us up together with him, and he made us sit with him in heaven.** Perhaps he was at the time confined externally by chains, but he had been mentally lifted up high, and he already sat in heaven through the certitude of his hope.

* 2 Cor 4:5

* 1 Cor 6:3

* Eph 2:6

The saints are therefore superficially despised as though without honor, and they endure it all. Nevertheless, they trust themselves worthy of heavenly seats,

and they wait for eternal glory with certitude. While they are hard pressed externally in the trials of persecution, internally they fall back to the secure citadel of the mind. From there they look down on all that goes on below them, all that they know their own bodies likewise experience. They fear no threats because they consider contemptible the torment they suffer. That is why Solomon says, *The just man is like a fearless lion; nothing frightens him.** Therefore he repeats, *Nothing that happens to the just man saddens him.** Those who do what is right are secure in the citadel of their intention; in the act of dying they do not sense death. In a wonderful way the darts of the wicked strike them yet do not touch them. The humble ones are accordingly lifted up high, because whenever they despise themselves, they are secure against all danger.

*Prov 28:1

*Prov 12:21

25. On the other hand, the prophet rightly tells the wicked mind in the guise of Babylon, *Get down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground; there is no throne for the daughter of the Chaldeans.** This passage calls the human mind in my opinion not an unspoiled virgin but an unfruitful one. Babylon, you see, is interpreted “confusion,” so the mind is rightly called an unfruitful daughter of Babylon when it by no means gives birth to good works and when it is not governed by any regularity imposed by a correct way of life; so it is, as it were, the child of a mother called *confusion*. If, on the other hand, *virgin* means not “unfruitful” but “unspoiled,” after she lost the state of salvation she is called what she once was in order to make her confusion all the greater. So the voice of God suitably tells her reprovingly, *Get down*.

*Isa 47:1

The human soul indeed stands up high when it desires heavenly rewards, but it gets down from that state when in shameful defeat it subjects itself to its

passing desires for the world. So the prophet immediately adds, *sit in the dust*. She gets down and sits in the dust when she abandons heaven, sprinkles herself with earthly thoughts, and grovels in the very lowest antics. Repeating himself again, he adds, *sit on the ground*. It is as though reproving her openly he should say, “Since you refused to raise yourself up by means of heavenly companionship, grovel in the earthly actions beneath you.” It was necessary therefore for the prophet to add, *There is no throne for the daughter of the Chaldeans*. The *Chaldeans*, you see, are interpreted as “wild.” They are indeed wild who follow their own will and do not know enough to restrain their own behavior.

Earthly desires are wild because they render the mind stiff and insensible, not only to the commandments of the Creator but often even to the blows of the whip. The daughter of a wild people has no throne, because the mind that is born to love of the world from evil desires and that persists in the same desires insofar as it subjects itself to earthly pleasure loses its judgment seat. Furthermore, she has no throne on which to preside, for the mind is without any ability to consider or distinguish; it is as though it were banished from its own judgment seat because it wanders among superficial desires. It is perfectly obvious that the mind that has lost its internal seat of counsel is dissipated outside itself through innumerable desires. Because such people pretend not to understand what they are doing, they are indeed blind to the point where they really do not know what they do; often by a just judgment they are allowed their own will and turned loose under that laborious worldly ministry that they so anxiously desire.

So we are told next, *No longer will you be called soft and tender; take the millstone and grind flour.** It is certainly true that parents treat their tender daughters gently

* Isa 47:2

and do not force them to work at the strenuous chores of slaves. Accordingly, almighty God calls a daughter tender, as it were, when he calls away a beloved soul from the laborious servitude of this world, lest while it is weakened by physical labor it become insensible to interior desires. The daughter of the Chaldeans, however, is not called soft and tender, because the mind given over to evil desires is abandoned to that labor of this world it so anxiously yearns for; it is allowed to serve the world superficially as a slave because it has no interior love whatsoever for God, as would behave a daughter. Therefore it is ordered to pick up the millstone and grind flour. The stone is turned and flour is produced.

Every theater of action in this world is a mill, which collects many concerns and makes people's minds turn as in a circle; it throws out flour from itself because when hearts turn wrong, they keep generating infinitesimal thoughts. Sometimes, however, a quiet person who is supposed to have some merit is unmasked in the course of some action. Therefore the following words are immediately added: *Uncover your shame, bare your shoulder, show us your legs, cross the rivers.** In the management of a project, shame is certainly uncovered when people of mean and cowardly disposition are recognized by their pretentious actions, although they had previously been supposed to be outstanding when they kept quiet.

The mind bares its shoulder when it reveals what it has done that was previously unknown. It shows us its legs when it admits the steps of its desires, by which it yearns after gain in this world. It also crosses the rivers, because it never stops desiring the actions of this world, which keep flowing every day to their end; moreover, it abandons some and follows up others, as though it were going on from one river to another. We

*Isa 47:2

have spoken these few words by way of digression in order that we might show how the mind falls out of the throne of a holy intention and lies prostrate. If it stops yearning after those things that are above it, it keeps falling down to those that are below it. If, however, it abandons the love of the things of time, it holds tight the hope of unchangeable eternity and remains steadfastly on its high throne.

26. Eliphaz is therefore right to say, *He raises up the lowly*, and to add appropriately, *and lifts to safety those who mourn*.^{*} It often happens that even in this world there are those who rejoice and are elated when they boast of the mere honor of their prosperity. But God lifts to safety those who mourn. Yes indeed, he raises up his afflicted ones to glory by the solidity of true joy. They are elated, yes, but at their safety, not at senselessness. They are installed in good works, and they give thanks for their firm hope in God. There are those, as we have said, who are evildoers and who never stop rejoicing. Solomon talks about them: *They rejoice when they do evil, and they exult in wayward behavior*.^{*} And elsewhere, *There are evil men who feel as secure as if they had done deeds of justice*.^{*}

* Job 5:11

* Prov 2:14

* Eccl 8:14

Such as these are certainly elated, not because of safety but because of senselessness. They are proud when they ought to be afflicted; for the very reason that these miserable people stoop to elation, good people weep over them. They are like madmen in their behavior, they prevail in senselessness, and they consider it virtue. When their power is greater than that of healthy people, they do not recognize it as sickness. When their life is nearly over on account of the increase of sickness, they think their power has grown. Since they have no perception of reason, they laugh while others weep. The more ignorant of and insensible they are to the evil they

suffer, the more expansive is their loud elation. The Lord therefore lifts to safety those who mourn, because the minds of the elect do not rejoice in the senselessness of the present life; rather, they rejoice in the certitude of eternal salvation. It is appropriate, then, that we should be immediately told about the very destruction of the evil.

XVII. 27. *He foils the plans of the wicked, to keep their hands from completing what they had started to do.** The minds of the wicked are always on the lookout for shady plans, but God's providence often trips them up, even though they do not give up their crooked design when stopped by opposition. Still, God curbs their power lest they should prevail against good people. God's wonderful judgment works against them so that their wicked plans are without effect, and their conscience finds them guilty and delivers them to the just judgment of the Judge. The fact that they plan evil shows forth their doings, but the fact that they cannot carry it out protects those against whom they plot. So Eliphaz appropriately adds,

*Job 5:12

XVIII. 28. *He catches the wise in their cleverness, and he foils the plots of the wicked.** You often see people boasting about their human wisdom, but when they notice God's judgment going contrary to their wishes, they try to resist it with clever devices. So that they might bend the intentions of God's providence to their own will, they persist in cunning plans and devise schemes of excessive refinement. Yet even as they strive to change God's will, they end up doing it. While they attempt to resist the counsel of almighty God they obey it, because that with which human application frivolously pesters him often fits his design exactly. Accordingly, God catches the wise in their very cleverness when human acts perfectly serve his plans

*Job 5:13

even when they resist them. I will demonstrate how this is done more easily if at this point I mention a few historical examples.

