

PREFACE

I. 1. The question is often asked, who was the author of the book of blessed Job? Some have thought that Moses, others that one of the prophets, wrote this book. Because we find in the book of Genesis* that there was a Jobab who was a descendant of Esau and a successor of King Bela, son of Beor, they thought that this blessed Job lived long before the time of Moses. This is a misunderstanding of the way of speaking of Sacred Scripture; for in the early parts it mentions briefly the events that are to come to pass much later, being more concerned about recounting other events more precisely. That is why Jobab is mentioned before there were kings in Israel. He who is said to have lived in the time of the Judges of Israel is certainly not thought to have lived before the Law.

Some carelessly assume that Moses wrote down the story of Job as a man who had lived long before him; they think that he who could write down the precepts of the Law for our instruction should be credited also with having given us examples of virtue from the life of a man who was a Gentile. Others, as we have just said, think that the author of this book is one of the prophets; they assert that no mere human could write down such mysterious words of God but only one whose mind had been raised to heaven by the spirit of prophecy.

2. The search for the author of this book is certainly a vain one, because we believe in truth that the author is the Holy Spirit. The author of a book is the one who dictated it. He wrote it who inspired it; the book is the

* Gen 36:32-33

record of his deeds left as an example for us to imitate, through the good offices of the writer. Suppose we receive a letter from some great person and we read the words but wonder by whose pen they were written; it would certainly be ridiculous, when we know who sent the letter and understand its import, to search out by what scribe the words in it were written down. Now, therefore, we know the book, and we know that its author is the Holy Spirit; so when we ask about the writer, what else are we doing but asking who the scribe is, whose words we are reading?

3. We may, however, have more reason to think that the same blessed Job who fought this spiritual battle also told of how he won the final victory. We should not be influenced by the fact that we find such words as "Job said" or "Job suffered so and so" in the book. It is the custom in Sacred Scripture for the writers to narrate their own deeds as though they were those of others. That is why Moses says, "Moses was the meekest man of all those who lived on earth."^{*} John says, "That disciple whom Jesus loved."^{*} And Luke says, "Two of his disciples were walking on the road, Cleophas and another disciple."^{*} This other disciple who so tactfully says no more indicates in this way, as some believe, that he was Luke himself.

Therefore, the writers of Holy Scripture give information about themselves in it as though they were speaking of others, because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit speaks of Moses through Moses, and the Holy Spirit speaks of John through John. Paul too insinuates that he is not speaking of himself when he says, "Do you want proof that it is Christ who speaks in me?"^{*} That is why the angel who is described as having appeared to Moses is sometimes called an angel and sometimes the Lord:^{*} an angel certainly, be-

cause he served as an external voice, but he is called the Lord because, acting from within, he made the speaking effective. Therefore, the speaker is guided from within, and he is called *angel* because obedient and *Lord* because inspiring.

Thus David says, "Pay attention, my people, to my law; listen to the words of my mouth."^{*} It is not a question of David's law or David's people; rather, David plays the role of him for whom he speaks; he speaks by his authority, and it was he who inspired him. We see this happen in the church every day, if only we are alert enough to notice it. For the reader stands up in the midst of the people and proclaims, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."^{*} He certainly does not pretend to be God himself, but in expressing himself in this way he is not far from the truth. With his voice he proclaims God's dominion; it is before God that he performs his function as reader.

^{*}Exod 3:6

Therefore, the writers of Sacred Scripture are placed above themselves because they have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are in a way taken out of themselves, so that they speak of themselves as though they were speaking of others. Therefore, blessed Job, filled with the Holy Spirit, could write of his own deeds as though they were not his, and in fact they were gifts of divine inspiration. The deeds he spoke of belonged to someone else, precisely because a person spoke of the things of God; and another spoke of his deeds, precisely because the Holy Spirit spoke of the things proper to humankind.

II. 4. But now we must put this aside and apply ourselves to the consideration of the events of sacred history. Each person, by the very fact of being human, must know the Creator. The more we think we are nothing of ourselves, the more we subject ourselves to God's

^{*}Ps 78:2

^{*}Num 12:3

^{*}John 19:26;
21:10

^{*}see Luke
24:13, 18

^{*}2 Cor 13:3

^{*}Exod 3:2-4

virtue. What such a person had willingly hidden within in untroubled times is made known when aroused by the trials. And so the prophet also spoke the truth: "The Lord sends his mercy by day, and makes it known at night."* For the mercy of the Lord is sent out by day because it is received and known in untroubled times; it is declared at night because the gift received in peace is clearly seen in times of trial.

*Ps 41:9

III. 7. Let us look a little deeper and ask ourselves why Job underwent so many trials when he practiced virtue so diligently and was above reproach. He was certainly humble, for he testifies of himself, "I did not consider it demeaning to answer my male or female slave when they complained against me."* He also maintains that he showed hospitality, saying, "The pilgrim did not remain outside, but the entrance to my house lay open for the traveler."* He was an upholder of discipline, as he indicates, saying, "Princes stopped in midspeech and put their hands on their mouths."* He tempered strictness with kindness, saying, "I sat like a king with his army standing around, yet I was the comforter of the afflicted."* He showed generosity in almsgiving, as he intimates in saying, "I did not eat my bread alone, but shared it with the orphan."*

*Job 31:13

*Job 31:32

*Job 29:9

*Job 29:25

*Job 31:17

Therefore, although he fulfilled injunctions to observe all the virtues, he needed one thing more: to give thanks to God even in the midst of trials. He was well known as a man who could serve God in the midst of his gifts, but it was fitting that a stern regime should discover whether his devotion to God would endure in the midst of trials. Pain, indeed, is the test of the true love of any peaceful person. The enemy asked for Job so that he might trip him up; his petition was granted, but only so that he might make further progress. The Lord in his kindness allowed to happen what the devil in his wick-

edness asked for. The enemy had claimed Job in order to consume him, but in tempting him he only obtained the increase of his merits. For it is written, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."* Some of the language in his answers may indeed sound bitter to ignorant readers who do not know enough to understand the words of saints in the pious way in which they were spoken. They are unable to interiorize the sentiments of the suffering just man, and so they are unable to interpret the words of pain correctly. Only the compassionate person can in truth know the mind of the sufferer.

*Job 1:22

8. They are careless readers, therefore, who think that blessed Job sinned in his speeches, because if they find fault with the answers of blessed Job, they also say that God's judgment of him was false. For God says to the devil, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is none on earth like him. He is a blameless and upright man, who fears God and avoids evil."* The devil is quick to reply, "Does Job fear God fruitlessly? You have built a wall around him, his house, and all his possessions. . . . Just reach out and touch him, and see if he does not curse you to your face!"*

*Job 1:8

*Job 1:9-11

The enemy, then, set himself to attack Job, but actually the battle he undertook was against God. Blessed Job himself was the battleground where God fought the devil. And whoever says that holy Job sinned with his lips when placed in the midst of trials, what else is he doing but baiting God his Sponsor with having lost his bet? For he, God, willed to take up the cause of the one tempted, having put him forward before he was tried and allowing the trials to take place. If, then, Job is said to have missed the mark, his Backer is also claimed to have lost; besides, God's gifts to Job testify to his innocence. For everyone knows that the recompense for sin is not reward but punishment. When a person earns

* see
Job 42:10

the reward of a double restitution of what was lost,* the moral is that all his words were virtuous and not sinful.

To this argument may be added the fact that Job interceded for his friends who had sinned. Anyone in a state of serious sin does not wash away somebody else's sin, because he is burdened by his own. The fact that he could obtain remission for someone else's guilt shows that he was free of guilt himself.

If, however, someone is put off by the fact that Job tells the story of his own virtues, let us remember that, besides the loss of all his possessions, besides the many wounds on his body, besides mourning for the death of his children, with his friends coming to console him and turning to reproach, he was led to despair of life itself. Already afflicted by so many sufferings, he was wounded by insulting words as well. Those who had come to cheer him started to accuse him as though he were a criminal and forced him to give up all hope for himself. Therefore, when he recalls his good actions he is not boasting or lifting himself up, but he is recalling his soul to hope when prostrate with wounds and insulting words. He was wounded by the cruel spear of despair, persecuted by the trials occasioned by God's wrath, and pursued by insults from the tongues of those outside.

Therefore, blessed Job, wounded by many arrows of pain, feared that insults would shake his resolve, so he recalled himself to a state of confidence by reminding himself of his former life. By no means did he fall into the vice of arrogance, for he fought against the internal temptation to despair by means of the words he spoke in praise of himself; he spoke of the good things he had done so that he might not lose hope of the good he had desired.

IV. 9. Now let us follow the temptations in the order in which they occurred. The enemy in a rage determined

to attack the holy man's invincible courage, and he set up against him all the artillery of his temptations. He took away all his possessions and killed his children. He struck at his body and instigated his wife against him. He sent his friends to console him and then incited them to bitter invective. He kept until last the fourth friend, whose insults were harsher and wounded Job more deeply. He hoped to reach his heart by repeated blows, with one wound following another. Because he saw that Job was influential in the world, he thought the loss of his possessions would dislodge him; then he struck him with the death of his ten children, but Job did not budge.

From that wound that made him childless he even gained strength to praise God more; seeing this, Satan asked permission to strike his body with sickness. When he realized that he could not touch Job's conscience by causing pain in his body, he instigated his wife against him. In fact, he found that the city he wanted to attack was too strongly fortified. That is why he sent so many plagues against him, as though leading armies against an enemy, and then inflamed the mind of his wife with perverse speech, as though corrupting the hearts of the people inside the city.

We learn from our external battles what we should do about our internal ones. The enemy in a rage surrounds the city, forming a wall with his army, and if he sees that the city wall is still holding up, he changes his strategy and tries to win over the hearts of the people inside the city. In the same measure that he stirs up the besiegers outside, he also uses his sympathizers inside, and as the battle rages fiercer without, he counts all the more on the traitors inside to make the city fall into his hands.

10. Therefore Satan made himself like a ram and beat upon the wall of the city with as many blows as

BOOK I

I. 1. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job."* We are told where the holy man lived in order that we may realize the full extent of his virtue. For everybody knows that Uz is Gentile country, and Gentile country is enslaved to vices for the simple reason that it does not know God its Creator. We are therefore told where he lived in order that it might redound to his honor that he was a good man living among bad men. 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. 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. Therefore, this same blessed Job is a witness for himself when he says, "I was a brother of snakes and a companion of birds."¹

* Job 1:1

* Job 30:29

¹ It is necessary to justify this translation, since most modern translations have *jackals* and *ostriches* instead of *snakes* and *birds*. Since I am translating Latin, not Hebrew, I will confine myself to the Vulgate (*Biblia sacra juxta vulgata[m] versionem*, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Robert Weber [Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975]) and its line of descent. To take *draco* first, both *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (5th ed., ed. D. P. Simpson [New York: Macmillan, 1968]) and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (ed. P. G. W. Glare [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982]) translate it by *snake* or *dragon*. Since dragons are mythical creatures and ordinarily seen only in or near large bodies of water, and, more to the point as far as Latin is concerned, ordinarily the word *serpens*, not *draco*, is used, and *draco* is attested by all the extant witnesses of the Vulgate, I consider myself justified in the translation *snake*. It is true that the Douai version (most recent printing, authorized by James Cardinal Gibbons [Baltimore: John Murphy,

Therefore also, Peter praises Lot to the skies for having been good among wicked people: "He rescued the righteous Lot, when he was oppressed by the sinful life of criminals. Lot was a just man by seeing and hearing, but he lived among those who tortured his righteous soul by their wicked acts, which they committed every day."* 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 by seeing and by hearing, because the evil lives of his neighbors reached his eyes and ears, at which news he felt not pleasure but aversion. Paul too says to his disciples, "You live in the midst of a wicked and unjust people, and you shine out among them like the heavenly lights which shine on the world."*

* Phil 2:15

Again, the angel of the church at Pergamum is told, "I know where you live: in the land ruled by Satan; yet you hold fast to my name, and you have not denied your faith in me."* Holy Church is also praised by her Bridegroom in the Canticle of love: "Like a lily among thorns is my loved one among the daughters."* And so blessed Job is rightly described as one who had lived among wicked people when Gentile country is mentioned, so that as the Bridegroom has proclaimed, he

* Rev 2:13

* Song 2:2

1899], reprinted by TAN Books and Publishers [Rockford, IL, 1971]) has "I was the brother of dragons," but since that version is no longer considered authoritative or binding, I do not consider myself bound to follow it. As regards the word *struthio* (gen. pl. *struthionum*), both Cassell's and Oxford attest *sparrows*. Sparrows being such a widespread and commonly seen species of bird even in the ancient world, it seems legitimate to consider them synonymous with the genus itself and translate as *bird*, all the more since it is in synonymous parallelism with *snake*, which is also a genus. To clinch the matter, both Oxford and Cassell's use the word *struthiocamelus* to translate *ostrich*.

may be shown to have grown like a lily among thorns. Therefore he is right to add,

II. 2. "He was blameless and upright."* For there are people who are so simple that they do not know what it is to be law-abiding! Yet they abandon that innocence that true simplicity denotes, because they do not reach the virtue of being law-abiding. Why? Since they do not know how to be careful (with knowledge taught by being law-abiding), they can hardly remain innocent and simple. Therefore Paul warns his disciples, "I want you to be wise as regards what is good, but simple as regards what is evil."* For the same reason he says, "Do not behave like children; be like children when it comes to malice."*

* Job 1:1

* Rom 16:19

* 1 Cor 14:20

Therefore, the Truth himself commanded his disciples, "Be as prudent as snakes and as simple as doves."* For both virtues are needed for complete instruction, so that the snake's cleverness may inform the dove's simplicity and, on the other hand, the dove's simplicity may soften the snake's cleverness. That is why the Holy Spirit made his presence known to people not only by means of the dove but also by means of fire. For the dove symbolizes simplicity, and fire symbolizes zeal. Therefore, he appears in the dove and in fire, because all those who are filled by the Holy Spirit administer his meekness and simplicity in such a way that they are also on fire with the zeal of being law-abiding against the shortcomings of the disobedient.

* Matt 10:6

III. 3. This follows: "He feared God and avoided evil."* To fear God is not to leave any good deed undone. That is why Solomon says, "He who fears God neglects nothing."* Since, however, there are those who do certain good deeds in such a way that they by no means keep themselves from certain evils, we are also told that Job avoided evil. It is certainly written, "Leave

* Job 1:1

* Eccl 7:19
Vulg

Ps 36:27 evil and do good." For good deeds are not acceptable to God when they are defiled in his eyes by an admixture of evil. Therefore Solomon says, "He who commits one offense loses the value of many good deeds."* Then James too asserts, "Whoever keeps the whole Law but disobeys one stipulation is guilty of the whole Law."* Paul, again, says, "A little yeast ruins the whole batch of dough."* And so in order that the total extent of blessed Job's holiness in prosperity might be revealed, how far he was from any taint is cleverly pointed out.

4. The announcers of wrestling matches ordinarily describe the limbs of the combatants first, how broad and strong their chests are, how healthy they look, how their muscles bulge, how their lower belly neither burdens them with its weight nor hinders them by its small size. When they have first shown how well poised the limbs of their bodies are for the fight, then at last they give a blow-by-blow description of their great strength in action. Therefore, since our champion is to fight the devil, as though he were standing in the arena before a vast audience, the writer of sacred history lists the champion's spiritual virtues; as if he were describing the powers of his soul, he says, "He was blameless and upright, and he feared God and avoided evil."* So once we know his great fitness, we may already foresee his victory following from his fitness.

IV. 5. This follows: "Seven sons and three daughters were born to him."* The abundance of children often tempts the parent's heart to avarice. For the parent is consumed with desire for the accumulation of an inheritance by the very fact of being blessed with many heirs. And so, in order that the holy soul of blessed Job might be shown in the best light, he is called just, and we are told that he was the father of many children. In the very beginning of the book that bears his name, it is asserted

that he was devoted to the offering of sacrifices, and he himself remembers afterward that he was generous in donations. Let us consider the extent of the fortitude of this man who had so many children and yet whose affection for them did not press him to exercise stern control over the inheritance.

V. 6. This follows: "He possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and a large number of slaves."* We know that great losses cause the mind to undergo greater pain. We are told, then, that Job patiently suffered many losses in order that we might clearly see the extent of his virtue. For nothing is ever lost painlessly unless it is possessed without fondness. And so since his large property holdings are described and yet a little later we are told that he lost them patiently and painlessly, it follows that his possessions were held without attachment. It is also worth mentioning that the richness of his heart was described before his material riches. For the abundance of material possessions ordinarily makes the soul lose its fear of God, and this is all the more likely the more such abundance forces the mind to focus on various things. For when the mind is pulled in many different directions, it cannot remain centered in itself. That is what Truth himself alluded to when he explained the parable of the sower: "He who sowed among thorns is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deception of riches choke the word and make it ineffective."* Now we are told that blessed Job had many possessions, but we are also told a little later that he was often at the altar offering sacrifices to God.