29. Joseph had a dream in which the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to his own sheaf; he had another dream in which the sun, the moon, and the stars worshiped him. He guilelessly told his brothers about them, and immediately envy and fear of his future domination struck their hearts. So when they saw him approaching them, their malice took fire, and they said, *Look, here comes the dreamer. Come let us kill him. Let us see what good his dreams will do him.* Since they were afraid of being subjected to his authority, they let the dreamer down into the cistern; then they sold him to the Ishmaelites who were passing. He was taken to Egypt and sold into slavery, and then he was accused of debauchery; although he was condemned, his virtue of chastity helped him; by the judgment of prophecy he was made master of all Egypt. Heavenly wisdom gave him foresight, and he stored up grain; in so doing he avoided the danger of future want. Accordingly, when famine struck the world, Jacob sent his sons into Egypt in his anxiety to provide food. Jacob's sons met the overseer concerned with the distribution of grain, not knowing that he was Joseph. In order that they might be entitled to receive food, they were compelled to prostrate themselves on the ground and adore the one distributing food.*

* see
Gen 37:7-9,
19-20, 24-25,
28; 39:1, 17;
41:41, 48;
42:1-2, 6

Now let us consider the history; let us consider how the power of God catches the wise in their craftiness. Joseph was sold by his brothers so that they wouldn't worship him, yet he was actually worshiped after he was sold. They ventured to do the crafty thing so that God's plan might be thwarted, but in trying to turn aside God's judgment, their resistance forwarded it. Where their crafty action had the object of altering God's

will, there precisely they were forced to fulfill it. Just so, when God's plan is put aside, it is fulfilled. When human wisdom resists, it is caught. Joseph's brothers were afraid he might prevail over them; nevertheless, the avoiding of God's dispositions ends up by forwarding them. So human wisdom is tripped up by itself when it intends to resist God's will, and that act brings about its completion.

30. In the same way, when Saul saw his subject David grow stronger every day with new successes on the battlefield, he offered him his daughter as his bride. As her bridal gift he asked for a hundred Philistine foreskins so that when the soldier* challenged in this way tried to exceed his own measure he might end his life in betrayal to enemy swords. We read, *The king needs no other betrothal present than a hundred Philistine foreskins, so that he may be avenged on his enemies, but Saul thought he was betraying David into the hands of the Philistines.** David's strength, however, came from the intimate favor of Providence; instead of giving the king a hundred Philistine foreskins, he gave him two hundred. Saul was of course beaten by the net result of this deed of valor and caught by God's Providence in his wise plan. Where he thought he was taking the life of a successful soldier, he was actually adding to that soldier's honorable career.*

*David

* 1 Sam 18:25

* see 1 Sam
18:20-27

31. Even the elect sometimes contrive to discern something cleverly, so it will not be out of place to introduce another wise man to you and to show you the deep internal counsel by which human craftiness is tripped up. Jonah certainly intended to act wisely and prudently after he was sent to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh. He was afraid that if the Gentiles were chosen, Judaea would be abandoned, so he refused to fulfill the office of preaching. He chose instead to take

ship and flee to Tarshish. Immediately a storm arose, and the sailors cast lots to find out whose fault it was that the sea was unsettled. Jonah's guilt was discovered, he was thrown into the sea, a large fish swallowed him, and the swimming beast arrived at the very place where he had contemptuously chosen not to go. Look at this fugitive from God: the storm finds him, the lot catches him, the sea receives him, and the beast locks him up. Because he refuses to obey his Creator's voice, the guilty man is carried in his own prison to the very place to which he was sent. God orders a man to minister prophetically, and he refuses; God breathes, and the beast vomits up the prophet. Accordingly, God catches the wise in their craftiness when he turns around for his own purpose and uses the very thing through which the man wanted to contradict him.*

* see
Jonah 1:2-4, 7,
15, 17; 2:10

32. Let us now examine the wisdom of the Hebrews and see what that wisdom ruled out by foreseeing it and what wisdom made happen by ruling it out. Surely the faithful crowd rushed to witness our Redeemer's miracles; just as surely the priests of the people burned with envy and announced that the world was going after him. Here is what they said, *You see, we are getting nowhere! Look, the whole world has gone after him.** They wanted to deprive him of the advantage of such a vast concourse of people. Therefore they attempted to put an end to his influence by killing him. They said, *It is expedient that one man die so that the whole nation may not perish.** But the Redeemer's death brought about his union with his body (the church, that is), not the separation from it. So also the law prescribes in the sacrifice of a dove or pigeon (a figure of our sacrifice) that the neck should be cut and the head not completely severed, so that it may still be attached to the body after it is dead. The Mediator of God and humankind, you see, is the Head

* John 12:19

* John 11:50

of all of us and the Sacrifice of true purification; because he underwent death for us, he clings to us all the more closely. So after the head of the dove is cut it clings to its body, because not even the event of death separates Christ from the church. The persecutors, then, carried out what they strove to accomplish with pernicious intent and did him to death so that they might deprive him of the devotion of the faithful. Yet just where the cruel infidels thought they could extinguish faith, there faith grew. And when they thought they were rid of his miracles through persecution, they naturally compelled themselves unintentionally to increase them. The Lord therefore catches the wise in their craftiness when he reduces what human cruelty sets afoot against him to the service of his kindness.

33. The just and merciful God adjusts the acts of mortals: some he gracefully overlooks, but others he grudgingly allows. Those he allows he puts up with in such a way that he may adapt them for his own use and counsel. Accordingly, in a wonderful way even that which happens without God's will is not contrary to God's will, because evil deeds are turned to a good purpose, and even when they are oriented against his plan, they are nevertheless made to act in accordance with it. That is why the psalmist says, *Great are the works of the Lord, carefully wrought in all he wills to do.** Yes, his works are great, so great that through all the works of humankind his will is sought out, and it is often done precisely there where it was thought to be spurned. So the psalmist says elsewhere, *Whatever God wills he does in heaven and on earth.** Solomon says for his part, *There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against the Lord.**

*Ps 110:2
Vulg

*Ps 134:6
Vulg

*Prov 21:30

The conclusion therefore is that in all our doings we must search out the guiding power of God's will;

once we know that, all our actions must serve that will with devotion and follow it as we would a guide in our journey, lest we should be unwilling servants of God if in our pride we abandoned the search for his will. The strong counsel of heaven, you see, can never be sidestepped, but those who curb the self under God's command make it theirs with great energy, and those who bear it willingly on the bowed shoulder of their heart lighten its weight for themselves. We have mentioned persecutors above. We will now point out how the following words are congruent with the blindness of persecutors.