7. Let us reflect, then, on the holiness of this man who, despite his many concerns, gave himself up to such constant attentiveness to God. The value of the

*Ps 36:27

*Ecc 9:18

*Jas 2:10

*1 Cor 5:6

*Job 1:1

*Job 1:2

*Job 1:3

*Matt 13:22

precept that counsels us to leave all things had not yet been revealed, and yet blessed Job already kept the equivalent of that counsel in his heart, for he certainly with a tranquil heart gave up the property he had owned without gratification.

VI. 8. "Yes, Job was the greatest of the Easterners."* Everybody knows that the Easterners are the richest people in the world. That Job was the greatest of the Easterners, therefore, if we dare say it outright, means that he was the richest of the rich.

VII. 9. "His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other's houses, each one taking his turn. They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them."* Ordinarily great riches are a source of serious rivalry between brothers. That the father is said to be a rich man, therefore, and that there was harmony among his sons, proclaim inestimable praise for the father who taught them. Although there was an inheritance to be divided among them, the hearts of all of them were united and had room only for love.

VIII. 10. "When the banqueting days had run their course, Job would send for them to purify them; rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one."* When it says, "Job would send for them to purify them," it clearly shows how strict he could be in their presence by his concern about them when absent. We must now focus carefully on the fact that, when the days of feasting were over, Job had recourse to ritual purification by holocaust for every single day. The holy man certainly knew that banquets could hardly ever be held guiltlessly. He knew that the revelry of banquets must be cleansed by purification through many sacrifices, and therefore, as their father, he offered sacrifice and washed away any defilement they had incurred in their banquets. The vices that are almost inseparable from banquets, or rather

* Job 1:3

* Job 1:4

* Job 1:5

absolutely inseparable, are certainly not inconsiderable. Pleasure is almost always connected with banquets. For while the body is reclining and enjoying the food, the heart too is relaxed in vain delights. That is why the Scripture says, "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to play."*

11. Banquets are nearly always followed by conversation, and once the belly is filled, the tongue is loosed. Therefore, the rich man is correctly described as asking for water in hell: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tortured in this flame."* First, we are told that he dined richly every day, and then he is said to request water for his tongue. Since, as we have said, talk flows freely at meals, the punishment indicates the crime, for the one who had feasted sumptuously every day, as Truth has told us, is said to feel the pain most intensely on his tongue.

Those who play musical instruments often ply their art so well that one plucked string can cause another string to vibrate, even though its position may be far removed from that of the first, with many strings between them; thus, when the former string gives a sound, the latter, played in the same song, vibrates, although the other strings have not been touched. So too Sacred Scripture often treats of virtues in the same way as it treats of vices, namely, that while speaking directly of one it speaks tacitly of another. For nothing is said against the rich man on the subject of talkativeness; nevertheless, when we are told of his punishment in the tongue, that sin is indicated that is more serious than all the others committed at banquets.

12. Remember that we were told the seven brothers each held banquets on a separate day and that when the banqueting days had run their course, Job was said

*Exod 32:6;
1 Cor 10:7

*Luke 16:24

to offer seven sacrifices; in this way the sacred history clearly teaches us that in offering sacrifice on the eighth day, blessed Job celebrated the mystery of the resurrection. For the day we now call the Lord's Day is the third from the Redeemer's death, but in the order of creation it is the eighth, and it is also the first day of creation. It follows the seventh in the cycle, and so it is rightly called the eighth. Therefore, he who is said to offer seven sacrifices on the eighth day, full of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, is taught to have celebrated the Lord's resurrection in hope. And so the psalm bears the inscription "for the eighth day,"* because the joy of the resurrection is proclaimed in it. But since we are informed that blessed Job's sons were brought up so strictly and taught so well that neither by word nor by deed did they commit any sin in their banquets, the text continues,

IX.13. "For he said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.'"* He proclaimed them perfect in word and deed, for it was only their thoughts the father was worried about. Nevertheless, we know that we should not rashly judge another person's heart from the words of this holy man. He did not say, "They cursed God in their hearts," but "*perhaps* they cursed God in their hearts." Accordingly, Paul was right to say, "Do not judge before the time, before the coming of the Lord, who will shed light on the dark and hidden things, and reveal the secrets of the heart."* Whenever a person's thoughts stray from the moral norm, that person sins in darkness. We ought all the more to refrain from rash judgments of other people's hearts when we know we cannot light up the dark places for us to see their thoughts. We ought, however, to take careful notice of this: how severely the father could correct what his sons were doing when he took such care to purify their hearts.

*see Ps 6:1;
11:1 Vulg

* Job 1:5

* 1 Cor 4:5

What do the leaders of the church say to this when they do not even know what their disciples do openly? What excuses do they think up in their own defense when they do not even heal the interior wounds in those committed to them, brought on by their own actions?

Now then, so that Job's perseverance in this holy work may be clearly shown, the writer is correct to add,

X. 14. "Job acted this way all his life."* It is indeed written, "He who perseveres to the end will be saved."* The sacrifice represents the holiness of Job's conduct, and the total number of the days of the sacrifice shows his perseverance in that holy conduct.

We have briefly followed the story up to this point; now the order of our exposition requires us to return to the beginning and point out the secret allegories.

XI. 15. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job."* We believe what happened in the story, but now let us see the fulfillment through the allegorical sense. As we have already said, Job's name means *one who suffers*, and *Uz* is interpreted as *counselor*. Whom, therefore, does blessed Job's name signify, unless it be him of whom the prophet says, "He took on himself our sufferings"?* He lived in the land of Uz, for he ruled the hearts of the people of counsel and judged them. Paul certainly says, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."* Wisdom herself spoke through Solomon: "I, Wisdom, dwell in counsel, and I am to be found among learned thoughts."* Job, therefore, dwells in the land of Uz, for Wisdom, who bore the sufferings of the passion for us, made the hearts of those dedicated to the counsels of life his own habitation.

XII. 16. "He was blameless and upright."* Upright-ness stands for justice, but blamelessness for meekness. When we are trying to cultivate uprightness and justice, we usually forsake meekness; when we wish to practice

* Job 1:5

* Matt 10:22;
24:13

* Job 1:1

* Isa 53:4

* 1 Cor 1:24

* Prov 8:12

* Job 1:1

meekness, we leave justice and uprightness behind. The incarnate Lord, however, had both blamelessness and uprightness, for his meekness did not lack strict justice, nor on the other hand did his strict justice lack the virtue of meekness. And so, when certain people led an adulteress to him, trying to get him to offend against either meekness or justice, his answer satisfied both: "Let the sinless one among you be the first to stone her."* The words "the sinless one among you" satisfy blamelessness and meekness; the words "let him be the first to stone her" satisfy zeal for justice. That is why the prophet says, "For the sake of truth, meekness, and justice, set out, prosper, and reign."* In search of truth he keeps meekness and justice together, so that the weight of meekness may not make him lose his zeal for justice, nor on the other hand should he free himself from the weight of meekness to keep his zeal for justice.

*John 8:7

*Ps 44:5

*Job 1:1

*Isa 11:3

XIII. 17. "He feared God and avoided evil."* It is written of him, "He will be full of the spirit of the fear of God."* For the incarnate Lord exemplified in himself all that he inspired us with, in order that his own example might persuade us to fulfill the injunction of the precept. In keeping with our human nature, therefore, our Redeemer feared God, since in order that he might redeem proud human beings, he took upon himself a humble mien for their sakes. This action of his is nicely symbolized by the fact that Job is said to avoid evil. He indeed avoided evil, not in the sense that he could have done what was evil, but in the sense that he upbraided evildoers wherever he found them. For he found the old life in human society when he was born, and he abandoned it, whereas he gave the new manner of life that he brought with him to his followers.

XIV. 18. "Seven sons and three daughters were born to him."* What does the number seven tell us, except

that it means high perfection? We do not need to invoke the explanations of the number seven given by human logic, namely, that it is the perfect number, because it is composed of two primary numbers, one even and one odd, one that is divisible and the other indivisible; it is enough simply to know that Sacred Scripture always uses the number seven to symbolize perfection. Thus we are told that the Lord rested on the seventh day from the work of creation. That is also why the seventh day, that is, the Sabbath, was given to the human race as a day of rest.* Therefore also the year of jubilee symbolizes perfect rest, for it is attained after seven sevens and the gift of a final year.*

*see Gen 2:2-3

*see Lev 25:8

*Job 1:2

19. And so "seven sons were born."* They are obviously the apostles who went forth manfully to preach. As they put the counsels of perfection into practice, they lived the virtue of courage as an analogy of masculine strength. Therefore, twelve were chosen for the perfection implied in the seven gifts of grace. The number seven, indeed, has grown into twelve, for when we multiply its parts, we end up with twelve. Yes, whether it be four by three or three by four, seven becomes twelve. The holy apostles, then, were sent into the four regions of the world to preach the Trinity, because they were chosen as twelve, in order that that number might make clear the perfection they preached by their lives and their words.