* Job 5:14 XIX. 34. *All day they find darkness; they stumble at noon, as if it were night.* All day they found darkness. Why? Because they were blinded in the very presence of Truth by the error of unbelief. Surely we see clearly in daylight, but at night our eyes are darkened. Accordingly, the persecutors of our Redeemer saw the miracles of his divine power, yet they doubted his divinity. So they encountered darkness in daylight, since they had lost their eyesight in the presence of the light. Therefore the Light himself warns them, saying, *Walk while you have light, lest the darkness catch up with you.***

* John 12:35 Of Judaea also it is written, *Her sun set while it was still daylight.** Another prophet took up again the voice of penitents in himself, and he says, *We stumble at noon as though in the dark; we are in dark places like the dead.** In another place he says, "*Watchman, what of the night; watchman, what of the night?*" *The watchman answered, "Morning comes, and night again.*"* The watchman comes at night, you see, because the Protector of the human race also appeared visibly in the flesh, but Judaea was hemmed in by the darkness of her unbelief, and she did not recognize him. That is why the watchman's voice adds the words, *Morning comes,*

* Jer 15:9

* Isa 59:10

* Isa 21:11-12

and night again. His presence, you see, brings in more light, and it brightens the world, but in hearts without faith the old blindness remains.

So Eliphaz was right to say, *They stumble at noon as if it were night.** We grope about and search for that which our eyes do not see. The Jews had seen his miracles clearly enough, but still they groped about in search of him while saying, *How long will you keep us guessing? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.** The light of miracles was right there in front of them, yet they stumbled in the darkness of their hearts, and they still groped about in search of him. Their blindness soon turned to cruelty and their cruelty to open persecution. The Redeemer of the human race, however, could not be held for long by the hands of his persecutors. Therefore Eliphaz immediately adds these words,

XX. 35. *Rather, he will save the poor man from the sword of their mouth and from the violence in their hands.** Christ indeed is this poor man of whom Paul is speaking here: *For your sakes he became poor, when he was rich.** It was the Jews who accused the Lord and handed him over; when he was handed over, the Gentiles killed him. By *the sword of their mouth* may then be signified the Hebrew tongues that accused him. The psalmist speaks of them: *As for the sons of men, their teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharpened sword.** About them also the evangelist testifies that they cried out, *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!** As for the violent hands, they express the Gentiles who did the crucifying, since in the Redeemer's death it was the Gentiles who did the bidding of the Hebrew voices. Accordingly, God saved this poor man from the violent hand and from the sword of their mouth. Our Redeemer suffered the power of the Gentiles and the tongues of the Jews when he died in his humanity, yet he overpowered

*Job 5:14

*John 10:24

*Job 5:15

*2 Cor 8:9

*Ps 56:5

*Luke 23:21

them when he arose in the power of his divinity. And what else occurred in the resurrection but the strengthening of our weakness by the hope of a life to come? So we are told without delay,

* Job 5:16

XXI. 36. *There will be hope for the indigent.** With the poor man saved, the indigent are led back to hope, because the humble people of faith, although struck down by fear at the Redeemer's death, are strengthened by his resurrection. They themselves, the first of the poor of his people, were his chosen preachers, and they were devastated by his visible death, but the revealed resurrection restored them. The poor man is therefore saved and the indigent given hope because the Lord's flesh is risen, and all the faithful are strengthened and assured of eternal life. Behold, Truth has already come, manifest and revealed; he has already suffered death in the flesh, already destroyed death in his resurrection, and already crowned his resurrection with the glory of his ascension. Yet the Hebrew tongues still do not stop insulting him. He calmly puts up with their insults in order that he may convert some and one day more severely punish those who refuse conversion. Only then will unfaithful tongues silence their unbridled speeches when they see him coming as a just Judge, him whom now they judge unjustly. So it goes on,

* Job 5:16

XXII. 37. *Injustice will shut its mouth.** At the present time injustice opens its mouth wide, because unbelieving tongues never stop insulting the Redeemer of the human race. Then, however, it will close its mouth, not through good will but through punishment. The sentence may on the other hand be taken to refer to converted persecutors. With the poor man rescued and the indigent restored to hope, injustice has closed its mouth and been rendered speechless, because the miracle of Christ's resurrection has enlightened the world. An immense multitude of unbelievers accepts the faith

and has consequently stopped insulting and wounding its Redeemer. It had opened its mouth in derision against God, but now it has closed its mouth in fear.

38. Leaving aside the application to the Jews, we may read the text in a moral sense and investigate how it may be applied to wicked people in a general way. To be sure, when the minds of unjust people notice the good deeds of their neighbors, they are tormented and stretched on the rack of their own envy. They endure serious pain in their own malice when they resentfully see any good in another person. So Eliphaz is right to say, *All day they find darkness.** When their minds are troubled by someone else's improvement, they are veiled from the ray of light. As often as they look at the obvious good deeds of their neighbors, you see, they search those deeds to see if there is evil hidden in them; they even anxiously question whether they can possibly find something to accuse their neighbors with. They see perfectly well that the body is sound, yet with the eyes of the heart closed they search for a wound by touch.

*Job 5:14

So we are told the following, *They stumble at noon as if it were night.** The clear day of good works shines out in their neighbors, but they grope about as if it were night because they suffer from the interior darkness of envy. They strive to reach something reprehensible; they search out an entry point for detraction, but they cannot find one, so they blindly go about outside. This fact is well expressed in the case of Lot, the entrance to whose house the Sodomites did not find because of the protecting angels, as it is written, *They pressed most fiercely against Lot and were already near enough to break down the door, but the men put out their hands and pulled Lot inside. They closed the door, and they struck those outside from the least to the greatest with blindness so that they could not find the door.**

*Job 5:14

*Gen 19:9-11

What does Lot's being attacked by evil men and pulled into the house and protected mean unless that any righteous person ambushed by evil people retreats to the mind and stays there unperturbed? The men of Sodom, on the other hand, could not find the door of Lot's house, because the seducers of minds who plot against the life of the righteous find no doorway by which to accuse. They are, as it were, struck with blindness and go around the house, because they envy the words and deeds of this one whom they watch so closely. But since the energetic and praiseworthy actions in the life of the righteous meet them everywhere, they grope about and find nothing but the wall. It is well said, *They stumble at noon as if it were night.** Why? Because they are unable to accuse what they see is good, blinded with malice as they are, and they search for the evil that they do not see in order to accuse it.

* Job 5:14

39. The text continues, *Rather, he will save the poor man from the sword of their mouth and from the violence in their hands.** The poor man is indeed anyone who is not lofty in his own eyes. That is why Truth says in the gospel, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.** All are lured to sin in two ways. They are either led by pleasure or overcome by fear. The sword of the mouth is unjust persuasion, whereas the violent hand is the threat of power. But the truly humble person is here called the poor man, and because such people desire no prosperity in this world, they boldly despise even worldly adversity. Therefore it is rightly said, *He will save the poor man from the sword of their mouth and from the violence in their hands.* Eliphaz could say it outright: *God so secures the humble minds in his own protection that neither can soothing arguments entice them to commit sin nor painful torture break them.* Hope, to be sure, raises the

* Job 5:15

* Matt 5:3

soul to eternal life, and that is why the soul feels none of the evils that it encounters exteriorly. Therefore it follows that *There will be hope for the indigent.** And when the poor finally receive the promise of that hope, all pride shuts its mouth, so the passage continues logically, *Injustice will shut its mouth.**

*Job 5:16

*Job 5:16

Now, you see, the evil ones detract good people and their virtuous deeds, whose practice they shun; these latter they never stop slandering and turning into something else. But then injustice will shut its mouth when it knows the greatness of the glorious reward that is in store for the righteous. At that time, you see, no one will be free to speak against good people, because the torments that are the fitting reward of the evil will lock up their tongues. That is why we are told that Hannah prophesied, *He will guide the steps of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in the darkness.** Nevertheless, in order that all the elect may escape eternal punishment and the poor may rise up to everlasting glory, they must be tested here by constant trials, and to that extent they can be found purified in judgment. We are brought down daily, you see, by the very weight of our weakness unless by the wonderful hand of our Creator we are lifted up by helpful trials.