*Job 1:2

20. "And three daughters were born."* What do we take the daughters to mean, unless it be those of the faithful who are weak? Although they are hardly strong and virtuous as regards the works of perfection, nevertheless they constantly hold the faith in the Trinity that they have learned. Job's seven sons, therefore, signify the preaching of the faith and his three daughters the multitude of those who listen. His three daughters may

be also taken to mean the three classes of the faithful. The three daughters were mentioned after the sons, for after the courageous apostles appeared, three different classes of the faithful followed in the life of the church: they were leaders, celibates, and married people.

And so the prophet Ezekiel said he knew of three men who were truly free: Noah, Daniel, and Job.* For what do we understand by Noah, who presided over the ark in the flood, unless it be the class of leaders? Since they make decisions on the manner of life of the faithful, they are considered rulers in Holy Church, guiding her through the waves of temptation. What does Daniel represent, unless it be the celibate life? For it is his marvelous abstinence about which we are informed, and celibates abandon worldly life and rule over Babylon below from the high places of their mind. What does Job signify, unless it be the good life of faithful married couples? They have worldly possessions and perform good works, and so they are like wayfarers on the roads of this world, traveling from that way of life to their eternal fatherland. Since, therefore, after the holy apostles, these three classes of the faithful came next, the three daughters of Job were correctly mentioned after the sons.

XV. 21. "He possessed seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels."** Since those who hear the word with faith have been gathered together from all walks of life, what we have said in a general way in commenting on the mention of Job's three daughters is now repeated in detail in relation to the enumeration of the animals. For what do the seven thousand sheep express, unless it be the perfect innocence that can be seen in certain people who come from the sheepfold of the law to the perfect grace of God? What are the three thousand camels if not the bent and defective nature of the Gentiles

* see
Ezek 14:20

** Job 1:3

who come to the fullness of faith? Sacred Scripture sometimes uses the name *camel* to refer to the Lord himself and sometimes to the people of the Gentiles. For the Lord is referred to by the use of the word *camel* when the Lord himself tells his Jewish adversaries, "You strain out the gnat and swallow the camel."* For the gnat wounds while it whippers, but the camel bends down of its own accord to bear burdens. The Jews, therefore, strained out the gnat when they asked that a rebel thief be freed; they swallowed the camel, however, when they actively cried out for the death of him who voluntarily came down to bear the burden of our mortality.

The word *camel* is also used for the people of the Gentiles. Therefore, when Rebecca came to Isaac, she rode on a camel's back,* for when the church hurried to Christ from the Gentile people, she was still living the old depraved and vice-ridden life. She descended from the camel when she saw Isaac, for when the Gentiles came to know the Lord they abandoned their vices, their pride, and their self-importance and sought out humility and lowliness. The veil of wretchedness covered her face, for her former life made her ashamed in front of him. The apostle of these Gentiles said to them, "What good did those things do you, of which you are now ashamed?"** Since, therefore, we take the sheep to mean the Hebrews who come to faith from the sheepfold of the law, there is no reason that we should not understand the camels as the depraved Gentiles, stuck on idol worship. For since the gods they worshiped were those they found among themselves, it was as though the burden they carried on their backs, and which had grown there, was themselves.

22. Since camels are common animals, they can also mean Samaritans. For camels indeed chew the cud, but their hooves are not cloven. Samaritans also chew the

* see
Gen 24:61

** Rom 6:21

cud in a way, since they obey a part of the law, and they are without cloven hooves in a way, since they hold part of the law in scorn. It is a heavy load, in fact, that they bear in their minds, for all the efforts they make are without the hope of eternal life. They have no faith at all in the resurrection. What indeed could be heavier or more burdensome than to bear the troubles of a passing world without any hope of reward to relieve the mind? However, the Lord appeared in flesh, filled the Hebrew people with the grace of striving for perfection, and led some of the Samaritans to know the faith by the miracles he worked; we may say, therefore, that the seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels possessed by Job were like a shadow expressing the reality.

XVI. 23. "Five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses."* We have already said above that the number fifty, made up of seven sevens and an added number one, signifies rest; the number ten, however, signifies high perfection. Since, therefore, the faithful people are promised perfect rest, it is as though the number fifty were multiplied by ten to reach the number five hundred. In Holy Scripture, however, sometimes the word for oxen signifies fools who only catch on slowly, and sometimes it signifies the life of good workmen. Solomon indeed tells us that *ox* is a metaphor for the sloth of fools: "They follow her straightway, just like oxen led away to the sacrifice."*

Prescriptions of the law, on the other hand, given through Moses, tell us that the word for oxen signifies the way of life of good workmen: "Do not muzzle an ox, when it is treading out the grain."* This is said more clearly elsewhere: "A workman deserves his pay."* The word for *ass*, too, sometimes signifies the sloth of fools, sometimes excessive luxury and laziness, and sometimes the simplicity of Gentiles. The word for *ass*

*Job 1:3

*Prov 7:22

*Deut 25:4

*Luke 10:7

signifies the sloth of fools, for example, when Moses says, "Do not plow with ox and ass yoked together."* He might as well have said, "Do not associate fools with the wise in preaching, lest you hinder the successful preacher by the disreputable one." Another interpretation of the word *ass* is the inordinate luxury of the indolent rich, as the prophet uses it: "Their flesh is like ass's flesh."*

The word for *ass* also expresses the simplicity of the Gentile peoples, as when the Lord rode an ass's colt on his journey to Jerusalem.* For what does it mean to go to Jerusalem riding an ass unless that by winning over the simple hearts of the Gentiles and leading them to the vision of peace, he became their Master? So then the oxen represent the Jews as workmen, and the asses represent the Gentile peoples; this is easily shown by one proof text, since the prophet says, "The ox knows his Owner, and the ass his Master's crib."* For who except the Jewish people is the ox, whose neck has been lowered by the yoke of the law? Who except the Gentile people is the ass, the dumb animal found by any seducer, irrational and unresisting, to be burdened with any error he pleases? The ox, therefore, knew his owner, and the ass his master's crib, since the Hebrew people found God, whom they worshiped unknowingly, and the Gentile people accepted the fodder of the law, which it did not have. What has been said above, therefore, about the words for sheep and camels, is repeated here for oxen and asses.

24. Now there were oxen in Jerusalem before the coming of the Redeemer, for laborers had been sent out to preach, and about these Truth says, "Woe to you hypocrites, for you go all around the land and the sea to make a single proselyte, and once you have made one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as

*Deut 22:10

*Ezek 23:20

*see
Matt 21:5

*Isa 1:3

both Head and Body, both Christ and the Church. Now that we believe how our Head was prefigured, we will show how his Body, which we are, is expressed. We have heard from the story what should impress us, and we know from the Head what we should believe; now we will learn from the Body how we should live. For we ought to change our own lives in accordance with what we read, since the soul is alerted through the sense of hearing so that we may put into practice in our lives what we have heard.

XXV. 34. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job."* Since Job means *one who suffers* and Uz means *a counselor*, both words could acceptably prefigure all the chosen ones, for all who suffer in the present world and are in a hurry to meet their eternal destiny certainly have counseling souls. For there are those who neglect their own lives by satisfying their transitory desires; they either misunderstand eternity or, even if they understand it correctly, scorn it; they have nothing to suffer, and they do not even know how to take counsel. They have lost heaven and do not take it into account; woe to these sad ones who consider themselves happy. They never raise their minds' eyes to the light of truth for which they were created; they never allow their hearts to contemplate the eternal fatherland; it is themselves whom they abandon in the things that occupy them. Instead of the fatherland, they love the exile that is forced upon them, and they rejoice in the blindness that they suffer, as though it were the clear light of day.

The chosen ones, however, know that all transitory things amount to nothing; their minds' eye searches for the light for which they were created. Nothing but God can satisfy them; their thoughts are tired out with this search and rest in the hope and contemplation of their

Creator, desiring to be numbered with the citizens of heaven. Every one of them who yet remains embodied in this world rises above it mentally, complaining of the dust of exile being suffered and desiring the heavenly fatherland with ever-renewed transports of love. Tearfully they realize that they have lost what lasts forever, and they take comfort in the project of scorning the temporary things they are involved in. The more astute they become in this project of abandoning goods that do not last, the more sorrow they feel at not yet reaching that which remains forever. Therefore Solomon was right in saying, "He who adds to his knowledge adds to his suffering."* For those who already know the great things they have not yet reached suffer more from the lowly things that detain them.