*1 Sam 2:9

XXIII. 40. *Blessed is the man whom the Lord corrects.** The first virtue is to avoid sin, to keep from committing it. The second is at least to correct those that we have committed. It often happens, however, that not only do we never avoid the sin that threatens but we do not even notice those we have committed. The less we understand how damaging our blindness is, the deeper is the darkness of sin that engulfs the mind. Consequently it is by God's generous gift that punishment often follows hard upon the sin, the pain of which opens the sinner's eyes, which security among vices had blinded.

*Job 5:17

Unquestionably the sleepy soul is touched by compunction so that it might wake up, insofar as those who lost their state of rectitude in security might in affliction consider where they lie.

For this reason, then, the very harshness of correction is the origin of light. That is why Paul says, *Whatever is declared is revealed by the light.** The power of pain, you see, is the declaration of salvation. Therefore Solomon also says, *Care will put a stop to the gravest sins.** Someone else adds, *Him whom God loves he chastises, and he beats every son he receives.** God also tells John through the angel's voice, *Those I love I rebuke and chastise.** Paul again says, *All discipline seems painful rather than pleasant at the time; afterward, however, it bears peaceful fruit of justice for its recipients.** So although pain and happiness cannot cohabit, we are rightly told at this point, *Blessed is the man whom the Lord corrects.* When the sinner suffers the pain of correction, he is led on to that happiness that is not interrupted by pain. The text goes on:

*Eph 5:13
 *Eccl 10:4
 *Heb 12:6
 *Rev 3:19
 *Heb 12:11
 *Job 5:17

XXIV. 41. *So do not shun the Lord's reproof.** Anyone who is beaten for a fault but who haughtily complains about the beating shuns the Lord's reproof, because he charges that he has borne it unjustly. There are those, on the other hand, who receive blows not for atonement for crimes but to indicate their courage; when they ask why they have been struck, they should not be said to shun the Lord's reproof, because it is quite enough for them to find out what they themselves do not know. In the same way blessed Job lets out frank words between blows of the whip; the more truly he is himself unaware of the reason for his suffering, the more righteously does he in himself question the judgment of the one striking him. Accordingly, because Eliphaz supposed that Job had been struck not in consideration

of being approved but as expiation, when he heard Job speak frankly between blows, he thought Job had shunned God's reproof. We have said that Eliphaz really plays a role as the heretics who make themselves judges and always twist all the righteous activity of the church into the vice of insincerity.

Nevertheless, because Eliphaz is led into speaking by a pure intention but does not take care to distinguish the one to whom he is speaking, he again proclaims the guidance of God's plan and adds the following:

XXV. 42. *God wounds, but he also heals; he strikes, but his hand will cure.** There are two ways in which almighty God wounds those whom he intends to lead back to safety. Sometimes he strikes at the flesh and causes the stubborn mind to relent for fear of him. Accordingly, he wounds his chosen ones and calls them back to safety; he afflicts them externally so that they may live an interior life. He also speaks to us through Moses. He tells us, *I will kill and give life; I will strike down, and I will heal.** He kills, you see, so that he may give life; he strikes down so that he may heal. He wields the whip externally precisely in order to cure the wounds of our sins. There are other times, however, when external trials seem to be at an end while God inflicts internal wounds on us; yes, he strikes at the obstinacy of our minds by means of our desire for him, but it is a healing blow, since the dart of his fear pierces us and brings us back to a sense of righteousness.

Our hearts are really not in good health when they are not wounded by God's love, when they do not feel the harshness of exile, when they do not feel the least compassion for any weakness of their neighbor. They are wounded so that they may be healed. God pierces our unfeeling minds with darts of his love and soon renders them sensitive through the fire of his love. That is

*Job 5:18

*Deut 32:39

*Song 2:5 why the bride says in the Song of Songs, *I am wounded by love*.^{*} The soul was not in good health; she was laid prostrate by the blind security of her exile; she neither saw the Lord nor wanted to see him. She was, however, hit by the darts of his love; now she is deeply wounded by her condition of devotion and is on fire with desire for contemplation. In a wonderful way she who previously lay dead in security is now alive because wounded. She is agitated, she pants, and she now desires to see the one she used to avoid. Therefore, after being struck she is led back to safety, and she is called back to security and quieted internally by having her self-love thwarted.

When the wounded mind begins to pant for God, however, when she spurns all the allurements of this world and sets out for the heavenly fatherland in her desire, everything she formerly held pleasant and enticing in this world now becomes a trial to her. Those who formerly loved the sinner become cruel attackers in the sinner's virtuous life. Those who are right with God endure war from their own body, in which they formerly cultivated vices and lolled in pleasure. Their former pleasures return to their memory and afflict their opposing mind with stern battles. Nonetheless, although we are worn out with passing efforts, we are delivered from everlasting pain. So Eliphaz rightly adds,

*Job 5:19 XXVI. 43. *He will deliver you from six trials, and you will have no trouble with the seventh*.^{*} What is meant by the number six followed by seven unless it is the agitation and the course of this present life? God completed all his work on the sixth day and created humankind, and he rested on the seventh day.^{*} The seventh day has no evening, because there is now no end of the repose that follows. When everything is complete, repose follows, because after the good works done in

*see Gen 2:2

this present life, we will find the reward of eternal rest. Accordingly, God delivers us from six trials lest we encounter trouble in the seventh. Yes, the Lord wears us out by means of our labor in the present life (it is the teaching of his fatherly love); then on Judgment Day he hides us from the whip in order that he may make us just as certain of our salvation then as the whip chastises us severely now. He follows this act nicely by specifying both the trials of the present life and the aid supplied by heavenly guidance.

XXVII. 44. *In time of famine he will deliver you from death, and in wartime from threat of the sword.**

*Job 5:20

Just as famine of the flesh means removal of the support of the body, so mental famine means the silence of God's voice. The prophet rightly says, *I will send famine on earth, not a famine of bread or a dearth of water, but a famine of hearing God's word.** When God's voice abandons the human mind, temptations of the flesh wax strong against her. So Eliphaz continues, *and in wartime from threat of the sword.* Yes, we suffer war when we are attacked by temptations of our own flesh. The psalmist speaks indeed of this war: *Shield my head on the day of war.**

*Amos 8:11

*Ps 139:8
Vulg

Accordingly, reprobates become weak from a famine of the word of God, and at the same time they are stabbed by the sword in wartime; as for his chosen ones, God delivers them from death by famine and hides them from the sword in wartime. Yes, he feeds their minds with the nourishment of his word and renders them strong against the temptations of the flesh. There are, however, those who, although they refresh themselves from the table of God's word against the time of internal famine, and although they are equally strengthened against internal battles of temptation by the virtue of continence, are still in dread of the blows of detraction

by men. Even as the darts of tongues worry them, they are often strangled in the snare of sin. So we are rightly told next,

*Job 5:21

XXVIII. 45. *You will hide from the tongue's lash.**

The tongue's lash is a reproach by one who insults us. Those who make fun of the good deeds of the righteous and persecute them strike them with the tongue's whip. In blaming a good work the tongue often revokes it; like a whip it strikes, and it lacerates the back of a fearful mind. The prophet had noticed how the tongue's lash lay in ambush against the chosen mind when he promised God's help and said, *He will deliver you from the hunter's snare and from the harsh word.** Hunters, you see, are out for nothing less than our hide, but we are set free from the hunter's snare and from the harsh word when we overcome both the traps set by carnal people and their mocking reproaches by despising them.