35. We are rightly told, then, that Job lives in the land of Uz, for the soul of each chosen one suffers and is detained by the counselor knowledge. We should also be aware that the mind of the person involved in fast-moving events does not suffer. For those who live without counsel abandon themselves to fast-moving events and affairs and are for the time being not disturbed by thoughts of distress. For the intelligent ones who anchor their minds in counsel carefully observe involvement in any action, considering all their possibilities. Lest an unexpected reversal surprise them in the action of the moment, they stand their thoughtful ground and lightly test the situation, taking thought lest they be blinded by fear of what must be done, lest they be forced into actions that should rather be put off; lest unworthy acts beat them in open conflict through impure desires, lest good acts trip them up or vainglory set a trap for them. And so Job lives in the land of Uz, for the mind of the chosen people is all the more wearied with suffering from the difficulties of the road the more it tries to live by counsel.

*Job 1:1

*Ecl 1:18

XXXVI. 36. The next phrase: "He was blameless and upright, and he feared God and avoided evil."* Whoever yearns for the eternal fatherland doubtlessly lives blamelessly and uprightly: blamelessly at work, indeed, and uprightly in faith; blameless in good works here below and upright in spiritual thoughts within. There are those who do good works without being blameless, for they do not seek any interior reward from them; rather, they curry favor exteriorly. It is of such as them that a certain wise man says, "Woe to the sinner who enters the land by a double path."* It is indeed by a double path that sinners enter the land when their good works belong to God and the thoughts they think within belong to the world.

37. It is well said, "he feared God and avoided evil,"* for the Holy Church of the elect starts out with fear on her path of blamelessness and uprightness, but she reaches the end with love. It is only when for the love of God people have already begun to stop sinning that they really avoid evil. As long as they still do good works out of fear, however, they do not yet avoid evil; for they sin by the very fact that they would sin if they could do so without fear of punishment. The writer, then, correctly told us that Job feared God and avoided evil as well, for since love follows fear, whatever guilt is left in the mind is trodden underfoot by the determination of a thought-out plan. Since all the vices are repressed by fear and love gives birth to virtue, we are rightly told:

XXXVII. 38. "Seven sons and three daughters were born to him."* Seven sons are indeed born to us, because the conception of a good thought causes the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit to be born in us. For the prophet lists this interior family conceived by the mind that is fertilized by the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and under-

*Job 1:1

*Sir 2:14

*Job 1:1

standing, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and reverence; and he will be full of the spirit of fear of the Lord."* Since, therefore, each one of us gives birth to wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, reverence, and fear of the Lord at the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is as though an abiding family were born in our mind, which will keep our noble heavenly race alive as long as it welcomes the love of eternal life. But these seven sons of ours certainly have three sisters, for whatever these virtues or senses accomplish, they share with faith, hope, and charity, nor could the seven sons reach the perfection of the number ten unless all their acts were done in faith, hope, and charity. Since many kinds of thoughts of good works follow this abundant vanguard of virtues, the writer is correct to add,

XXVIII. 39. "He possessed seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels."* Without doing violence to historical truth, we may spiritually imitate what we have heard physically. For we possess seven thousand sheep when we feed the innocent thoughts within ourselves with the fodder of truth that we have searched for in perfect purity of heart.

40. We will also have three thousand camels in our possession if we submit all that is high and curved in us to the mastery of faith and voluntarily bend ourselves down in loving humility to the knowledge of the Trinity. We indeed possess camels if we humbly submit our lofty wisdom. We certainly possess camels when we make our opinions flexible out of regard for the weaknesses of our brothers, so that we may bear one another's burdens and know how to bend down and feel pity for the weaknesses of others. Camels, which do not have cloven feet but do chew the cud, can also be understood as wise arrangements of material things;

*Isa 11:2-3

*Job 1:3

*Job 1:2

these are partly worldly and partly divine, so that it is necessary to list them as animal in a general way.

Although the arrangement of earthly matters is also useful for God's purposes, nevertheless it cannot be done well without extreme distraction of mind. Therefore, since the mind is distracted at the present time and the eternal reward is in preparation, the subject under discussion is, generally speaking, like an animal, having something prescribed and something not prescribed. It is not cloven footed, because it does not separate itself completely from all worldly occupations; nevertheless, it chews the cud, for it arranges worldly affairs wisely and hopes for heaven with a confidence bordering on certitude. And so the management of worldly affairs, like camels, is mentally in harmony with the law, but not as regards the feet. For the things that those who live rightly aspire after belong to heaven, and what belongs to this world is the work they do every day. Therefore, when we submit this management of worldly affairs to the knowledge of the Trinity, we are as though possessors of camels by faith.

XXIX. 41. The next phrase: "Five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses." We possess these yoke of oxen and use them when the virtues unite in plowing up the tough earth of our minds. We also possess five hundred she-asses when we repress our playful emotions and rein in our flesh by the dominion of the spiritual attitude of our heart whenever the flesh wants to assert itself. At least the possession of asses is the governing of our simple thoughts, which, since they cannot run in the rare atmosphere of the understanding, where they as it were move too slowly, they humbly carry the baggage of their brothers. For there are those who meekly practice self-effacement by living a life of external labor because they do not understand the

higher things. The ass is a slow animal certainly, but it is devoted to the bearing of burdens, and so we do well to understand asses to be simple thoughts; for as long as we know our ignorance, we ordinarily find it easy to bear the burdens of others. And when we are not made uppity, as it were, by our own special wisdom, our minds amiably become flexible when confronted with the indolence of others and make us tolerant. Whether we focus on the yoke of oxen or on the asses, the number five hundred is correct, for whether we think wisely or are humbly ignorant, our goal is the rest of eternal peace, and the number of the jubilee year is applied to us.

XXX. 42. The next phrase: "and a large number of slaves."* Yes indeed, we do possess a large number of slaves when we restrain our unending thoughts and subject them to the domination of our minds, lest they engulf our souls with their very frequency, reversing the proper order of dominance by lording it over our sense of discretion. The words *a large number of slaves* are a good symbol for this crowd of thoughts. For we know very well how the tongues of female slaves are loosened when their mistress is away, how noisy they are, and how they leave undone their assigned duties and work, turning upside down their whole ordered way of life. But if their mistress returns unexpectedly, their unrestrained tongues are immediately silenced, and each one takes up her duties and work. In this way each one returns to her proper task as if she had never left it.

If, therefore, the reason momentarily leaves the house of the mind, like the absent mistress, the thoughts raise a clamor, just like a noisy crowd of female slaves. But the moment the reason returns to the mind, the disturbing noise immediately stops. Just like female slaves who quietly return to their assigned work, the thoughts

*Job 1:3

are immediately subjected to their own source and make themselves useful. We possess, therefore, a large number of slaves when we govern our innumerable thoughts in the right way, by rational discretion. When we do this wisely, we certainly make ourselves similar to angels by means of our discretion. And so he rightly adds,

XXXI. 43. "Yes, Job was the greatest of the Easterners."* We too will become the greatest of the Easterners when we become united by means of the rays of our discretion, as far as it is possible for us, with the spirits who stay in the eastern light, forcing the clouds of fleshly decay to disperse. That is why Paul says, "Our conversation is in heaven."* Anyone who goes after the defective things of time is riding for a fall, but anyone who desires heaven proves that he lives in the East. He is the greatest of the Easterners, not of the Westerners, for his ambitions lie not among the deeds of those who seek lowly and passing things but among the choirs of the citizens of heaven.

XXXII. 44. "His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other's houses, each one taking his turn."* Job's sons hold banquets in each other's houses, for all the virtues nourish the mind, each one according to its own measure. So he was right to say, "Each one taking his turn," for the turn of each son is the light of each virtue. If I may briefly repeat here the seven gifts of grace, wisdom has its turn, then understanding, then counsel, then fortitude, then knowledge, then piety, then fear. For to be wise is not the same as to understand; many people are indeed aware of eternity, but they certainly do not understand it. Wisdom, therefore, holds a banquet in her turn, for she refreshes the mind with the hope and certitude of eternal life. Understanding too holds a banquet in his turn, for he penetrates what he hears, refreshes the heart, and lights up the darkness

* Job 1:3

* Phil 3:20

* Job 1:4

in it. Counsel holds a banquet in his turn, for since he does not allow the soul to act forthrightly, he makes it reasonable. Fortitude holds a banquet in her turn, for since she fears no contradiction, she serves the food of confidence to the troubled mind. Knowledge holds a banquet in her turn, for she breaks the fast of ignorance inside the mind. Piety holds a banquet in her turn, for she stores works of mercy inside the heart. Fear holds a banquet in his turn, for since he keeps the mind from taking pride in the present, he comforts it with hope for the future.

45. I think, however, that there is something else for us to ponder in these banquets of Job's sons, namely, the fact that they feed one another. For the virtues are all radically abandoned if one does not support the other. Wisdom certainly has less dignity if understanding is absent; understanding, however, is completely useless unsupported by wisdom, for although it reaches very high without wisdom's weight, its own weightlessness carries it to a point from which its fall will have dire consequences. Counsel is banal without raw fortitude, for it indeed finds scope for research, but it is not robust of itself and does not persevere to the completion of its task. Fortitude by itself is self-destructive unless upheld by counsel, because the more it knows its own strength, the worse ruin is in store for it if it is not guided by reason. There is no knowledge without the fostering of piety in view, for as long as it puts off the doing of a good action it has in mind, it makes itself the more liable to judgment. Piety itself is useless without the discretion provided by knowledge, because as long as no knowledge enlightens it, it is unaware how to show mercy. And as for fear itself, it will certainly never rouse itself to a good action as long as it does not have the other virtues, for since it worries about everything, its

very fear will keep it indolent, and it will avoid all good actions. Therefore, since one virtue is nourished by another in a constant mutual service, we are rightly told that Job's sons were fed by one another in turn. And so since one virtue supports the other by being virtuous, we may say there is a large family of those preparing banquets, each taking a turn and each to be fed.

XXXIII. 46. "They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them."* Since our virtues promote faith, hope, and charity in all that they do, Job's sons are somewhat like workers who invite their three sisters to a meal, so that faith, hope, and charity may rejoice at the good works that each virtue puts into operation. They wax strong as though by food, since good works give them confidence; after the meal they wish to be filled with the dew of contemplation, and so it is as if they became drunk with wine.

47. But what is there that is done in this life without some defilement, however slight? Sometimes we even draw near to what is worse by means of the very good deeds that we do, which cause our minds to rejoice, and this rejoicing in turn begets a feeling of security, and when the mind finds itself safe, it relaxes and becomes tepid. At other times, however, these good deeds infect us with a certain amount of pride, and the more conceited they make us in our own sight, the lower we become in God's sight.

XXXIV. 48. And so he is right to add, "When the banqueting days had run their course, Job would send for them to purify them."* When the banqueting days had finally run their course, Job's sending for his sons to purify them means an affirmation of the heart's intention after the experience of the virtues and the purification of all our actions, after a close examination and going over them, lest we should call bad actions good, or at

* Job 1:4

* Job 1:5

least think they were good enough when they did not go far enough. For the mind is often deceived by poor quality or by insufficient goodness, but it is prayer rather than discussion that will discover our reaction to virtue. For when we attempt to scrutinize ourselves more thoroughly, we are more likely to succeed when we pray than when we study. For when the mind is raised on high by some exercise of compunction, all it contains is below and more easily seen and judged.

XXXV. 49. Therefore he rightly adds, "Rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one."* For we rise early when we are radiant with the light of compunction, and we leave behind us the night of our humanity, opening the eyes of our mind to the rays of the true Light. In addition, we offer a holocaust for each one of Job's sons when we offer our sacrifice of prayer for each virtue: lest wisdom stretch herself too much, lest understanding go astray in her subtle running, lest counsel become confused by too much advice, lest fortitude be too forward in her confidence, lest knowledge become puffed up by knowing without loving, lest piety should become distorted by being drawn away from its proper object, lest fear fall into the pit of despair by worrying too much about justice.

Therefore, when we pray intensely for each virtue, that it should be pure, what else do we do but offer a holocaust for each one, according to the number of Job's sons? For a holocaust is a sacrifice that is totally consumed. Therefore, the offering of a holocaust means to burn the mind completely with the fire of compunction, so that the heart may burn on the altar of love and consume its impure thoughts, as though they were the sins of its own family.

50. But only those know how to do this who carefully keep their eyes on their interior emotions and

* Job 1:5

rein them in before the thoughts become actions; only those know how who are mature enough to guard their minds. That is why we are told that Ishbosheth died unexpectedly, for Sacred Scripture tells us that the doorkeeper was female, not male: "The sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, Rechab and Baanah, came and entered Ishbosheth's house during the hottest part of the day, while Ishbosheth was in bed taking his noontime rest. When they entered the house, the woman who cleaned the wheat was watching the door, but she was asleep. They entered the house secretly, carrying ears of wheat, and they struck him in the groin."^{*}

^{*}2 Sam
4:5-6

The woman guarding the door cleans wheat when the mind stands guard and shrewdly distinguishes vices from virtues. If she falls asleep, she lets the conspirators in to kill her master, for when we stop being careful to distinguish, the way is open for the evil spirits to kill the soul. They carry ears of wheat when they enter, for they are quick to carry off the seeds of good thoughts. They strike the soul in the groin, for they destroy the heart's virtue by means of the pleasure of the flesh. To strike anyone in the groin indeed means to cut short the life of the mind by the pleasure of the flesh. Ishbosheth would never have suffered such a death if he had not appointed a woman to guard the door of his house, that is, kept a carelessness guard at the entrance to his mind. For we ought to have feelings that are both valiant and bold standing guard at the gates of our heart, never giving in to the sleep of negligence or deceived by ignorance.

Ishbosheth is well named, then, who was left unguarded by a woman and without protection against the swords of the enemy, for Ishbosheth means *man of confusion*. For he is indeed a man of confusion who is unprotected by a strong guard over the mind; even while he thinks he is practicing virtues, vices enter secretly and

kill him. We must, therefore, guard the door of our minds with all our strength lest the enemy lying in ambush should ever cross the threshold of a neglected thought. For this reason Solomon said, "Guard your heart with all diligence, for the heart is the source of life."^{**} It is important, therefore, that we scrutinize as carefully as we can the virtues we practice, even from our first intentions, lest they have an evil source, even if they appear correct.

XXXVI. 51. "For he said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.'^{***} Job's sons curse God in their hearts when our good works begin from thoughts that are not good and when we openly do what is good while secretly planning evil. They certainly curse God when we think in our minds that we have made ourselves what we are. They also curse God, even if we know that our strength is his gift, when we want to be praised for what he has given us. Now this is what we must know: the ancient enemy vitiates our good works in three ways in order that what we do well, as far as people can see, may lose value in the sight of our interior Judge.

For at times the enemy corrupts the intention of a good work so that all the actions that follow are impure and unclean, precisely because they were polluted at the source. At other times he is unsuccessful in corrupting the intention of a good work, but then he waylays the action itself, as it were, so that when a person safely proposes to begin, a hidden vice touches the action unnoticed, as though from ambush, and spoils it. Sometimes, however, he neither vitiates the intention nor waylays the action but lies in wait for the conclusion of the good work. The more remote he pretends to be, either from the heart within or from the action in progress, the more shrewdly he waits for the good action to terminate so he can deceive at that point. When he has made a person

^{**}Prov 4:23

^{***}Job 1:5

As leaders they wished to be imitated by those subject to their authority. So even though those same followers had a little understanding, yet these leaders used their assumed authority to drag them to destruction. Only one servant fled from them to report the news, for while the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees were successfully carrying out their mischief, the words of prophecy were really deserting them, and the prophecy "The upholders of the law knew me not" was fulfilled.

*Jer 2:8

XXXIII. 53. "When he had spoken, another came up to say, 'While your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine in your oldest son's house, suddenly a strong wind blew up from the desert and struck the house at its four corners; the house collapsed and fell on your children, and they are dead.'" As I have just said, by Job's sons and daughters we understand the preaching apostles and the people subject to them; we are told that they held a banquet in their oldest brother's house, because the people still living as Jews were enjoying the rich food of the sacred preaching. "Suddenly a strong wind blew up from the desert." The desert is the heart without faith, forsaken by its Creator and therefore presently unoccupied. And what else should we understand by the strong wind but a fierce temptation? Therefore, a strong wind blew up from the desert: that is, in the passion of our Redeemer, a fierce temptation blew up from the hearts of the Jews against those who believed in Jesus. The desert can also fittingly be understood as the forsaken multitude of unclean spirits. The wind blew up from there and struck the house, because it was from the unclean spirits that temptation came forth and unsettled the hearts of the persecutors.