*Ps 90:3

Harsh words are certainly theirs who oppose our righteous ways. But we escape these harsh words when we ignore their mocking derision and trample upon it. The holy soul, therefore, is protected from the tongue's lash, because she seeks no honor or praise from this world, and she does not feel insult or detraction. Still, there are those who already scorn detraction, already care nothing for derision, but who nevertheless fear bodily pain and torture. The ancient foe, you see, has many ways of attacking us so that he may turn us aside from our good intentions, so he approaches our temptation sometimes by a famine of the word, sometimes with battle against our flesh, sometimes with tongue lashing, sometimes with the misfortune of persecution. But because when all those who are perfect have overcome their evil habits immediately arm their minds as well against the wounds they suffer, Eliphaz rightly adds,

XXIX. 46. *So you will not fear a disaster when it arrives.** Since the saints take into consideration the fact that their fight is against an adversary with many shapes, they prepare themselves for many different types of warfare. For example, they have the food of God's word against famine; they have the shield of continence against the sword of war; they have patience to protect them against tongue lashing; they have the help of interior love against the losses of exterior disasters. So in a wonderful way it happens that the more numerous the ways in which the sly enemy tempts us, the richer are the virtues with which the shrewd soldiers of God are endowed. And since all the elect while they bravely endure the battles of the present life are preparing salvation for themselves against the fear of coming judgment, Eliphaz rightly adds,

*Job 5:21

XXX. 47. *You will laugh at desolation and hunger.**

*Job 5:22

At that time reprobates will certainly suffer desolation and hunger, when they have been condemned in the final Judgment and cut off from the vision of the eternal Bread. Scripture has it, *Let the wicked be taken out, lest they see God's glory.** The Lord himself says, *I am the living Bread that came down from heaven.** Desolation and hunger would accordingly simultaneously torment those who not only suffer pain externally but even die from internal starvation. Gehenna wreaks desolation through fire, but hunger kills, because the Redeemer hides his face. The wretched ones are rightly rewarded internally and externally, because they failed him by thought and deed. Therefore the psalmist rightly says, *You will make them like a blazing oven at the time when you are present; God will upset them in his wrath, and the fire will burn them up.** The fire that burns them up is external, but the oven grows hot internally. Therefore

*Isa 26:10

*John 6:51

*Ps 20:10
LXX

all the wicked are made like an oven at the time when God is present, and they are also burnt up in the fire. When the Judge appears, you see, the multitude of unjust people is repulsed from the sight of him, and while their conscious awareness burns them with interior longing, Gehenna tortures their flesh externally.

48. The whip of the tongue may also be understood in terms of that sentence of final condemnation pronounced by the strict Judge upon the unrepentant: *Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.** The just are then hidden away from the whip of the tongue and from the coming disaster, because at the time of such a strict sentence they are reassured by the comforting voice of the Judge, who tells them, *I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you dressed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to see me.** These words are preceded by *Come, you blessed ones of my Father, and take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.** Accordingly, the just will laugh at desolation and famine, because when the final penalty overtakes the wicked, those who are just will rejoice at the fame of a fitting retribution. Nor will they any longer be compassionate out of a common humanity toward those condemned, because the just are made partakers of divine justice by resemblance, and they are made firm with the unrelenting force of interior rectitude.

No mercy, you see, sways the minds of the elect who have been raised to the glory of heavenly justice, because high beatitude has rendered them strangers to misery. The psalmist has said it rightly: *The just shall see it and be afraid; they shall laugh at him and say, "Here is the*

*Matt 25:44

*Matt
25:35-36

*Matt 25:34

man who did not let God help him.”* The just look at the wicked now and are afraid, but later they will see them and laugh. Since, you see, they may fail momentarily by imitating the wicked, they do experience fear here. But because they cannot help them later when they are condemned, they have no compassion on them then. They find in the very Judge’s justice, in which they are blessed, the judgment that there is no mercy available for those subject to eternal punishment; it is incorrect to suppose such a thing, but the degree of happiness that they enjoy would be lowered if, being resident in the Kingdom, they should wish what can in no sense be granted. Whoever commit themselves to a rule of life before receiving their eternal reward already taste here on earth the beginning of the safety to follow in eternity, so that they may have no fear of the ancient enemy and may have not the slightest fright before the enemy’s violent attack when the hour of death arrives. The beginning of the reward of the just is precisely that tranquil mind often present at their death. Therefore Eliphaz rightly adds,

XXXI. 49. *You will have no fear of any beast of the earth.** The cunning adversary is surely named a beast of the earth, because he becomes wild, violent, and cruel, trying to attack sinful souls at the hour of death. Those whom he deceived with flattery when they were alive he attacks ferociously when they are dying. The Lord promises the church of the elect help against these attacks, saying through the prophet, *No evil beast will pass through her gates.** Accordingly, those who in their life did not fear the Creator’s power fear the beast of the earth at their death. Because the saints subject themselves to the fear of God from the core of their heart, they throw off every burden of fear concerning the adversary’s arrival. That is why the psalmist pleads with God and says, *Let him never attack my soul like a lion.**

*Ps 51:8-9
LXX

*Job 5:22

*Isa 26:10

*Ps 7:3

He says somewhere else, *O God, hear my prayer when I am in trouble; free my soul from fear of the enemy.** While they are alive their fear of the Judge is perfect, lest they should be in dread of the accuser when they are dying. So it is wisely said, *You will have no fear of any beast of the earth.* He could have said openly, “Since you were not caught off guard here by the enticements of the foe, you will have no fear of his cruelty later.” Still, granted that we live right, our chief worry is that we should hold others in derision while we ourselves boast of our special status. So it is just as well to remember that it is good to live with others, as we are told immediately:

*Ps 63:2

*Job 5:23

*1 Pet 2:5

*Isa 54:11

XXXII. 50. *Your treaty is with the stones of the regions.** The Gentile churches in the world are, as it were, distinct regions. Although united in faith, they are distinguished by languages and custom. How then do we understand the stones of the regions unless they be the chosen ones of the church? They are told in the words of our first teacher, *You are like living stones in a building.** God promised Holy Church concerning these stones, speaking through the prophet, *Behold, I will pave your stones becomingly.** Accordingly, those who live well make a treaty with the stones of the regions, because since they overcome worldly desires, they unite their life beyond any doubt with the example of the saints who lived before them. But because such people separate themselves from worldly actions, evil spirits multiply their attacks against them; yet the more they weaken a person by sadness, the more humble do they render that person before the Creator. Therefore Eliphaz continues,

*Job 5:23

XXXIII. 51. *The beasts of the earth will be your peacemakers.** Let us first notice that he did not say that they were peaceful but that they will be your peacemak-

ers; obviously that means not that they will have peace but that they will make peace. Subtle enemies attack while lying in ambush. The mind being attacked, however, wants to return to the eternal fatherland the more earnestly as its life in this inhospitable exile is the more difficult; the mind humbles herself all the more truly before the grace of her helper as she judges the traps set for her by the enemy to be the more dangerous. The beasts of the earth are consequently peacemakers for the elect, because when the evil spirits array themselves against good people and oppress their hearts, they impel them against their will toward the love of God. Accordingly, where the battle raised against us by our adversary is fiercest, there our peace with God is made strongest.

52. The beasts of the earth can also be taken to mean the movements of the flesh. The latter weary our minds by suggesting irrational conduct, and in this way they rise up against us after the fashion of wild beasts. But when our hearts are subject to God's law, even the incitements of the flesh are subdued. Then, even if we are remotely tempted, we do not go all the way to completed actions, like raging animals who really bite. Who is there who still abides in this corruptible flesh? Who completely tames these beasts of the earth? That famous preacher who was caught up into the third heaven spoke thus: *I see another law in my body, resisting the law of my mind and making me a captive of the law of sin residing in my body.**

*Rom 7:23

It is one thing, however, to notice these beasts raging in the field of action and something else to hold them growling within the den of the heart. When they are confined in the cage of self-control, you see, even if they roar in temptation, they are not free to bite, as we have said, or to take any forbidden action. Accordingly, the beasts of the earth are peacemakers, because even

if the emotions of the body actively desire things, they do not really fight us or openly contradict our actions.

By the very fact that these beasts are called peace-makers, they can also be taken in the same sense we have already used concerning the evil spirits. Emotions of the body, you see, make peace for us with God when they resist us by temptation. The minds of the just are directed toward what is above, so they are tired out by the serious war they wage with their corruptible body. When the mind is hindered in its desire for heaven by pleasure in this world, even if that pleasure be relatively small, the mind is impelled by the very conflict of temptation to love with all its heart that which no resistance troubles. Then the person recalls interior silence to the mind and leaves the enticement of the flesh behind, sighing for that silence with pure love.

Temptation, you see, forces us all to consider the place from which we have fallen: after we abandoned God's peace, we found contention in ourselves rising against ourselves. Then we saw more clearly what we had lost, namely, carefree love of God; fallen therefore into ourselves, we discover that we are outraged against ourselves. Accordingly, the beasts of the earth make peace with us, because emotions of the body assail and provoke us, and in so doing they impel us to love interior silence. So we are rightly told next,

XXXIV. 53. *And you will know the peace that lives in your tent.** In Holy Scripture that peace that is called complete is one thing, and that which is only initial is something else. Truth gave his disciples initial peace when he said, *Peace I leave with you; my own peace I give you.** Simeon desired complete peace when he prayed, *Now, O Lord, you let your servant go in peace, according to your word.** Our peace is initiated by desire for the Creator but completed by the revelatory vision. It

* Job 5:24

* John 14:27

* Luke 2:29

will then be complete when our mind is not blinded by ignorance or alarmed by upheavals of the flesh. Since we are now talking about the initiating of peace, however, when we subject either the mind to God or the flesh to the mind, the tent of the just is said to have peace. This is obviously because in the body, where the mind dwells, the perverse excitement of desires is curbed by the guidance of justice. But what use is it to restrain the flesh by self-control unless the mind knows how to expand by compassion in the love of neighbor? There is no such thing as chastity of the flesh unprotected by a pleasant disposition. So after the peace of the tent we are rightly advised,

XXXV. 54. *When you visit your likeness, you will not sin.** The likeness of one person is another person. Our likeness is rightly called our neighbor, because we see in that one what we are ourselves. We reach our neighbor in a bodily visitation by footsteps; in a spiritual visitation, however, we are led not by our feet but by affection. Accordingly those who direct their loving steps to the people whom they see to be like themselves by nature visit their own likeness. Just as they see themselves in the others, so let them gather from themselves the knowledge of how to conform themselves to the weaknesses of the other people. Those who consider themselves in others so that they may remodel the others in themselves visit their own likeness. That is why Truth, in describing events through Moses, intimated what was yet to happen. Here is what he said: *The earth brought forth green plants, bearing their seed according to their kind; there were also trees bearing fruit, each one with its seed according to its kind.**

*Job 5:24

*Gen 1:12

Yes, the tree bears its seed according to its kind when the mind gathers consideration for another from itself and produces the fruit of good works. Thus a certain wise

man said, *What you would not want done to yourself, do not do to another.** Thus also the Lord said in the gospel, *As you wish men to act toward you, do you act toward them likewise.** He might have said openly, “Visit your likeness in the other person and find out from yourselves how to conduct yourselves toward others.” Thus also Paul said, *I became like a Jew to the Jews, so that I might gain the Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law although I was not under the law myself, so that I might help those who were under the law; to those outside the law I became like one outside the law, although I was not outside God’s law myself, but inside Christ’s law.* A little later he said, *I became all things to all men so that I might save them all.**

* 1 Cor
9:20-22

Now the famous preacher did not break faith so as to become a Jew, nor did he return to the sacrifice of animal flesh so as to be under the law, nor did he exchange the simplicity of his commitment for the variety of error so as to become all things to all men. Rather, he drew near to those without faith by condescension, though not by failing, so as to welcome them all in himself and transform himself into all of them; he wanted to be like them by compassion, in order that he might be what he rightly wished they would become. Thus he would the more truly hasten to the aid of any wanderer all the more effectively if he had learned his way of salvation from consideration of his own case. Accordingly it is well said, *When you visit your likeness, you will not sin.* Then sin is really overcome, you see, when all consider from their own likeness how they expand in the love of their neighbor. When therefore the flesh is restrained from vices, when the mind grows in virtues, it remains for each one to speak and teach that life that his or her example proves. Those who first sow the seed of good works gather abundant fruit from their preaching.

Then comes the follow-up after peace in the tent and visitation of our likeness:

XXXVI. 55. *You will know that you will have many descendants, and your offspring will be like grass on the earth.** Yes, after the peace of the tent and after the visitation of our likeness arise the many descendants of the just one, certainly because after the weakening of the members and the strengthening of moral virtue, the ability to preach the word is granted to him, and it is exceedingly fruitful, because it is preceded in his heart by the preparation of good practice. The person has eloquence and is a good speaker whose heart is enlarged through zeal for correct living, and such a one's conscience does not forbid speaking when life precedes the tongue. That is why the Egyptians at Joseph's direction became public slaves and humbly subjected themselves to the king's discretion; they even had enough grain to sow seed. Even we free people receive the fruits of the earth to eat when we feed on the word of God, and that we also have an appetite for the things of this world appears in our wandering about in search of pleasure. But when we are enslaved we also receive grain for seed, because when we are fully subject to God we are also filled with the word of preaching.

*Job 5:25

And because a numerous posterity of faithful people follows once the ability to do holy preaching is obtained, after the multiplication of posterity we are told, *Your offspring will be like grass on the earth.* The offspring of the just are likened to the grass on the ground, because the one who is born from their example and who abandons the withering fame of the present life grows up by hope into eternal life. Or at least the offspring of the just grow up like grass, because they demonstrate in life what they assert in preaching, with the result that an uncountable multitude of followers arises. On the

other hand, anyone who already scorns worldly desires, anyone who goes out of self to perform the acts of an external ministry, is never satisfied with doing great things externally except by being able also to penetrate internal secrets by contemplation. So Eliphaz rightly adds the following verse,

XXXVII. 56. *You will enter the tomb with abundance, as it is accumulated in its time.** What is expressed by the word for tomb unless the contemplative life? The contemplative life buries us away from the world; it receives us from worldly desires and hides us in its deep places. They were dead as far as external living is concerned and even buried through contemplation to whom Paul said, *You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** The active life is also a tomb because it hides us when we are dead from evil actions, but the contemplative life is a better tomb because it buries us far away from all worldly works. Accordingly, whoever has already rid the self of the importunities of the flesh still has to exercise the mind in the effort of acts of holiness. Whoever already trains the mind through holy activity still has to extend this training until reaching the mysteries of interior contemplation. The person is no perfect preacher, you see, who either neglects the work that should be done out of eagerness for contemplation or puts off the work of contemplation because of the urgency of labor.