*Job 1:18-19

*Job 1:19

priests, scribes, and elders. If we add the Pharisees, we can identify the four corners of the house. The desert wind came, then, and struck the four corners of the house, or rather, the temptation leapt out from the unclean spirits and aroused the minds of these four groups to perpetrate a malicious persecution. The house fell down on the children and killed them, for while Judea demeaned herself by her cruel conduct in the persecution of the Lord, she was ruining the faith of the apostles through fear and desperation. For when they saw that the Lord was taken, they quickly disowned him and fled in all directions. Although an interior hand kept their spirits alive through foreknowledge, the life of faith in them had meanwhile been killed by their cowardly fear. Therefore, those who deserted their Master when Judea went mad were killed, as it were, by the house falling in on them, as the four corners collapsed.

But what do we think happened to the faithful flock at that time, when we know that even the rams had fled? One of them escaped to spread the news, for the words of the prophets who foretold these things were vindicated; they said of the persecuting people, "The beloved in my house committed many crimes,"* of the good preachers who nevertheless fled during the passion, "My partners stood afar off,"* and of all those held in the grip of fear, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will scatter."*

*Jer 11:15

*Ps 37:12

*Zech 13:7;
Matt 26:31

*Job 1:20

XXXIV. 55. "Then Job got up and tore his garments."* With the house destroyed and his children dead, Job got up, because with Judea lost and unfaithful and the preachers falling into the death of fear, the Redeemer of the human race made clear how just was his decision to abandon his persecutors. His rising is indeed his revelation of how stringently he abandons sinners to their fate. He rises, therefore, when he proves the

54. The house in which Job's children held their banquet had four corners. For we know of three groups in the synagogue who were leaders of the people, namely,

justice of his judgment against the wicked. And so the text rightly goes on to say that Job tore his clothes. For what did the clothing of the Lord stand for but the synagogue, which clung to the expectation of his incarnation at the preaching of the prophets? In the same way he now wears as clothes those who love him, for it is Paul who tells us, "That he might reveal his glorious Church, un wrinkled and unstained."* She who is declared to be without wrinkle or stain is surely revealed as a spiritual garment, clean in action and un wrinkled in hope; in addition, while Judea believed that he was going to become incarnate, she was his clinging garment.

*Eph 5:27

56. The one expected came; when he came, he taught new truths; as he taught, he worked miracles; as he worked miracles, he suffered wrongs. Accordingly, he tore the garment wherewith he was clothed, since he saved some of the Judeans from unbelief and left others in their unbelief. So the torn garment is none other than Judea herself, divided into contradictory arguments. If his garment were not torn, the evangelist would not say as the Lord was preaching that a disagreement arose among the people: "Some said he is a good man, while others said he is not; rather, he misleads the crowd."* She was, as it were, his torn garment when she was divided by contradictory arguments and lost the unity of concord.

*John 7:12

XXXV. 57. "Job shaved his head, threw himself on the ground, and worshiped."* His shaven hair can be nothing other than the simplicity of the mysteries, his head nothing else but the honor of the priesthood. That is why the prophet Ezekiel was told, "Now, son of man, take a sharp razor and shave off your hair and beard with it."* This action of the prophet obviously expresses the decision of the Redeemer, who shaved his head by his appearance in the flesh, for he hid the mysteries of his

*Ezek 5:1

law from the Jewish priests. He shaved off his beard, for he deserted the kingdom of Israel and deprived it of its beauty and strength. As for *the ground* in this passage, it is certainly sinful humanity that is meant. For in the beginning sinful humanity was told, "You are earth, and to the earth you shall go."*

*Gen 3:19

Therefore, the word *earth* signifies the sinfulness of the Gentiles. For whereas Judea believed herself just, it is clear what she thought of the reprobate Gentiles, for Paul admits, "We are born Jews and not Gentile sinners."* Therefore, our Mediator shaved his head, as it were, and fell to the ground, because in hiding his mysteries from her priests, he deserted Judea and made himself known to the Gentiles. He shaved his head; that is, he took away the mysteries of the law from his first priestly class. Then he fell to the ground; that is, he gave himself to sinners who were to be saved. So whereas he abandoned those who seemed righteous to themselves, he took for himself those who knew and admitted that they were unrighteous. Therefore he himself says in the gospel, "I came into this world for judgment, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."*

*John 9:39

The column of cloud too, which led the people in the desert, shone with the brightness of fire, not in daylight, but at night; our Redeemer, you see, vouchsafed his guidance to his followers by the example of his own life, but he gave no light to those who trusted in their own righteousness. For those, however, who experienced the darkness of their own sins, he shone with the fire of his love. You must not think that Job's falling to the ground is inappropriate for application to the Redeemer in this sense. For it is also written, "The Lord has sent the word to Jacob, which fell in Israel."* *Jacob* is indeed interpreted *usurper*, and *Israel* *the seer of God*. What

*Isa 9:8

else is meant by *Jacob* but the Jewish people, or by *Israel* but the Gentile peoples? For he whose place Jacob tried to usurp through his death as man is the very one, God, whom the Gentiles saw through the eyes of faith. Therefore, he who was sent to Jacob fell in Israel, for the Jewish people rejected the one sent to them, whom the Gentile peoples found and at once confessed. Indeed, it is written about the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of the Lord fell upon them."^{*}

* Acts 10:44

58. Well then, whether it be the Word of God or the Holy Spirit, we are told in Holy Scripture that he fell, precisely to express his unexpected coming. Whether he fell or he rushed down, his coming to the lowest place was sudden. For the Mediator, therefore, to have as it were fallen to earth is for him to have, unhopéd for, come to the Gentiles, without any signs to announce his coming. It is well said that he fell to the ground and worshiped, since in his acceptance of the lowliness of the flesh, he breathed aspirations of humility into those who believed in him. He did what he taught others to do, just as we are told about his Spirit, "The Spirit himself asks for us with unutterable sighs."^{*} For he who is equal does not petition, but he is said to request, because indeed he causes those whom he fills to request. Nevertheless, our Redeemer himself gives the example, for he prayed to the Father even as his passion was approaching. Why, then, should we be surprised if he subjected himself to the Father by praying while he was in the form of a slave, if while he was in this form he even put up with the violence of sinners, all the way to his last breath?

XXXVI. 59. The next verse: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked will I return."^{*} The synagogue was the Redeemer's mother according to the flesh, and from her he came to us in visible bodily form. She kept him within her, covered with the garments of

* Job 1:21

the letter, and she made no effort to open the eyes of her mind to spiritual understanding of him. Because he lay hidden in the flesh of a human body, she refused to see him as God, as though disdainful the consideration of nakedness in divinity. He came naked out of his mother's womb when he came out of the flesh of the synagogue to the Gentiles for all to see. This was nicely prefigured by Joseph, who left his garment behind and fled.^{*} When that adulterous wife wanted to abuse him, he left his garment behind and fled, and when the synagogue, in her belief that the Lord was only a man, tried to confine him with an adulterous embrace, he left the garment of the letter before her eyes and presented himself openly to the Gentiles, that the power of his Godhead might be revealed.

Paul tells us as well, "Even today, when Moses is read, their heart is veiled."^{*} The adulterous wife, you see, kept the discarded garment with her and lost the naked man whom she had wickedly seized. He who left the synagogue and appeared in visible form to faithful Gentiles came naked out of his mother's womb. But did he desert her completely? If so, what about the prophet who said, "Even if the children of Israel should be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore, a remnant will be saved?"^{*} And what about this passage: "Until the full number of Gentiles enters in; then all Israel will be saved"?^{*} A time will come, then, when he will also appear in visible form to the synagogue. At the end of the world, beyond any doubt, the time will come when he will make himself known as he is, God, to the remnant of his nation. Thus it is rightly stated, "Naked will I return."^{*} Naked indeed will he return to his mother's womb when this world has come to an end; he who suffered contempt for having become man in this world will be declared God before all ages and in the eyes of his mother, the synagogue.

* 2 Cor 1:15

* Isa 10:22;
Rom 9:27

* Rom
11:25-26

* Job 1:21

XXXVII. 60. The next sentence: "God gave it, and God took it back; God has done what he pleased; blessed be the name of God."* Because our Redeemer is God along with the Father he gives us all things; insofar as he is human, however, he receives the Father's gifts along with all humans. Of Judea, therefore, he might say, "God gave it," as long as she believed the mystery of his coming incarnation. Once she had disdained the expected appearance of his incarnation, he would say of Judea, "God took it back." She was given indeed when she believed in what was coming through certain individuals, but she was taken back when her blindness in disdaining the veneration of what certain ones believed in required it.