That is why Abraham buried his dead wife in a double tomb.*¹ All perfect preachers, you see, unquestionably bury their souls, which are dead to the desires of the present life, under the covering of good works and contemplation. They do this in order that their souls

* see
Gen 23:19

¹ The Vulgate text followed by Saint Gregory has *duplici* instead of *Machpelah*, which is a proper noun.

may lie hidden underneath an active and contemplative life, virtually without feelings from concupiscence of the flesh, although previously their souls were sensible of worldly desire and lived a mortal life. Accordingly, the Redeemer of the human race performed miracles in the city during the day, and he spent the night on the mountain in assiduous prayer,* obviously in order to form perfect preachers and teach them never to abandon activity in favor of a love of contemplation or to scorn the joy of contemplation because of excessive involvement in activity. They should rather silently absorb in contemplation what they would pour out in speech when occupied for their neighbors' sake. By contemplation, indeed, we reach the love of God, but by preaching we again profit our neighbor.

* see Luke
5:12-19

So according to Moses, when a heifer is slaughtered and sacrificed, it is prescribed that it be offered with hyssop and cedarwood and scarlet wool dipped twice.* As for the heifer, we certainly slaughter it when we extinguish unbridled pleasure in our flesh. We offer this flesh with hyssop, cedarwood, and scarlet wool, because along with the slaughtering of our flesh we offer the sacrifice of faith, hope, and charity. Hyssop indeed usually cleanses our internal dispositions. With Peter we say, *He cleaned their hearts by faith.** As for the cedarwood, it never decays, because hope in heaven is unending. That is why Peter says again, *He has given us a new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, an incorruptible, unspoiled, and unfading inheritance.**

* see Num
19:6

* Acts 15:9

* 1 Pet 1:3-4

Scarlet wool has a flamelike red color, because charity sets on fire the one whom it fills. So also Truth says in the gospel, *I came to set the earth on fire.** Yet we are directed to offer the scarlet wool dipped twice, obviously because our charity should be colored by

* Luke 12:49

the love of God and of neighbor in the presence of our interior judge. As far as that goes, the converted mind should not prefer peace and quiet for the sake of loving God in such a way as to put off caring and doing good for the neighbor. Nor should one be so devoted to one's job for the love of the neighbor as to abandon peace and quiet altogether and put out the fire of the love of God that is within. Those therefore who have already offered themselves as a sacrifice to God, if they want perfection, should make sure that they not only exercise themselves in hard work but also try to reach the summit of contemplation.

57. Nevertheless, these matters urgently require careful consideration, because the various elements are distributed unevenly among different souls. Some people, you see, have such sluggish minds that if they are given a job to do, they barely begin it before they give it up. Some, on the other hand, are so restless that when they have a respite from their work they work all the harder, because the more freely their thoughts range, the more serious are the disturbances their hearts endure. Therefore the mind at rest should not let itself get stirred up for excessive work, nor should the restless mind let itself contract in zeal for contemplation. Calm people, you see, could often engage in contemplation, but because they were forced to engage in activity, they gave it up. On the other hand, those who could have lived a useful life involved in actions for the good of others were stopped by the sword of their own retirement. That is why some restless spirits search out more by contemplation than they understand, and they even go so far as to teach erroneous doctrines; they disdain to be humble disciples of truth and make themselves teachers of error.

So Truth himself has said, *If your right eye scandalizes you, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to be thrown into the fire of hell with two eyes.** When the two lives, active and contemplative, are kept in mind, they are like the two eyes we have in our face. The right eye is the contemplative life, and the left the active. But as we have said, some people simply cannot perceive the highest spiritual realities by discretion, and yet they assume the heights of contemplation. So they fall into the pit of faithlessness, deceived by the error of false understanding. Accordingly, the contemplative life causes them to fall away from the truth, because they took it up beyond their means, but the active life alone could have kept them in their humble state of righteousness. Truth rightly told them what we have already quoted: *If your right eye scandalizes you, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to be thrown into the fire of hell with two eyes.* He could have said more clearly, “When you are unable to live the contemplative life because you lack sufficient discretion, it is safer for you to stick to the active life alone. When you fall away from that which you choose because it is greater, be content with what you count as of lesser value, in order that if you are forced to lose the knowledge of truth gained by living the contemplative life, you might at least enter the kingdom of heaven with one eye through the active life alone.”

*Matt 18:9

The Lord says somewhere else, *He who scandalizes one of these little ones who believe in me should have a millstone hung from his neck and be thrown into the ocean.** What is meant by the ocean unless it is the world? What by a millstone but earthly actions? Such actions bind the neck of the mind tightly with

*Matt 18:6

stupid desires and thereby fasten the mind to a cycle of labor. Some people, you see, abandon earthly actions and humility as well, and they rise to the effort of contemplation beyond their intellectual ability; in so doing they not only fall into error themselves but also separate some weak souls from the bosom of unity. Accordingly, anyone who scandalizes one of the little ones would have been better dealt with by having a millstone tied to the neck and being thrown into the ocean. In other words, it might have been easier for a vulgar mind to occupy itself with the world and work at earthly tasks than to try itself in contemplation and be free to ruin many people. On the other hand, if the contemplative life were not more fitting for some souls than the active, the Lord would never have said through the psalmist, *Be quiet and see that I am God.**

*Ps 45:11
Vulg

58. Nevertheless we must remember that love often moves slow minds to action and that fear restrains restless minds and holds them in contemplation. Weighty fear, you see, anchors the heart, which is frequently shaken by the winds of thoughts but held fast by the chains of its self-discipline. No, the storm of its own restlessness does not pull the heart to shipwreck, because perfect charity ties it to the beach of divine love. Therefore, those who are in a hurry to apply themselves to contemplation should first ask themselves carefully about the extent of their love. The power of love is indeed the mind's vehicle; it draws the mind away from the world, and in that act it raises it on high.

Such seekers should first solve this question: Do they seek the heights with love? Do they love with fear? Do they know how to understand the unknown by love or to venerate it by fear when they do not understand? If love, you see, does not arouse the mind to contemplation, its lukewarm inactivity depresses it. If fear does not

weigh upon the mind, feeling lifts it through vanity to the cloud of error. If the closed door of mysteries later opens for it, it is thrust farther away from that door by very presumption. Because fear wants to break in, it does not find what it seeks. When the mind grows proud, instead of truth it perceives error; then it is like a person who intends to step inside and ends up outside.

That is why when the Lord was about to give the law, he descended in fire and smoke.* He sheds light on the humble people through the glory of his revelation, and he blinds the eyes of the proud through the darkness of error. And so the mind must first have all its longing for present honor and all its desire for pleasure of the flesh wiped away; only then can it be raised to the sphere of contemplation. That is why the people were not allowed on the mountain when they received the law; their minds were still weak, and they desired earthly possessions, so they could not presume to watch the higher realities. Rightly was it said, *If a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.** The beast touches the mountain when the mind that is given over to irrational desires tries to reach the high realities of contemplation. It is stoned to death because it does not endure the high places, and the very blows inflicted by the weight of the upper regions kill it.

59. Accordingly, those who try to reach the summit of perfection and want to hold the citadel of contemplation should first prove themselves in the arena of works through practice. They must really know that they inflict no evil on their neighbor anymore, that they calmly bear any evil inflicted on them by their neighbor, that joy at the reception of worldly goods does not weaken their resolution, that excessive sorrow at temporal loss does not dishearten them. Therefore they should consider when they commune with themselves inwardly that

* see Exod
19:18

*Heb 12:20;
see Exod
19:12-13

when they concern themselves with spiritual things, they should certainly bring no shred of bodily reality along, or if perchance they do, they should rid themselves of it with their skill at discernment. If they desire to see the unending light, they must cast out all the images surrounding them, and if they long to touch that which is above them, they must stop being what they are. So Eliphaz says right here, *You will enter the tomb with abundance.** That is so. The perfect one enters the tomb with abundance because of first gathering works in an active life and afterward in contemplation by effectively hiding the bodily senses from this world, since it is then dead. So Eliphaz rightly adds, *as accumulated in its time.*

*Job 5:26

60. The time for action, you see, comes first, the time for contemplation last. Therefore, all the perfect must first train their mind to virtue; later they may rest their minds in the quiet harvest. That is why the man whom the legion of devils abandoned at the Lord's command sat at his Savior's feet and listened to his teaching; he wanted to leave his own home together with the one responsible for his safety, yet Truth himself, who had saved him, told him, *First go back home and proclaim all that God has done for you.** When, you see, we learn something of the knowledge of God, be it ever so little, we do not want to return to human affairs anymore, we refuse the burden of our neighbors' needs, we seek silent contemplation, and we desire nothing else but refreshment without labor. But after he has healed us, Truth sends us back home; he orders us to proclaim what has happened to us, obviously because the mind has first to work at perspiring labor and later to be refreshed in contemplation.

*Luke 8:39

61. That is why Jacob served for love of Rachel and received Leah instead. He was told, *It is not the custom*

in our country to allow the younger daughter to marry before the older. * Rachel means “seen beginning,” Leah “laborer.” What else can Rachel signify but the contemplative life, or Leah but the active? In contemplation indeed it is the beginning or God that is sought; in action there is labor and a heavy burden of needs. So Rachel is lovely but barren, whereas Leah is bleary but prolific. Obviously, when the mind desires leisure for contemplation, it sees more but bears fewer children for God. On the other hand, when it undertakes the labor of preaching, it sees less but bears more.* After embracing Leah, therefore, Jacob finally gets Rachel, because every perfect person is first united with the fruitfulness of the active life and later embraces the repose of contemplation. The words of the holy gospel show us that contemplation is indeed less than action in time but greater in merit.

*Gen 29:26

* children

In the gospel, you see, we are told of the different behavior of two women. Mary was actually listening to our Redeemer’s words as she sat at his feet, while Martha was busy with her service. But when Martha complained about Mary’s disengagement, she was told, *Martha, Martha, you are concerned and troubled a great deal, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the best role, and she will not be deprived of it.** What is meant by Mary, who sits and listens to the Lord’s words, but the contemplative life? What does Martha, who is occupied with external service, signify but the active life? Martha’s solicitude is not censured, but Mary’s role is praiseworthy. Great indeed is the value of active life, but contemplation is better, so Mary’s role is said never to be taken away. Whereas the works of the active life disappear with the body, the joys of contemplation wax greater with the end of this life.

*Luke 10:41-42

This truth is well, if briefly, expressed by the prophet Ezekiel as he contemplates the flying animals and says,

*The likeness of a man's hand was underneath their wings.** Ezek 10:8 What else can we perceive in the animals' wings but the saints' contemplation, by which saints fly up to the highest heaven? They abandon earth and hover in heaven. And what do we understand by the hands other than work? When our hands are stretched out, you see, for love of our neighbor, they distribute even the material goods with which they abound. But their hands are beneath their wings because by virtue of their contemplation they surpass their works and actions.

62. The tomb can also be taken to mean, besides contemplation in this life of ours, the repose of our eternal and internal reward, which repose is all the more complete the more completely this corruptible life is done away with. The one who is completely dead to human changeability and buried in the secret place of the true light will enter the tomb with abundance after the accumulated works of the present life. So also the psalmist says, *You hide them in the hideout of your face from the commotion of men.** Ps 30:2 LXX This truth receives additional confirmation from the comparison that follows: *as accumulated in its time.* Grain sown in the field is touched by the sun because the human soul in this life is illuminated with respect to the heavenly light. It receives rain because it grows ripe from the word of truth. It is shaken by winds because it is tried by temptations. It has chaff growing with it because it has to bear the more worthless lives of sinners who contradict it every day. When it ends up on the threshing floor, it is pressed by the weight of other sheaves so that it may be relieved of the chaff that clings to it.

Because our mind is subject to the discipline of heaven, when it receives the blows of correction it leaves behind the companionship of carnal people, having itself been cleansed. Having rid itself of chaff, it is brought to

the granary, because the reprobates remain outside when the chosen soul is lifted up to the everlasting happiness of the mansion in heaven. So it is wisely said, *You will enter the tomb with abundance, as accumulated in its time.** After their affliction the just receive their reward in the heavenly fatherland; therefore it is as if the grain were being gathered into the barn after threshing. In some other time indeed they felt the threshing, but in their own time they are free of threshing. For a chosen soul the other time is certainly the present life; so to those still without faith Truth said, *My time has not yet come, but your time is always at hand.** Somewhere else he said, *This is your hour and the power of darkness.** You will enter the tomb, then, as the grain is accumulated in its time, because the one who has first felt the threshing discipline here receives eternal rest in order to be relieved of the chaff that must be burned.

*Job 5:26

*John 7:6

*Luke 22:53

Eliphaz has now mentioned in the course of his speech tent, stones, beasts, seed, grass, and tomb. But he has not used these words literally, as he indicates himself when he adds after them all in the same place,

XXXVIII. 63. *Behold, this is true, as we have discovered.** It is perfectly obvious that in these words Eliphaz has said nothing superficial, because what is discussed is not what is before one's face. One who says he has discovered these things shows having sought deep things with ordinary words. Nevertheless, after all that Eliphaz ends up in the stupidity of boasting when he immediately adds,

*Job 5:27

XXXIX. 64. *Now you have heard it; let your mind study it.** With however much doctrine the mind waxes great, it is serious ignorance on anyone's part to want to teach a greater mind. Therefore while Job's friends indeed spoke the truth, what they said is judged unjust by the interior judge. They lose the power of their own

*Job 5:27

truth because they are not adapted to the hearer, since when medicine is applied to healthy limbs it loses its curative power. Accordingly, in all that we say it is necessary to take into account the occasion, the time, and the person; we must know if the truth of the statement corroborates the words, we must know if a convenient time demands the statement, we must know whether the person's merit does not assail both the truth of the statement and the fittingness of the time. A person, you see, shoots an arrow in a praiseworthy manner who first looks at the enemy at whom it is shot. Warriors bend the bow in a wicked manner when they aim the arrow and let it fly to hit a fellow citizen.