*Job 1:21

61. May he teach those who believe in him, so that they may be able to bless God in the midst of trials: "God has done what he pleased; blessed be the name of God."* Therefore also, in the words of the gospel, when we are told of Jesus drawing near to his passion, he is said to have taken the bread and given thanks.* He gives thanks, then, when he accepts the trials brought on by the evil deeds of others. He who gave evidence of nothing deserving punishment humbly blessed God for the punishment in order that, you see, he might teach us what from then on anyone should do who was punished for his own crimes; if he cheerfully bore the punishment for the crimes of others, then he shows us what anyone who is corrected should do, for he gave thanks to the Father with an even disposition when he was subjected to the trial.

*Job 1:21

*see
Matt 26:26

XXXVIII. 62. "Through all this Job committed no sin, nor did he say anything foolish against God."* It is Peter who tells us, as I have already mentioned, that for Job neither to have sinned nor to have said anything foolish about God is spoken about Jesus: "He did not

*Job 1:22

sin, and no deception was heard from him."* The more deceptive speech is called prudence by men, the more God considers it foolishness. Paul was well aware of this when he said, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God."* Since, therefore, no guile was heard from his mouth, beyond any doubt he said nothing foolish. The princes and priests thought he had spoken foolishly against God when he admitted he was the Son of God when questioned during his passion. Therefore also, his questioners said, "What further need have we of witnesses? We ourselves have heard the blasphemy."* But he said nothing foolish against God; rather, he spoke the truth. In his death he announced even to the unbelievers that truth about himself that he made clear to all the believers a little later by his resurrection.

*1 Pet 2:22;
Isa 53:9

*1 Cor 3:19

*Matt 26:65

63. We have briefly traced out the sense of the text that refers to our Head; now we shall return to explain the moral sense for the edification of his Body, that we may know how the external events, enacted in a material way, happen interiorly in our minds. For as the sons of God stand before the Lord, Satan also stands among them, and that ancient foe often stands among our good thoughts, which are planted in our hearts when the Holy Spirit comes and works there; the enemy craftily joins our good thoughts and disturbs them, and once they are badly troubled he scatters them. But our Creator certainly never deserts us in time of temptation. For he renders the enemy recognizable to us through his own light and clarity, even as that enemy hides in ambush against us.

Therefore God first says to Satan,

XXXIX. 64. "Where did you come from?"* To question the crafty foe is to proclaim his ambush to us, so that when we notice his secret entry of our heart we may be on our guard against him, watching out for him carefully and resolutely.

*Job 1:7

XL. 65. "Satan answered and said, 'I have gone about the earth. I have walked upon it back and forth.'"*
 For Satan to go about the earth means to scrutinize the hearts of flesh and to find out where he can find an opportunity to accuse somebody. He goes about the earth because he surrounds the hearts of men and women, in order that he may take away the good from them and plant evil in their minds; once it is planted, he makes it increase; once it is increased, he perfects it, so that from those perfect in evil he may acquire companions in punishment. Take notice that he does not say that he flew but rather that he walked, for he is surely never quick to leave anyone whom he tempts. Rather, when he finds a soft heart, he plants his foot of pitiful persuasion; by staying there he leaves his footprints of shameful deeds, and whenever he can he makes people sinners by the imitation of his own wickedness.

God counters him, however, and praises blessed Job, saying,

XLII. 66. "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is none on earth like him. He is a blameless and upright man who fears God and avoids evil."* When God inspires a person with strength against the enemy, it is as though he praised him in Satan's hearing. God's praise, indeed, is first of all the giving of his goodness, and next the guarding of it once given. But just because he sees good people guarded and protected by God's power, the ancient enemy attacks them all the more fiercely.

Therefore, Satan says in response,

XLII. 67. "Does Job fear God fruitlessly? You have built a wall around him, his house, and all his possessions. In fact, you have blessed the work of his hands, so that his property grows upon the earth."* He might as well have said, "Why do you praise the one you strengthen with your protection? I have deserved your

*Job 1:7

*Job 1:8

*Job 1:9-10

scorn, but man would deserve your praise only if he withstood me by his own strength." So he was quick to maliciously request the tempting of man, which the Protector of man only granted in his kindness. For we are told,

XLIII. 68. "Just reach out and touch all his possessions, and see if he does not curse you to your face!"*
 Our minds often become proud when we give abundant evidence of virtuous living and when we succeed in maintaining our prosperity, thinking that we ourselves are responsible for the good things we have. The ancient enemy, indeed, maliciously desires to deprive us of these good things. God, however, only allows these temptations in his kindness, that the mind may be the more solidly supported by the hope of his divine help after the arrival of temptation, during which the very good things it boasted of cause it grief and make it know its weakness and frailty. It is by a wonderful dispensation of his loving providence that when the malicious foe tempts our heart in order to kill it, he, our merciful Creator, teaches it so that it may live.

XLIV. 69. So the text rightly continues, "Very well; all his property is in your power. You must not touch him personally."* It is as though he had said outright, "So I deliver to you the virtue of any of my chosen ones, that they may be tried from outside and that you yourself may understand how I still preserve them and keep them loyal to me in the ground of their minds."

XLV. 70. We are subsequently told, "Satan departed from the presence of the Lord."* Since he is absolutely forbidden to press his attack to the final defeat of the heart, Satan wanders outside, excluded from the interior. He is outside precisely because even though he often troubles the virtues of the mind, he does not inflict any deadly wound on the hearts of good people, for God is

*Job 1:11

*Job 1:12

*Job 1:12

against him. He is only allowed to attack them as far as it is necessary for them to learn from the temptations and be strengthened, lest they attribute their good deeds to their own powers, and lest they forsake their own selves in the lassitude of security, neglecting the vigilance of distrust. Indeed, let them stay awake all the more and keep watch over their good purpose when they see that they are always in the front line of battle against the enemy's temptations.

XLVI. 71. "One day Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, when a messenger came to him and said, 'The oxen were plowing, and the she-asses were grazing close by, when the Sabaeans attacked and took everything away, putting the servants to the sword.'"^{*} In the hearts of the chosen, wisdom is born before the good things that follow; she is brought forth as the firstborn child, as it were, a gift of the Spirit. This wisdom, indeed, as the prophet tells us, is our faith: "Unless you believe, you will not understand."^{*} Our wisdom will really be understanding when we apply our faith and belief to everything the Creator has told us. Job's sons, then, hold a banquet in their oldest brother's house when the other virtues feast with faith.

None of those other virtues can be good, even if they have the appearance of good, unless faith is first born in the heart. Job's sons feast in their oldest brother's house when our virtues eat well of the food of Sacred Scripture in the house of faith. It is indeed written, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."^{*} Then our virtues will really eat the food of life, when they begin to find nourishment in the mysteries of faith. Job's sons feast in the house of their oldest brother, and unless the other virtues fill themselves with the food of wisdom and do prudently the things they want to do, they cannot be virtues.

^{*}Heb 11:6

^{*}Job 1:13-15

^{*}Isa 7:9 LXX

72. See now how our good deeds are nourished by the food of wisdom and faith while our enemy takes away the plowing oxen and grazing asses, killing the servants with the sword. What do we take the plowing oxen to mean unless it be our serious thoughts? When they finish plowing the heart with eager practices, they bring forth abundant fruit of progress. What do we understand by the grazing asses unless it be the simple emotions of the heart? When we carefully restrain them and keep them from wanderlust and duplicity, we feed them on the plain of purity and freedom. When the sly enemy sees serious thoughts in the heart, however, he often lets in the desire for pleasure unnoticed and corrupts them; when he sees simple emotions there, he shows us easy tricks and discoveries, and when we seek to be praised for our intelligence, we lose our purity and simplicity. If the tempter is unable to lure us into an evil action by his temptations, then he hurts us by snatching away our good thoughts, so that while the disturbance of the mind's domain is being recognized, he may seem to have stolen it completely.

The plowing oxen can also be taken to mean thoughts of charity, by which we try to help others when we desire to soften the hard hearts of our brothers by preaching. The asses may also be understood as meekness and patience, for they indeed do not resist by wild unreasonable behavior those who load burdens on them. The ancient enemy often causes the mind to sink into a kind of lazy inertia when he sees that we want to help others by our preaching; this inertia keeps us from helping others even when we are free from our own duties. He therefore takes away the plowing oxen when he interrupts the train of thought in our mind that is devoted to the good of our brothers by inserting inertia and negligence. Although the hearts of the chosen keep